

# TYPE 7: GREENSAND VALLEY

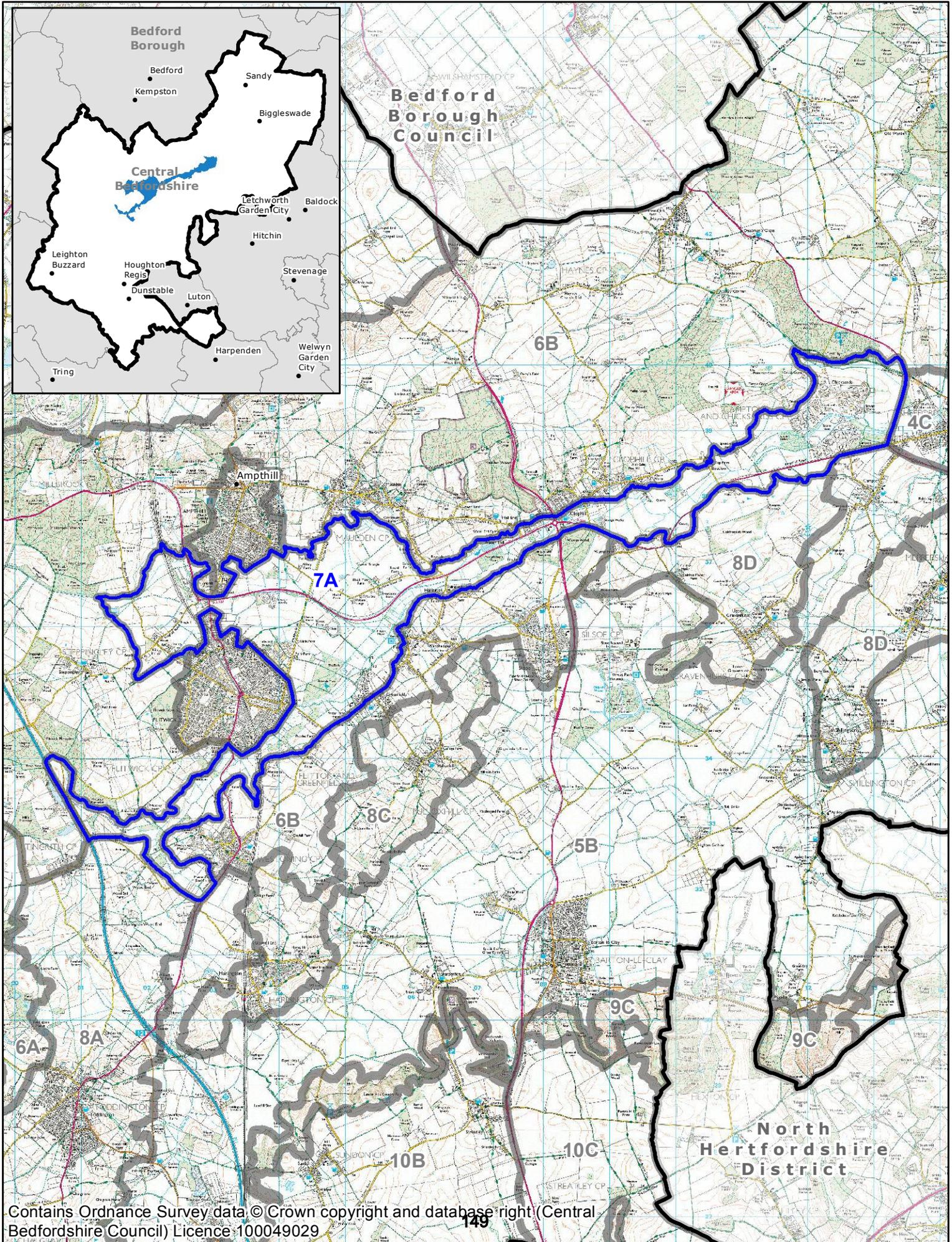
## Key Characteristics

- The small-medium scale valleys of the River Flit and River Ouzel.
- Surrounded largely by the enclosing landform of the Wooded Greensand Ridge.
- Underlying solid geology of Lower Greensand with alluvium and drift deposits of valley gravels associated with the Rivers.
- Rivers and associated wetland sites are important for biodiversity.
- Mixed woodland blocks and shelterbelts increase the sense of enclosure.
- Field and roadside boundaries are variable ranging from mature shelterbelts to scrubby degraded margins.

