

Northern Valleys CTA (Conservation Target Area)

The valleys of the Sor Brook and North Newington Stream. Extends westwards to include Epwell, Shenlow and Rough Hills and then onto the escarpment of the Stour Valley. The section of the Sor Brook, running south to the confluence of the two watercourses, is excluded because in the wider valley and on the more gentle slopes no typical habitat for this area is known.

Joint Character Area: Midland Clay Pastures and at Epwell, the Cotswolds.

Landscape Types: Wooded Pasture and Valley Slopes with small areas of Pasture Hills.

Geology: The valleys are fringed by the iron rich Marlstone Rockbed. The upper slopes are a mixture of Lias mudstone and siltstone whilst the lower slopes are Lias mudstone. Alluvium is found along the valley bottom. The hill area to the west is also Lias mudstone with the crowns topped by sand.

Topography. Quite narrow steep sided valleys with a sometimes quite wide gently sloping area towards the valley bottoms. To the west there is a small area of flatter plateau with three distinct small hills and then a section of the west facing escarpment of the Stour Valley.

Area of CTA: 1965 hectares

Biodiversity:

- Lowland Meadow: The more acidic type of this habitat is found on banks and stream side land. This includes Hornton Meadows, Wroxton and Balscote Mills, on the Stour escarpment near Shenlow Hill, a field at Broughton grounds Farm and a few other small sites.
- Acid grassland: a few scattered sites are known near Hornton and in the County Wildlife Site at Wroxton and Balscote Mills.
- Limestone grassland: has been reported in the area but there is some doubt concerning its identification in most cases. The field at Broughton Grounds Farm has patches of the more neutral calcareous grassland community and there may be calcareous lowland meadow habitat elsewhere. There is strongly calcareous rough grassland along the disused railway at Horley.
- Note: It is highly likely that further survey would uncover other grassland sites along these valleys. The western hills appear to be very suitable for acid or neutral to acid grassland. The field at Broughton Grounds farm is a case in point which has come to light recently.
- Fen and swamp. Fen habitat is found in scattered flushes along the valley and in small pockets near the streams. Some of the meadows at Wroxton and Balscote Mills have fen habitat. Swamp habitat is found next to the fishponds at Horley.

Access: restricted to footpaths and bridleways.

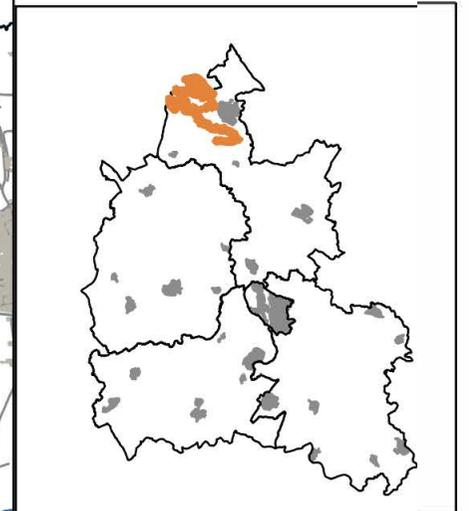
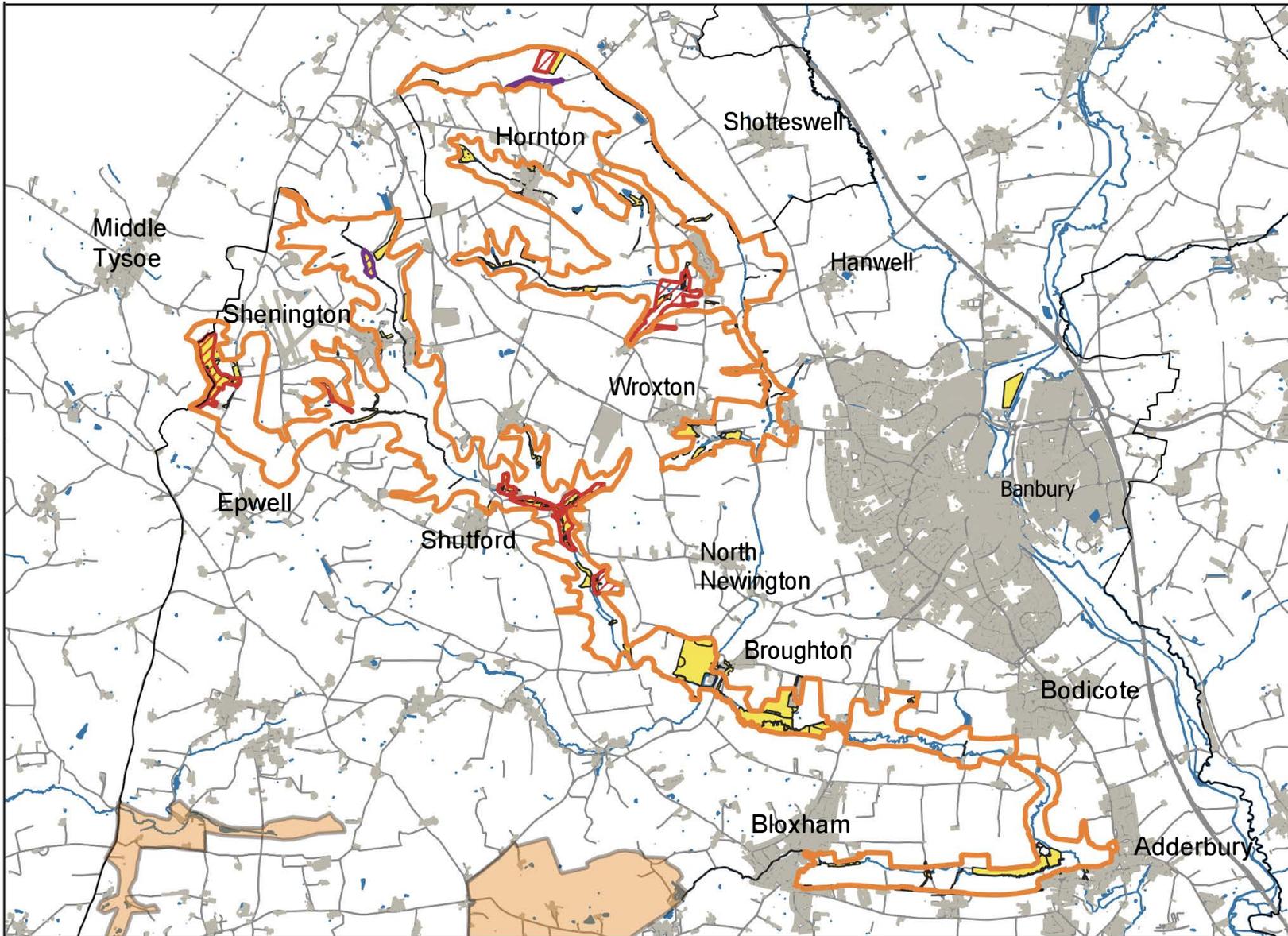
Archaeology:

Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan Targets associated with this CTA:

1. Limestone (lowland calcareous) grassland - management¹ and restoration (and survey).
2. Lowland dry acid grassland - management and restoration (and survey).
3. Lowland meadows - management and restoration (and survey).
4. Fen (and swamp) – management.

¹ "Management" implies both maintaining the quantity, and maintaining and improving the quality of existing BAP habitat and incorporates the following target definitions: "Maintaining extent" and "Achieving Condition".

Northern Valleys Conservation Target Area



- CTA Boundary
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Proposed Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Priority Habitats
- Water
- Other CTAs

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