

Zone 1 - Lechlade to Kings Lock

Broad low lying basin underlain by Oxford clay, with land rising north and west to the Cotswolds and views south to wooded ridges. Many sections have an attractive pastoral quality, whilst in others there is a featureless arable backcloth to the river scene. The river is a narrow meandering channel with natural edges, flowing through open low-lying farmland. Generally extensive views of a rural, working landscape. The river corridor varies from open and broad scale to small scale and intimate depending on the extent of the hedgerow, tree, woodland cover and field size. Poplar plantations and pollarded willows close to river are characteristic. Pasture is particularly important as a traditional river floodplain landscape. It is relatively rare within the Upper Thames catchment as a whole. Pylon routes traversing the valley are visually intrusive in the more open landscapes, and there is intrusive road noise from Oxford bypass. Settlements are generally set back on river terraces, with the lock and weir sites isolated within flood meadows. Public access is mostly at busy recreation sites with facilities, clustered at key bridge points (e.g. Ha'penny Bridge, Tadpole Bridge).

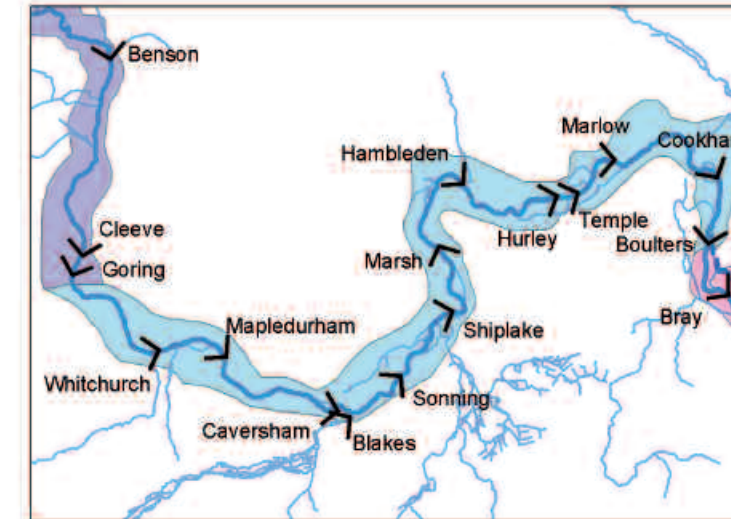
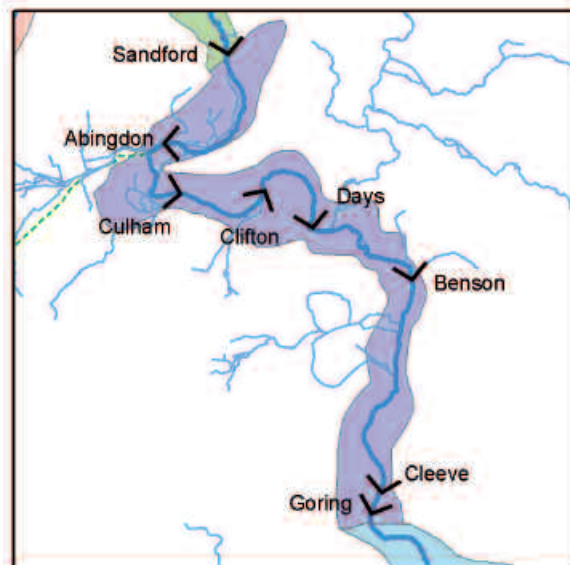
Zone 2 - Oxford to Sandford

An interesting stretch varying from rural character to historic cityscape. Open pasture flood meadow (important historically and ecologically) such as Port Meadow and Pixey Mead, and enclosed pasture between Binsey and Iffley with trees lining the riverbanks. Extensive views to Wytham Woods and Oxford City. Built up frontages of architectural interest between Osney and Folly Bridges, at the junction with Oxford Canal at Jericho, and the line of boathouses below Christ Church Meadow. The quality of the zone is spoiled by some pockets of disturbed landscape and poor urban fringe areas, as well as visual and noise intrusion from the Oxford Bypass. Established walks integrate lock, bridge and historic sites of interest.