## Location and Boundaries

- 7.1 Occurring at an elevation of approximately 40-50m AOD, the *Greensand Valley* landscape type is located where rivers cross the Greensand Ridge. Boundaries are defined by topography and land cover. The *Wooded Greensand* Ridge marks the distinct change in landscape character to enclose and define the edge of the valley landscape.

# 7A: Flit Greensand Valley



## 7A Flit Greensand Valley

### Location and Boundaries

7A.1 The *Flit Greensand Valley* lies in the centre of Central Bedfordshire - intersecting the *Mid Greensand Ridge (6b)*. The valley has a relatively straight course - stretching from the edge of Shefford and extending west where it widens and divides - flowing eastwards between the urban areas of Flitwick and Ampthill.

### Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 7A.1.1 A medium scale valley cutting through, the diagonal band of Greensand with small areas of Oxford Clay and Gault Clay. Much of the valley is overlain by alluvium/peat with narrow terraces of river gravel. A mostly open landscape.
- 7A.1.2 Elevation ranges from 40m AOD - 85m AOD - becoming more elevated in the west where the valley abuts *Mid Greensand Ridge (6b)* and *Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills (8a)*. The ridge provides a prominent backdrop and strong wooded context to the valley.
- 7A.1.3 Flitwick Moor SSSI valley mire system - alkaline fen and acid springs. The areas of peat are an archaeological resource.
- 7A.1.4 The valley was formerly the location for a number of traditional industries with a series of water mills (only one at Flitwick remains).
- 7A.1.5 Historic interest includes significant late prehistoric and Roman sites in upper reaches, plus medieval castles at Flitwick and Cainhoe.
- 7A.1.6 Flitwick Manor and Chicksands Priory are listed as Grade II parklands on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.
- 7A.1.7 Low lying areas of riverside farmland, including areas of improved pasture (with sheep, cattle and horses grazing), wet meadow and arable fields.
- 7A.1.8 Variable field and roadside boundaries - ranging from mature shelterbelts to scrubby degraded margins, sometimes also marked by drainage channels.
- 7A.1.9 Bordered by the urban areas of Flitwick and Ampthill as well as the smaller settlements of Shefford and Clophill. The presence of housing on the edge of the valley gives the impression that it is more settled than it is.
- 7A.1.10 At Chicksands Priory Estate - the British Intelligence and Security Centre is located on a former American military base (largely inaccessible and hidden from view).
- 7A.1.11 The A507 runs parallel to and crosses the River Flit - and dominates the valley both visually and audibly. Pedestrian steps and bridges crossing over the road are conspicuous. A busy roundabout connects the A507 to the A6 close to the settlement of Clophill.
- 7A.1.12 The small hamlet of Water End (characterised by red brick, thatch, weatherboarding and clay tiles) and the southern edge of Clophill.
- 7A.1.13 Two areas of ancient woodland: Upper Alders and Campton Plantation. A mostly open landscape but small areas of wet woodland are present; willows/ alders often line ditches.
- 7A.1.14 Past and present mineral extraction operations (fullers earth) - a restored quarry site, southeast of Clophill, forms a small complex of ponds and fringing vegetation.
- 7A.1.15 Scattered farmsteads occur in the west - where the valley widens and an arable land use dominates. Locally distinctive farm buildings occur in the area between Maulden and the Flit - many farms traditionally having onion lofts and sheds - although few now remain.

## Landscape Character Description

### Physical and natural landscape

- 7A.2 The River Flit has carved a valley through the prominent band of Lower Greensand to create a distinctive valley landscape. The narrow valley floodplain along the central section (at Clophill and Water End) widens significantly in the east (towards Shefford) and in the west (towards Ampthill and Flitwick). The valley has a varied landscape character. It contains a range of land uses - arable and pastoral farming, mineral extraction and utility services, development (business, recreation), small scale settlement, areas of urban fringe land as well as dominant road corridors. A number of businesses (market gardening, small complex of offices and a small-scale business park) and recreational interests (golf and fisheries) operate adjacent to the A507.
- 7A.3 In the west and south west the Tingrith and Steppingley tributaries are set within a more rolling wooded landscape and retain a strong rural character. For much of its length the Flit is heavily engineered to control flooding. Numerous springs occur along the southern edge of the valley, at the junction of the Greensand and the Clay - many of these are typical Chalybeate springs containing extensive iron deposits.
- 7A.4 The valley contains the small hamlet of Water End which has retained much of its traditional character - red brick, clay tiles and weatherboarding being the key building materials. There are indications however of settlement character in the valley being eroded due to new housing development that does not respond to traditional building style and vernacular. The significant amount of development and land use change that has occurred within the valley has resulted in the traditional pastoral character only being evident in small localised pockets.



