

**EPVS          Englefield Planned Valley Side**

**Historic Character**

This zone has a similar mix of farmland, settlement and parklands to the surrounding parts of the Kennet valley, but is distinct due to a divergent landscape history. Historically, there were open fields over most of the zone with a different landscape around Englefield Park. Parts of the open field had been enclosed into blocks of fields by the 18<sup>th</sup> century and their regularity suggests they were created by a planned phase of enclosure. Each block also had a single large farm amongst its fields, which was usually located near the top of the valley side, such as Mareridge Farm. The rest of the open fields were enclosed into fields by Act of Parliament in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The fields shared the regular alignment of the early enclosures and had similarly sited farms. The only other settlements were along transport routes through the zone. Settlements developed along the London to Bath Road to serve coaching traffic and Aldermaston Wharf developed following construction of the Kennet Navigation.

At the northern tip of the zone the farmed landscape was different, comprising a mix of woodlands and irregularly-shaped fields, dominated by Englefield Park. This had its origins in a medieval deer park, which had been modified into a landscape park surrounding a country house by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The park was further extended in the 19<sup>th</sup> century into areas recently turned into fields by Parliamentary enclosure of common arable. The park exercised a considerable influence on its surroundings and the extension coincided with modification of roads into and around the park and wholesale re-planning of early enclosures into more regular, orderly fields. This created a more ordered setting for the park and reinforced the impression that the estate had tamed the landscape. It is not clear whether the regularity of the whole zone was due to the Englefield estate, but the 19<sup>th</sup> century changes gave a rectilinear grain to the landscape and an orderly character not found in the rest of the Kennet valley.

There has been considerable alteration to the zone due to agricultural change, housing growth and gravel quarrying during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most fields have been reorganised or amalgamated into larger arable holdings or have been lost to other land-uses. The very regular, planned character of the landscape does remain, however, despite these changes. A block of early and Parliamentary fields has survived around Lambden's Farm and gives a good example of what this zone's historic fieldscapes were like.

Housing has spread out from Aldermaston Wharf and along much of the A4 creating a two mile long belt of housing, part of which is known as Lower Padworth. This has brought a settled character to this area that did not previously exist. The creation of new housing at previously undeveloped locations, often on roadside plots, is common across the zone and characterised by construction of a single large house or a small group of such properties.

Commercial gravel extraction has taken place at several sites and is ongoing at Aldermaston Wharf. Areas of former quarry have been refilled and restored to arable land at Mare Ridge and Lower Padworth. The fields established are different from those that existed prior to quarrying and represent the creation of a new fieldscape.

Wooded cover has seen minor change, such as the large plantation between Englefield Park and Theale, but these have not greatly altered the grain of the landscape.

## *Historic Environment Character Zone*

### **Historic Environment**

There is a high density of HER records and parts of this zone have been relatively well-researched. The Lower Kennet Valley Survey carried out fieldwalking in this zone and several excavations have taken place. Little building survey or recording has been carried out.

Prehistoric activity has been recorded across most of the zone, apart from the Mare Ridge, and is documented by excavated features, findspots and cropmark features thought to be prehistoric. There is considerable evidence for Bronze Age activity from several locations, which includes excavated evidence of settlement and burial and a large number of cropmark ring ditches. Evidence of Iron Age settlement and burial has also been excavated at the same locations. Roman activity is less widely-distributed across the whole zone than in preceding periods. Settlement, including possible villa sites, continued at or near the locations occupied during the Iron Age. Large areas of field-systems and trackways are visible as cropmarks across much of the zone and are thought to be later prehistoric or Romano-British. A possible minor Roman road is visible running between the Kennet near Ufton Bridge and Mare Ridge Farm.

There is documentary evidence for early medieval settlement and a probable battle at Englefield, but no physical remains of either have been located. Excavations near Ufton Bridge produced early medieval occupation and such evidence is generally rare within the district. Documentary references and the church building are the only evidence for the late medieval settlement at Englefield and little is known of the nature of the settlement. The only other late medieval feature is Englefield deer park and it has been possible to identify its extent through traces of its pale and wood names that remain at Englefield Park.

Post-medieval evidence comes from standing buildings, including many significant listed examples, and transport features. Mile markers and canal features, including listed examples, and a 20<sup>th</sup> century transport cafe are recorded on the HER. Englefield Park is a registered park and the house and some of the park buildings are listed. There is a considerable concentration of listed buildings at Englefield including St Mark's church, several churchyard monuments and a number of 18<sup>th</sup> century houses. There are only two listed buildings at farms, a farmhouse and barn, and the remainder of the historic building stock has not been researched. The nature of the built stock as a whole is poorly understood and it is possible that further significant buildings or structural elements are present. Parts of Aldermaston Wharf and most of Englefield village have been designated as Conservation Areas. Part of the Conservation Area at Tyle Mill also falls in this zone.

### **Historic Environment Potential**

The zone is not developed on a large scale and the presence of buried archaeology has been demonstrated by excavation and extensive cropmarks. The archaeological potential of the zone as a whole is high and prehistoric and Roman material is most likely to be encountered.

If deposits relating earlier settlements are encountered at Englefield they will be significant in understanding the origin and nature of this village. The importance of elements of some buildings has been recognised through listing; however the historic building stock as a whole is poorly understood. The potential for discovery of further significant buildings or structural elements is high.

## **Historic Environment Action Plan**

### Conservation Issues

- Intensive modern agriculture threatens the resource on buried archaeological sites.
- Continued intensive gravel extraction from valley floor.
- More detail is needed on the historic building stock to ensure appropriate policies are put in place to conserve this resource.
- Development pressure.
- Conservation Area appraisals and management plans are overdue.
- Management of Kennet and Avon canal and possible impacts on surviving early fabric of locks, bridges, etc.
- Management of WWII features.

### Research Priorities

- Where are we likely to find further Mesolithic sites? Is it possible to map the landscape to produce a predictive model for the Mesolithic?
- Was the area at Aldermaston Wharf/Lower Padworth the centre of a ritual or funerary landscape in the Neolithic and early Bronze Age?
- Does the general spread of prehistoric material across the zone represent settlement activity? Where are prehistoric settlements most likely to occur?
- Where are the Romano-British settlements? What was their character and function? Where was the crossing of the River Kennet? Was this via a bridge or ford?
- Does the evidence of early Saxon activity at Ufton Bridge represent a larger settlement of this date? Does this site represent settlement continuity from the Iron Age to the early medieval?
- Does evidence for the medieval use of Englefield survive? Did a hunting lodge survive near the current house?
- Was Englefield village 'emparked'? If so where was the medieval village?
- Does archaeological evidence for the historic management of the river survive, especially in relation to mills and water management?
- Do the historic buildings in the zone contain any information about post-medieval and modern changes to land use and agricultural systems?
- Does archaeological evidence for the early development of the Kennet Navigation survive in locks and other canal infrastructure?
- Can the surviving WWII defensive features in the Kennet Valley help us understand the military and political history of that period?