

# LCT12 Bourne Valleys

## General Description

The Bourne Valleys are winterbournes, with a mix of pasture and contrasting open areas of arable land. Fields range in size from very small to medium with thick hedgerows and the occasional small woodland. Linear and nuclear settlements are found within these valleys.

## Location

The winterbourne valleys are characteristic features of chalk uplands. There are two areas within the Borough where this Landscape Character Type occurs:

- LCA 12A River Swift Valley
- LCA 12B River Bourne Valley

## Physical Influences

**Geology and Soils:** Predominantly Upper Chalk overlain with River and Valley Gravel. Overlying Middle Chalk can be found aligning the valley sides, producing steep slopes.

**Landform:** A 'V' shaped river valley, often with steeper valley sides.

**Drainage:** Seasonal surface streams (bournes) which retreat underground in the dry summer months.

## Biodiversity and Vegetation Pattern

The vegetation pattern of this landscape is typical of chalk downland valleys with seasonal water flow in the valleys. Mesotrophic grasslands are found in the valley bottoms, although much of the grassland is often agriculturally improved. Some arable farmland is found on higher ground. Fields are divided by hedgerows and there are occasional patches of scrub and woodland.

## Notable habitats

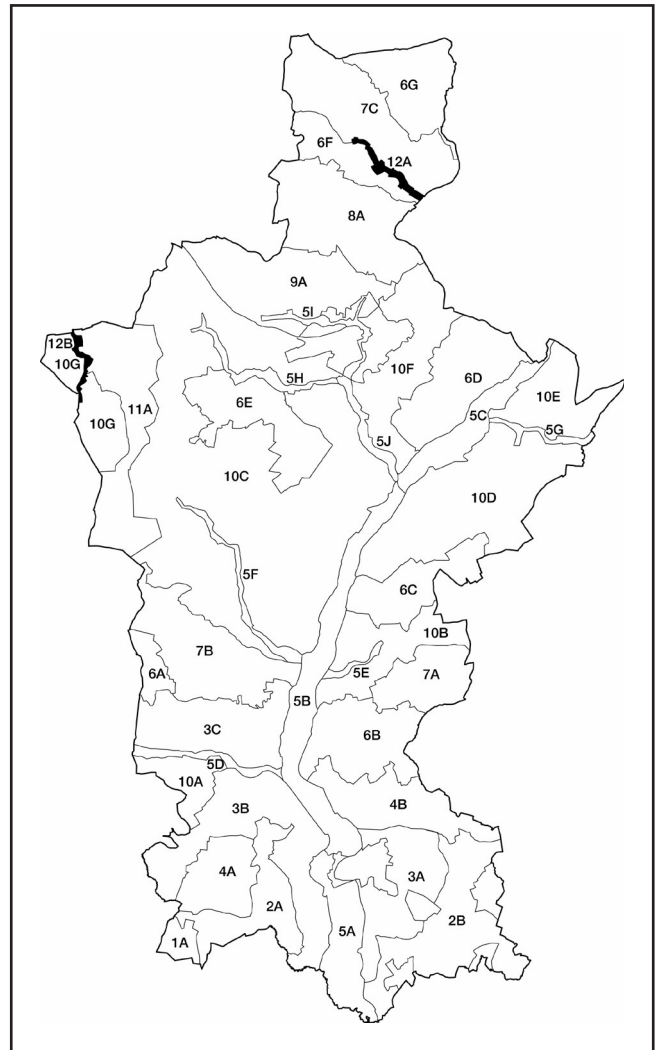
- Unimproved neutral grassland.

## Historical Influences

The historic character of this landscape has been considerably altered during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the formal development of the parliamentary field system. This process has removed much of the earlier network of field systems and roads through the area although roads aligned with the river and contour lines would appear to be earlier than this episode of parliamentary activity.

## Settlement Pattern

Settlements within this Landscape character type tend to have developed in linear form following the prevailing contours of the valley. Their historic cores tend to be located upon the valley floors and only extend up and away from the lower lying contours during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This later settlement expansion often occurs at right angles to the main settlement axis along roads which cut across and down the contour profile.



## Communication Network

The principal roads through the bourne valleys tend to follow the contours of the land within the valley bottom. These roads represent the easiest path to take with few severe changes in gradient along their course and are often early routes along the valley floor. Some roads do cross the valley at right angles to the main valley alignment providing entrance into and egress from the valley. The junctions between these roads and those which run along the valley floor are generally to be found in valley floor settlements with nineteenth century settlement extending up the valley slope along these routes.

## Key Natural and Cultural Landscape Issues

- Loss of riparian landscape features, rivers and associated vegetation
- Loss of small fields and hedgerows
- Potential erosion of quiet seclusion as a result of greater urban intrusion and increase in traffic
- Infill development within the linear villages.