Agricultural fields adjacent to a tree-lined tributary stream off Greenfield Road to the east of Flitwick



A rural lane near Flitwick Manor Park

### Biodiversity

- 7A.5 The River Flit itself is the most significant biodiversity feature of the area. Although the watercourse has been heavily engineered the river corridor contains associated habitats of importance such as mature willow pollards, native black poplars, scrub and wetland vegetation. The wetland habitats include fen, acid mire, reed beds and marshy grassland. At Flitwick Moor (SSSI) the valley mire system is the largest remaining wetland site in Bedfordshire. The majority of the fen has developed on an alkaline substrate, but localised acid springs well up from the underlying Greensand - with these areas characterised by bog mosses. Small areas of unimproved dry neutral grassland are also present in the valley and wet woodland remains a significant feature of the Flit corridor containing the majority of this habitat in the county. The areas of parkland with mature trees and pasture at Flitwick Manor and Chicksands Priory and are a further valued feature.

### Visual and perceptual character

- 7A.6 The sense of tranquillity and rurality of the valley has subsequently been diminished, particularly close to the A507, with its incongruous pedestrian bridge crossing points, and adjacent urban areas, and the developed edge of Ampthill – including the series of roundabouts on the A507 to the west of Ampthill. However, glimpses of the River Flit itself and flanking areas of wet meadow create surviving pockets of rural character. Views to the prominent, tree-dominated landscape of the Greensand Ridge have a strong influence on the character of the valley - defining its boundaries and providing a well-wooded context.

### Cultural pattern and historic character

- 7A.7 In the Roman period there was extensive settlement in the Ruxox area. Subsequent climatic deterioration led to the formation of deep peat deposits over the Roman levels, creating the conditions for good preservation of organic deposits. The peat is itself an important resource of evidence for past environmental and climate change.
- 7A.8 In the medieval landscape the land adjacent to the river was utilised as meadow for hay and grazing. Its economic importance is shown by the salient of the historic parish of Tingrith (now removed by boundary reorganisation), which took in a narrow strip of the valley at the west end of the area. Peat digging was also an important activity.
- 7A.9 The broader part of the valley between Flitwick and Maulden, where there is an exposure of Oxford clay and river gravel deposits, was common field land. It was enclosed in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but many of the enclosure boundaries were removed in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also at enclosure, the meandering course of the River Flit was straightened and the associated fenland drained in places.
- 7A.10 The medieval religious houses of Beadlow (Beaulieu) Priory and Chicksands Priory were located on the edge of the valley. The moat at Ruxox Farm, just above the flood plain, enclosed a grange (farm) of Dunstable Priory. South-east of Clophill, Cainhoe Castle occupies a strategic position just on the south edge of the valley. Chicksands Priory, Ruxox moat and Cainhoe Castle are scheduled monuments.
- 7A.11 Parts of two historic parks encroach into the Flit valley: Chicksands Park has been much altered by 20<sup>th</sup> c military use; Flitwick Manor Park (grade II) includes ecologically important meadow land.

### Settlement pattern; built character

- 7A.12 The Flit Valley is bordered by the settlements of Flitwick, Ampthill and Clophill giving the impression that it is more settled than it actually is. The valley itself is largely unsettled apart from the small hamlet of Water End and the southern edge of Clophill. Building materials are typically red brick and white washed rubble or weatherboarding and clay tile roofs.
- 7A.13 The valley was formerly the location for a number of traditional industries with a series of water mills (only one at Flitwick remains), peat digging and bottling of mineral water in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some former water mills remain along the Flit as at Clophill. Locally distinctive farm buildings occur in the area between Maulden and the Flit - with many farms traditionally having onion lofts and sheds. Scattered farmsteads occur in the west where the valley widens out to form a small vale dominated by arable land use. At the western end of the Flit extensions of urban development at Ampthill and Flitwick intrude into the valley such as an industrial centre and sewage works. The eastern end of the valley is dominated by Chicksands Priory, formerly an American military base and now the British Intelligence and Security Centre.