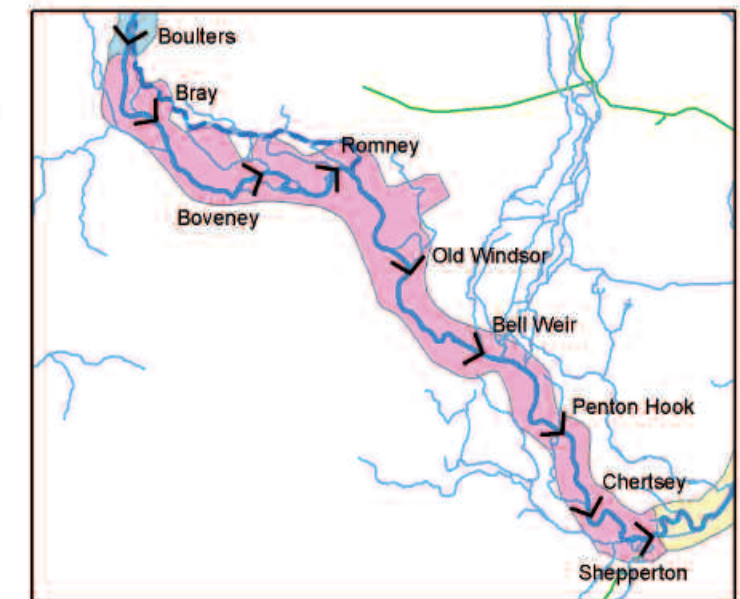
Zone 3 - Sandford to Goring

Broad valley zone of Oxford Clay Vale, with featureless open arable landscape as seen from the river, sometimes with narrow tracts of open pasture adjacent to the river's edge. Long views to the Chiltern and Sinodun hilltops, with wooded valley sides closing in towards the "Goring Gap" are positive features, whilst open views sometimes contain visually intrusive features (i.e. pylons, Didcot Power Station). Interesting built-up frontages at historic settlements (e.g. Abingdon and Wallingford), gardens and landscaped parkland of prestigious housing at Burcot, Benson, Moulsoford and Nuneham House. The few tree belts are confined to the river corridor and hedgerows are restricted to large field boundaries. Public access is sometimes restricted (as the Thames Path diverts along main roads for some stretches in this section).



