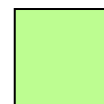


LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE: River Valley Terrace



Confined to the Avon Valley at the County level assessment scale.

SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

Basingstoke:	n/a
East Hampshire	n/a
Eastleigh	n/a
Fareham	n/a
Gosport	n/a
Hart	n/a
Havant	n/a
New Forest	River Terrace Farmlands
Rushmoor	n/a
Test Valley	n/a
Winchester	n/a

SIMILAR AND ASSOCIATED TYPES IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY ASSESSMENTS

Dorset	
West Berkshire	
West Sussex	
Wiltshire	

KEY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS AND BOUNDARY DEFINITIONS

- Adjoins the river valley floor landscape only identified on the gravel terraces of the river Avon - subject to occasional flooding.
- A flat intensively farmed landscape with medium to large irregular sized and arranged fields perhaps indicating early formal enclosures.
- Low hedges and woodland cover creating an open landscape with views across the valley to the distant higher plateau gravel heaths.
- Strongly nucleated settlement pattern of hamlets and market towns centred around crossing points.
- Important sand and gravel resource – considerable exploited north of Ringwood and series of gravel pits restored to lakes which have developed as important wildlife sites for wildfowl.
- There are several different shallow terraces and evidence suggests that the land here has been farmed continuously since the Bronze Age.
- Busy fast winding road parallel with the river plied by extraction industry vehicles away from the road and extraction the pastoral landscape can be very tranquil – views of the river being especially influential.

PHYSICAL

GEOLOGY, LANDFORM, ELEVATION:

Bedrock and Superficial Geology: Important economic resource for sand and gravel. Poole, Branksome and Selsey sand formations. London and Reading clay formations, north of Fordingbridge. The far north of this type is composed of Upper Chalk. The boundary is strongly defined band by the sand and gravel river deposits and the alluvial silty deposits of the River Valley Floor. The eastern edge is less clear cut but generally coincides where the superficial deposits run out.

Landform and Elevation: A very flat landscape only a few metres above the River Valley Floor.

SOILS TYPES:

Typical soil type pattern: Well drained coarse loamy soils over gravel – river terrace drift type 571w.

FUNCTIONS:

Hydrological function: Moderate to low. Free draining permeable soils – seasonally waterlogged..

Food and Biomass: Substantial areas of grade 2 north of extracted areas and south of the London clay. High biomass potential.

Biodiversity potential: Not identified for heath or chalk grassland creation opportunity because of the soils. No ancient woodland reversion opportunities.

LANDCOVER AND LAND USE PATTERN:

Intensively farmed landscape with medium to large scale fields varying from 6 to 25 ha, and averaging about 10ha. Fields are bounded by low (under 1.4m) cut gappy hedgerows or tree belts often with pine trees. The field pattern north of the M27 has been substantially obliterated by sand and gravel works in recent years – restoration is often to geometric shaped lakes with wooded boundaries. Mixed arable and grazing land management.

HYDROLOGY:

Groundwater less than 2m from the surface. Large man made lakes dominate the southern third of this type north of the A27 and have strong biodiversity and recreational functions.

EXPERIENTIAL**ACCESS AND TRANSPORT ROUTES:**

There is a strong east west alignment of PRow connecting the Avon with the New Forest to the east. There is no open access land. The A338 is a major north south transport link which lies within this type and occasionally coincides with the eastern boundary.

TRANQUILLITY:

Away from the busy valley bottom trunk road and extraction related sites the pastoral landscape with views over the river is very tranquil.

BIODIVERSITY

The River Valley Terrace landscape character type is an agricultural landscape supporting both arable land and improved grassland.

There are some examples of semi-improved neutral grassland, unimproved neutral grassland and occasional ponds. In one locality, ponds are a dominant feature: here they are associated with the quarrying land use although they may still provide habitat value through variation.

This is an open landscape with limited woodland resource, largely confined to field boundaries. This wooded element reduces further north in the type. Woodland is mainly broadleaved, with only small amounts of ancient and semi-natural woodland. In the south of the River Valley Terrace landscape character type there are occasional patches of young trees.

The Avon Valley BOA covers much of this landscape character type. It identifies opportunities for wet woodland, lowland meadow, purple moor grass and rush pastures and floodplain grazing marsh habitat creation and enhancement.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**ARCHAEOLOGY**

There is only weak archaeological evidence of early prehistoric activity but it seems likely there was exploitation associated with the valley. There appears to be settlement and farming from the Bronze Age onwards and it seems likely that it is these farming communities that were exploiting the New Forest. However, whilst the archaeological evidence of settlement is chronologically distinctive at the north end of the area (showing Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman occupation), in the south indistinctive and so undated enclosures probably indicate some these communities. Bronze Age burial mounds populate the whole valley.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Enclosures generally orientated at right angles to the course of the river to allow access to fresh water from different fields.

HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Settlement types by form:

Building materials and type:

VISIBILITY

Prominency: Locally low lying and visible from adjoining valley sides and edge of the New Forest. There are no elevated vantage points within this landscape type.

Enclosure: Within the terrace landscape the visual horizon north to south tends to be shorter than east west across the valley.

Public perceptions: The valley bottom landscape conveys a great sense of space, and from the terrace it is possible in places to see right across the valley floor to the predominantly wooded valley sides and up to the plateau heaths and plantations.