## Evaluation

### Landscape Change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
<p>Development of road corridors and road improvements.</p> <p>Expansion of Ampthill and Flitwick.</p> <p>Development of recreational facilities e.g. Water End Fisheries and the golf course.</p> <p>Development of sewage works and mineral extraction sites on the valley floor; bringing an industrial/utility influence to the landscape.</p>	<p>Potential for Clophill to merge with Water End should further ribbon development occur with the loss of individual settlement identity.</p> <p>Construction of committed developments to the south of Ampthill and north of Flitwick, which would further urbanise the valley.</p> <p>New Country Park at Flitwick, also Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Equestrian development.</p>

### Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 7A.1.16 Flitwick Moor SSSI with its rich flora and invertebrate fauna. This and other similar areas of surviving peat is also important as evidence of past climate and environmental change, and as a resource of well-preserved organic archaeological palaeoenvironmental evidence.
- 7A.1.17 River Flit and associated fringing vegetation - and small pockets of the valley floor with surviving floodplain character - fragmentation and isolation of wetland habitats is a key threat. Meadowland (a valuable medieval resource) survives particularly in the upper reaches of the Flit Valley.
- 7A.1.18 Small woodland shelterbelts and areas of ancient woodland, which require active management.
- 7A.1.19 Wooded context, backdrop and views, to the *Mid Greensand Ridge (6b)*.
- 7A.1.20 A series of high status historic sites - extensive Roman settlement and later monastic grange at Ruxox, the priories at Chicksands and Beadlow and Cainhoe Castle.
- 7A.1.21 The individual identity of settlements which are vulnerable to expansion and merging - e.g. Clophill and Water End.
- 7A.1.22 The important open gaps and areas more rural in character e.g. between Clophill and Water End, and Flitwick and Ampthill are especially vulnerable to urbanisation pressures,

### Visual Sensitivity

- 7A.1.23 The visual relationship with the adjacent *Mid Greensand Ridge (6b)*. The crest lines of the valley are particularly sensitive to change,
- 7A.1.24 Where the valley widens (towards Flitwick and Ampthill in the west and Shefford in the east) it becomes more open with clear views across the valley possible to and from the adjacent *Mid Greensand Ridge (6b)*. The central section of the valley is narrow and contained by the wooded slopes (6b) that frame and limit views. Although not heavily wooded, there are a number of shelterbelts along the main A507 that act to break up and restrict views. The visual environment is already highly fragmented due, for example, to the presence of the road corridor, harsh urban edges in places and the incongruous pedestrian steps and bridges that cross over the A507.

## Landscape Strategy

Although highly fragmented and dominated by the A507, the valley has retained a number of positive features. The overall strategy should aim to **enhance and renew** the positive features that are central to the character of the Flit Greensand Valley landscape. Enhancement of the landscape largely relates to improving the condition of features (such as the field and roadside boundaries and drainage channels) and enhancing and renewing traditional valley landscape features such as floodplain woodland meadowland. There may also be appropriate opportunities for introducing new landscape elements to the valley particularly where pockets of land have fallen into decline.

### Guidelines for New Development

- 7A.1.25 Improve the appearance and style of pedestrian bridges that cross the A507.
- 7A.1.26 Avoid road widening/upgrading that could further impact upon the small-medium scale of the valley.
- 7A.1.27 Conserve the visual relationship with the *Mid Greensand Ridge (6b)* and avoid development that would compromise views to the ridge- aim for undeveloped valley crests.
- 7A.1.28 Conserve the distinctive and consistent use of traditional building materials within the settlement of Water End and ensure ancillary changes such as lighting and boundaries do not dilute the rural vernacular style.
- 7A.1.29 Seek to retain the individual identity of Flitwick and Ampthill and retain the important gap along the Flitwick Road where it crosses the valley - coalescence of these settlements would divide the valley.
- 7A.1.30 Ensure restoration of mineral extraction sites maximises ecological value and recreational opportunities in ways which are sensitive to landscape character. Seek a strategic approach to restoration along the valley and seek a balance of open water and traditional floodplain habitats.
- 7A.1.31 Ensure an appropriate rural interface between settlement edges and the adjoining rural landscape. This is particularly important where settlement edge expansion is proposed. Retention of agricultural hedgerows, appropriate new tree screening and careful design of boundaries and lighting will help create a sympathetic rural/urban edge.
- 7A.1.32 Monitor the change of use of former agricultural buildings; ensuring conversions respect surrounding building style and vernacular.
- 7A.1.33 Retain the rural character and scale of the secondary roads running through the valley.
- 7A.1.34 Monitor demand for formal recreational activities such as golf courses and ensure that design and management is sensitive to the scale of the valley and uses locally characteristic species
- 7A.1.35 Improve public access around the Clophill Lakes