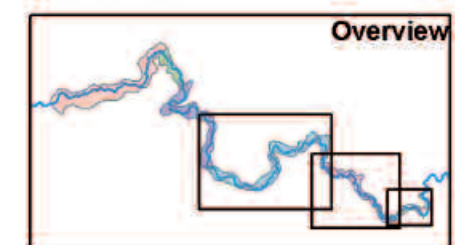
Zone 5 - Maidenhead to Walton

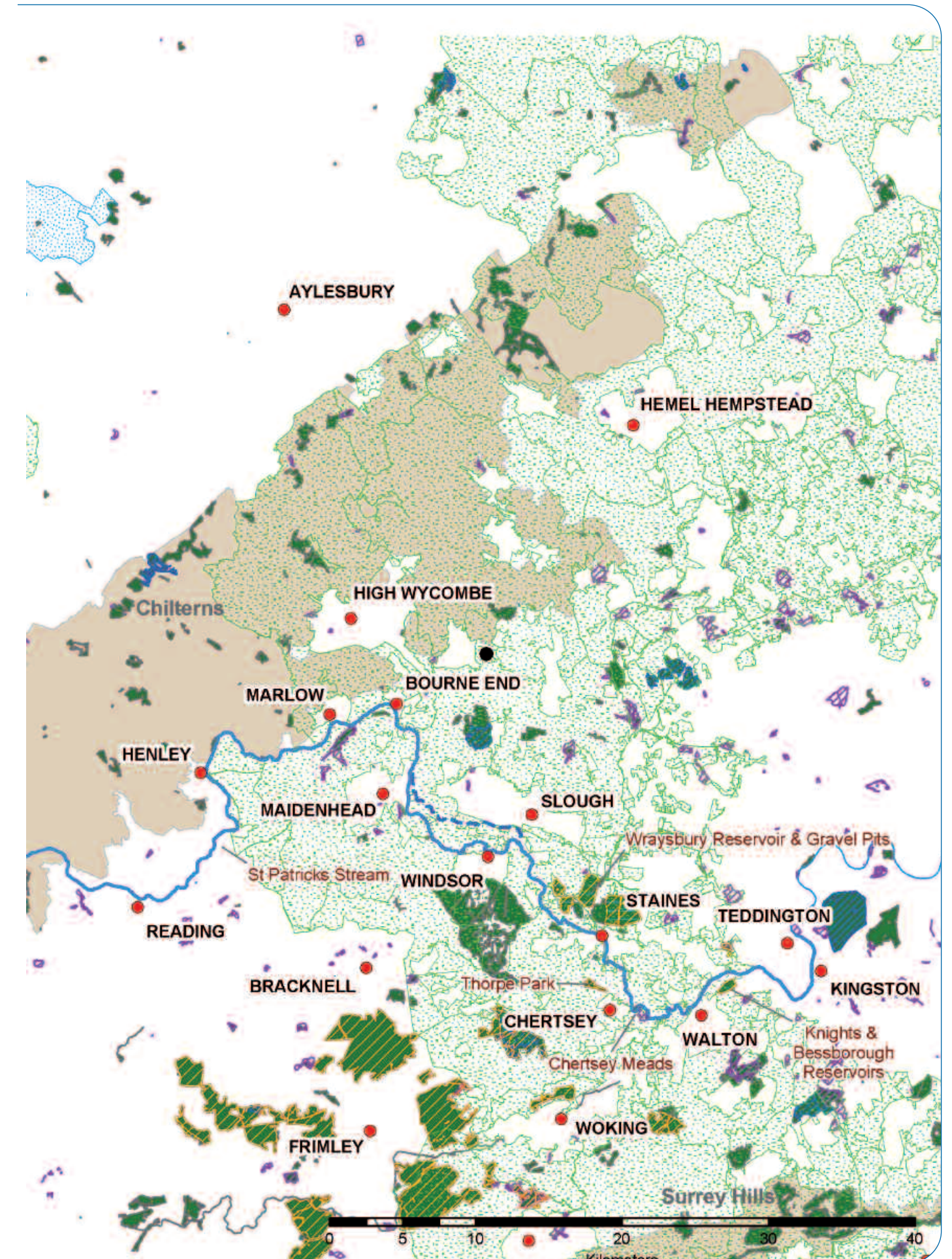
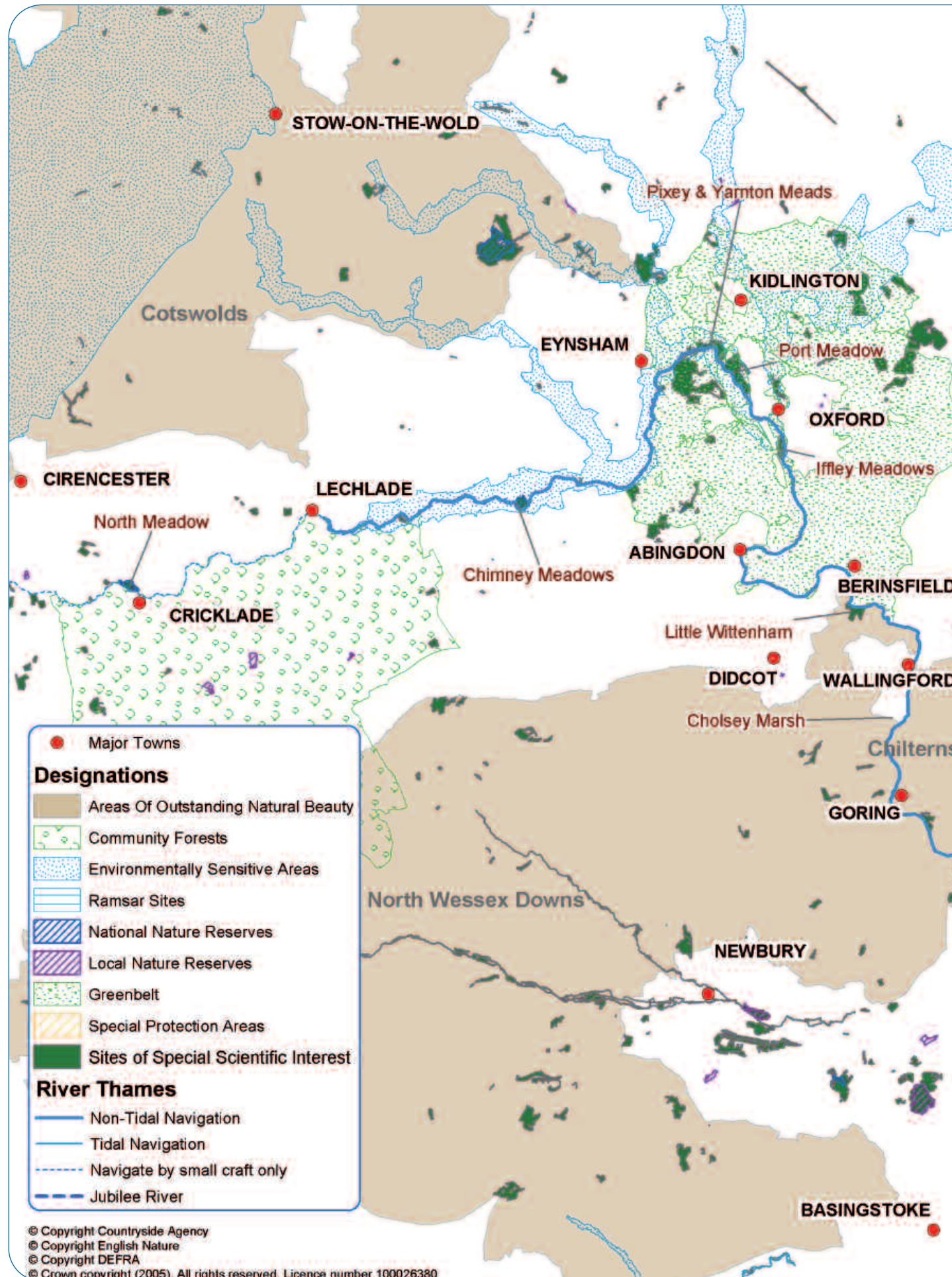
A transitional zone with a fragmented character. The expansive river flood plain landscape becomes more intensively developed and suburban, with a degraded character from gravel extraction, sewage treatment, busy transport corridors and urban development. There is 'backland' and residential ribbon development throughout the zone, with 'plotland' development at Penton Hook and Thames Mead. A more rural character survives with the historic, picturesque, open pasture landscapes of Runnymede, Laleham, Chertsey Meads, Windsor and Eton bordering the river. There are enclosed pasture pockets adjacent to the river at Ankerwycke Farm and Desborough Island and mature vegetation on islands and throughout riparian landscapes. Intensively farmed agricultural land, reservoirs and flooded gravel pits form important areas of open land between settlements. Open arable land forms extensive areas of denuded landscape in the Datchet area. Open views south to distant hills. Major traffic routes traverse the zone (M4, M25, and M3) creating visual and noise intrusion. Pylon routes are visually intrusive.