### Landscape Management Guidelines

- 7A.1.36 Restoration of river channel and associated floodplain habitat to ameliorate the negative effects of previous flood defence engineering of the River Flit. Ensure sensitive management of flooding and safeguarding of the floodplain.
- 7A.1.37 Conserve the visual and ecological integrity of the Flitwick Moor SSSI and ensure appropriate management. Explore opportunities for extending this ecological resource e.g. reversion of arable land.
- 7A.1.38 Retain peat and fen areas, with management of surrounding land uses to ensure that high water tables are maintained to conserve waterlogged deposits.

- 7A.1.39 Restore and improve the condition of boundaries along the A507 and apply a consistent management approach.
- 7A.1.40 Promote the appropriate management of land use of horse paddocks particularly relating to boundaries.
- 7A.1.41 Conserve waterside tree and implement pollarding regime for riverside willows.
- 7A.1.42 Promote the planting and laying of native hedgerows and discourage the planting of conspicuous coniferous shelterbelts at property boundaries. Consider opportunities for planting of native black poplars from local stock.
- 7A.1.43 Conserve and enhance the pedestrian/recreational connections to and from the adjacent urban areas of Flitwick and Ampthill and smaller settlements.
- 7A.1.44 Consider opportunities to improve low key recreation and access (pedestrian) access to and aligning the River Flit.
- 7A.1.45 Safeguard visual relationship between the valley and the *Mid Greensand Ridge (6b)*.
- 7A.1.46 Soften interfaces and transitions between the valley and the adjacent urban edge, e.g. at Flitwick through planting of appropriate native species.
- 7A.1.47 Safeguard all ancient monuments and their settings.
- 7A.1.48 Conserve and enhance areas of woodland particularly wet woodland and consider opportunities for creating further areas of woodland particularly in pockets of degraded land. Take into account archaeological and palaeoenvironmental considerations when designing planting schemes.
- 7A.1.49 Conserve and enhance the areas of wet meadow aligning the River Flit.

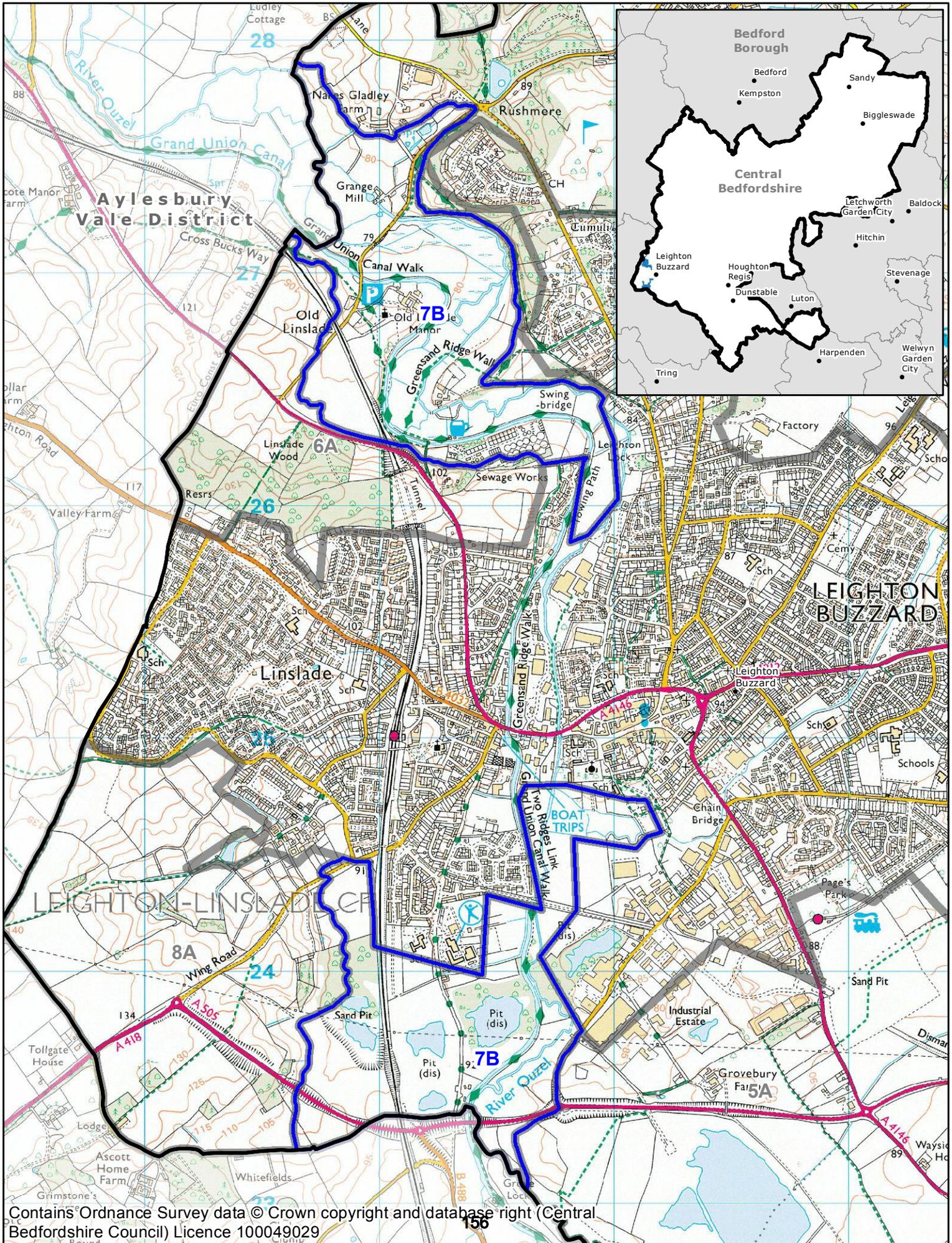
**Also refer to the following documents:**

- Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan
- Clophill Green Infrastructure Plan<sup>5</sup>
- Flitwick Green Wheel.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bedsrcc.org.uk/greenInfrastructure/downloads/Clophill.pdf>

# 7B: Ouzel Greensand Valley



## 7B Ouzel Greensand Valley

### Location and Boundaries

7B.1 The *Ouzel Greensand Valley* runs to the north and south of Leighton Buzzard where the River Ouzel has cut a winding course through the band of Lower Greensand that runs diagonally across Central Bedfordshire. To the north of Leighton Buzzard the base of the distinct sloping sides of the *Woburn Greensand Ridge* (6a) define the boundaries of the valley. To the south, the valley is bordered by the outlying section of the *Toddington-Hockliffe Clay Hills* (8a) and the *Eaton Bray Clay Vale* (5a). Administrative boundaries mark both the north-western and southern limits of the area and the Ouzel extends across into Buckinghamshire, although has a less clear valley form away from the Greensand ridge. This landscape is distinct from the only other *Greensand Valley* in Bedfordshire (*Flit* - 7a) due to its more intimate rural character, the winding course of the river, the presence of the Grand Union Canal and the consistent pastoral land use.