Zone 6 - Walton to Teddington

A broad, open river channel provides extensive views of the diverse riverside frontages in the urban landscape towards London. These include prestigious housing with distinctive boathouses, garden frontages of plotland development and boathouse moorings (as on Tagg's Island). Historic parkland at Hampton Court occupies a significant section of the river, and there is mature vegetation throughout the river corridor and on islands (aits). Urban 'backlands', gravel pits and enclosing banks to reservoirs encroach on the river scene at intervals. There are substantial lengths of hard edge to the riverbanks. High profile lock and weir sites provide 'set piece' views from public access points.







Policy 24 - landscape

We will conserve and enhance the special characteristics of landscape value in the river corridor

Possible actions River-wide

- 1 conduct a consistent and comprehensive landscape assessment of the entire river, updating existing studies where necessary
- 2 form local partnerships (similar to the Thames Landscape Strategy) that will use local river corridor characterisations to develop an agreed set of local prioritised actions based on a thorough understanding of the natural, built and cultural heritage
- 3 sensitively manage the key landscapes, landmarks, locks, open spaces and vistas
- 4 respect and restore historic features
- 5 minimise the impact from potentially intrusive development
- 6 introduce selective landscape and amenity enhancements to reduce visual intrusion from recreation access, car parking and boat mooring facilities
- 7 create ecological buffer zones between the river and adjacent arable fields, and encourage a greater diversity of indigenous trees, shrubs and other plants where biodiversity has been reduced by agricultural practices
- 8 introduce planting to screen intrusive features (for example: road, rail and pylon routes) and frame views¹
- 9 reinstate grassland and water meadows and introduce or regenerate woodland and scrub habitats on marginal land¹
- 10 review, update and promote wide adoption of the *Thames Environment Design Handbook*
- 11 restore river infrastructure using traditional construction materials and appropriate designs as specified in *Thames Environment Design Handbook*
- 12 retain headroom restriction on boat size imposed by Osney Bridge

The special landscape qualities are a vital part of the visitor experience.

¹ Care should be taken to ensure that planting does not create a wind shadow on reaches used for sailing.

12.0 Built heritage (map 15)

The River Thames provides a richly textured heritage landscape, with one of the highest concentrations of historic buildings, parks and scheduled ancient monuments in the country.¹

The diversity and wealth of these built heritage sites are key to the unique landscape character of the Thames, providing powerful reminders of the work and way of life of earlier generations and providing places of enjoyment for local people and visitors today.

The scheduled ancient monuments range in scale from Windsor Castle and Hampton Court Palace to Godstow Abbey and Halfpenny Bridge. Many other bridges over the non-tidal river are scheduled, including those at Radcot, Wallingford, Abingdon and Chertsey. Major historic parks and gardens include Cliveden and Taplow Court.

The river itself also provides an unparalleled collection of built river heritage, from the remains of the 1630's stone pound lock at Iffley Lock to many locks, weirs, and lock houses that remain in use today.

Policy 25 - heritage

We will maintain and enhance the cultural heritage, historic assets and archaeological value of the river and its corridor

Possible actions

- 1 manage land, buildings and structures (such as locks, bridges and weirs) of historic interest, in harmony with their setting, design, materials and construction methods
- 2 carry out an audit of heritage features
- 3 protect and conserve buildings, sites and objects of archaeological, architectural, engineering or historic interest
- 4 raise awareness of historical significance of sites along the Thames through education, signage and interpretation initiatives

The Thames is world-renowned for its character and history, which helps to attract visitors and thus contributes to social and economic well-being.



¹ Scheduled Ancient Monuments are sites of national importance designated by English Heritage as particularly significant and vulnerable to change. English Heritage also maintains a register of parks and gardens of particular historic interest.