### Summary of landscape character: Key characteristics

- 7B.1.1 A small to medium scale river valley running through the prominent band of Lower Greensand and intersecting the Woburn Greensand Ridge (6a).
- 7B.1.2 Low lying floodplain with minimal elevation range – approx. 80m - 85m AOD.
- 7B.1.3 The River Ouzel follows a natural, meandering course to the north of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade but straightens out upstream - through, and south of the town. River course complemented by former mill streams and disused channels.
- 7B.1.4 Considerable variation in character - enclosed, 'rural' character with a wooded backdrop to the north of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade becoming distinctly more open and industrial to the south where there is a gradual transition to the Eaton Bray Clay Vale (5a).
- 7B.1.5 The Grand Union Canal runs the full course of the valley (parallel to the river) and is more visually prominent than the River Ouzel and is an important industrial heritage feature.
- 7B.1.6 Numerous springs are present at the junction of the Greensand and clay in the north of the area - some typical of Chalybeate springs with streams and ditches containing extensive iron deposits.
- 7B.1.7 Borrowed character from the surrounding Woburn Greensand Ridge (6a) that encloses the valley and provides a strong wooded context.
- 7B.1.8 Strong recreational value with the canal towpath (popular with walkers and cyclists) and the recreational routes that line the canal's banks - The Greensand Ridge Walk, Two Ridges Link and the Grand Union Canal Walk.
- 7B.1.9 Low lying, riverside farmland with land cover predominantly defined by small fields under pasture (grazed by sheep and horses) but interspersed in places by pockets of arable land.
- 7B.1.10 Field boundaries include enclosure hedges and seasonally wet ditches - hedgerows are in variable condition.
- 7B.1.11 Field and hedgerow trees are an important feature across the floodplain - Black poplar is a distinctive feature of the Ouzel, plus lines of pollarded riverside willows.
- 7B.1.12 Elements such as narrow hump-backed bridges and Old Linslade Church evoke a picturesque, intimate quality to the landscape.
- 7B.1.13 Active place due to the close presence of the main railway line (embanked and visually and audibly prominent) and the busy secondary road that provides a direct link between the A4146 and A5 (T).
- 7B.1.14 Nares Gladley Marsh SSSI - a section of the River Ouzel and hillside marsh system that

supports marshy grassland, wet flushes and unimproved acid grassland. There are a number of County Wildlife Sites within the valley.

- 7B.1.15 Contains the tiny hamlet of Old Linslade which is dominated by Old Linslade Manor, Old Linslade Church and associated landscaped grounds.
- 7B.1.16 A prominent pylon line and a dismantled railway are linear features crossing the southern half of the valley.
- 7B.1.17 Disused mineral extraction pits (south of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade) now form a complex of water bodies flanked by deciduous woodland.

## Landscape Character Description

### Physical and natural landscape

- 7B.2 In the north the River Ouzel cuts through the wooded slopes of the Greensand Ridge. The Ouzel valley has a contrastingly enclosed, intimate character; the meandering river flanked with small fields of pasture and nationally important areas of marshland creates a subtle, small-scale landscape pattern. The Grand Union Canal is a prominent linear feature with its humped-back bridges and towpath, and is of industrial heritage interest and now a focus for recreation. The tiny, hamlet of Old Linslade, forms a picturesque setting and contrast in scale, to the adjacent towns.
- 7B.3 Variation in character occurs to the south of the urban area. Here the valley becomes noticeably wider, more open and its character is influenced by nearby industrial estates to the south of Leighton Buzzard – but quickly reverts back to a tranquil pastoral landscape. Of particular note in this section of the valley are the former sand extraction pits which are now flooded and form a complex of open water bodies surrounded by deciduous woodland. Scattered field and hedgerow trees, including the distinctive black poplar and pollarded riverside willows are a key feature of the valley.

### Biodiversity

- 7B.4 The area is of considerable biodiversity interest as recognised by the SSSI designation and numerous County Wildlife Sites, representing open water, neutral and marshy grassland and wet woodland habitats.
- 7B.5 The River Ouzel itself is the most significant biodiversity feature of the area, with the river following a natural meandering course. As well as the watercourse itself, the river corridor contains associated habitats including willow pollarded, native black poplar and scrub and wetland vegetation. Semi-improved neutral floodplain grassland is the dominant land cover - in variable condition from improved and species poor to other areas which are actively managed for conservation and amenity. Small areas of marsh occur throughout the valley - the most important being the Nares Gladley Marsh SSSI. The Grand Union Canal is a significant area of open water and includes a number of other wetland habitats including marginal areas of swamp vegetation. Other open water habitats include the extensive the extensive flooded quarries in the south as well as small field ponds associated with the Ouzel Meadows. The quarries in the south of the area include stands of semi-natural secondary woodland and together form an important wildlife resource.

### Visual and perceptual character

- 7B.6 Although surrounded by the urban areas of Linslade and Leighton Buzzard, and influenced by transport corridors, the northern section of the valley is intimate and enclosed and has retained its rural character. To the south the character is more open and has urban influences from the industrial estates to the south of Leighton Buzzard.



The Grand Union Canal viewed from the Grand Union Canal Walk at Old Linslade



More enclosed character north of Old Linslade, near Grange Mill

### Cultural pattern and historic character

- 7B.7 In the southern section of the area, the railway and sand quarrying have effectively removed most of the historic landscape interest, except perhaps for a small pocket of meadow confined between the Ouzel, the bypass and Grovebury Road. The most significant historic location is the former site of Yttingaford, just north of where the bypass now crosses the river. This was the site where a peace treaty was made with the Danes in AD 906. The ford was on the line of the ancient routeway, Thiodweg, which ran north-east from this point, eventually to join the Icknield Way north of Luton.
- 7B.8 In the northern section, meadow was the dominant land-use historically. Management of the water supply for the meadow, and the leat for the medieval Grange Mill, has had a strong influence on the layout of channels and cross-ditches.
- 7B.9 The Grand Junction Canal was constructed between 1793 and 1800, renamed the Grand Union Canal in 1929 when a number of canal companies were amalgamated. The road bridge at Old Linslade (Sandhole Bridge) survives in almost its original form and is a scheduled monument; traces of a former wharf are still visible nearby. Other structures of interest are the remains of a bridge at the Globe Inn, the swing bridge near Leighton Lock and the Twelve Arches Weir.



Hump backed bridge over the canal at Old Linslade

## Settlement pattern; built character

- 7B.10 The valley contains the historic planned market town of Leighton Buzzard, which is linked with the industrial town of Linslade – a product of the canal and railway age. The two settlements are separated by the River Ouzel and the Grand Union Canal.
- 7B.11 To the north of the valley, a large loop of the Ouzel defines the area of the former village of Old Linslade, which was superseded by the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century town which grew up alongside the canal wharves at Leighton Buzzard bridge. The parish of Linslade was enclosed by private agreement and the remains of enclosure boundaries are visible within the fields and parkland trees around Old Linslade church and manor. The historic buildings at Old Linslade, notably St. Mary’s Church and the canal/river create an important rural setting to the town.

## Evaluation

### Landscape Change

Past Change	Potential Future Change
<p>Utility services (sewage treatment works) adjacent to the Grand Union Canal.</p> <p>Expansion of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade.</p> <p>Previous mineral extraction pits - now forming a series of open water bodies with fringing woodland vegetation.</p>	<p>Potential increase in recreational use (and associated facility development) given the size of the local Linslade-Leighton Buzzard population bordering the character area.</p> <p>Increasing traffic on the rural road and lane network resulting from population growth within the wider area.</p> <p>Renewable energy development.</p>

### Key positive landscape features/ strategic sensitivities of the landscape

- 7B.1.18 Intimate, rural character including picturesque qualities such as the setting of Old Linslade Church.
- 7B.1.19 Meandering course of the river Ouzel and its associated wetland and floodplain habitats including Nares Gladley Marsh SSSI.
- 7B.1.20 Consistent pastoral land cover and Ouzel floodplain meadows including remnant unimproved floodplain and marshy grassland.
- 7B.1.21 Extensive areas of historic meadowland, with watercourses and cross-ditches deriving from the management of meadows and water supply for Grange Mill.
- 7B.1.22 Hedgerow and field trees including distinctive black poplar and pollarded willows - which are especially vulnerable to decline.
- 7B.1.23 Historic features including former mill steams, mills and other notable buildings.
- 7B.1.24 Grand Union Canal and towpath, Sandhole Bridge and remains of other canal structures of industrial heritage interest and now providing significant opportunities for recreation.
- 7B.1.25 Wooded context provided by the surrounding *Woburn Greensand Ridge* (6a) to the north of Leighton Buzzard.
- 7B.1.26 Role of the valley in providing a rural setting and recreational access opportunities for Leighton Buzzard and Linslade – and links to the Greensand Ridge.
- 7B.1.27 Disused mineral extraction pits now forming a series of water bodies flanked by deciduous woodland.

## Visual Sensitivity

7B.12 The area to the south of Leighton Buzzard is flatter and views are more open. There is however a fairly significant amount of tree cover within this small area to buffer and limit views. This southern section is already fragmented by pylon lines and posts carrying overhead wires and views are greatly influenced by the adjacent industrial area. The valley is more defined in the north due to the surrounding (*Woburn Greensand Ridge (6a)*); creating a stronger enclosure due to its landform and heavily wooded sides. The small scale of the landscape in the north means that any change would be likely to be dominant within views.

### Also refer to the following documents:

- South Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan: The Ouzel Valley
- Leighton Buzzard Green Wheel
- Secrets of the Sands HLF project.