Lower Windrush Valley CTA (Conservation Target Area)

The Lower Windrush Valley has been transformed by mineral extraction over the last 60 years and so the landscape of this CTA is characterised by a mosaic of water filled gravel pits and riverside meadowland stretching south from the centre of Witney.

Joint Character Area: Thames and Avon Vales

Landscape Type: Riverside Meadowlands and Lowland Village Farmlands to the south east.

Geology: Alluvium and sand and gravel

Topography: Flat riverside land

Biodiversity:

- Mesotrophic / Eutrophic Standing Water: Large numbers of water filled gravel pits managed largely for fishing and water sports. All the lakes collectively support a rich invertebrate fauna and aquatic plant flora and the area is nationally recognised as an Important Area for Stoneworts (ISA). The larger lakes are also particularly important for birds, especially overwintering wildfowl. Key sites include Standlake Common Nature Reserve & Rushy Common Nature Reserve, Dix Pit LWS and Witney Lake.

- Lowland Meadows: A few scattered unimproved and semi-improved sites. These include Ducklington Mead SSSI, Witney Marsh (Grimes Meadow) at the north end of the area, Witney Meadow, which is owned by Witney Town Council, and Dunster Meadow LWS near Standlake. Langleys Lane Meadow SSSI lies just outside the area within the Upper Thames CTA.

- Reedbeds and swamp: There is a reed bed in an old gravel pit at Standlake and sedge swamp at Witney Marsh, which are both LWS's Small areas of marginal swamp vegetation are found at the edge of many of the pits and along the River Windrush.

Access: Open access at Langel Common and Witney Lake & Meadows Country Park. Permissive footpaths secured through planning agreements include Windrush Path (Witney to Hardwick) and access to Devils Quoits at Dix Pit. Bird Hides at Standlake Common Nature Reserve are accessible to anyone who wishes to purchase a key.,

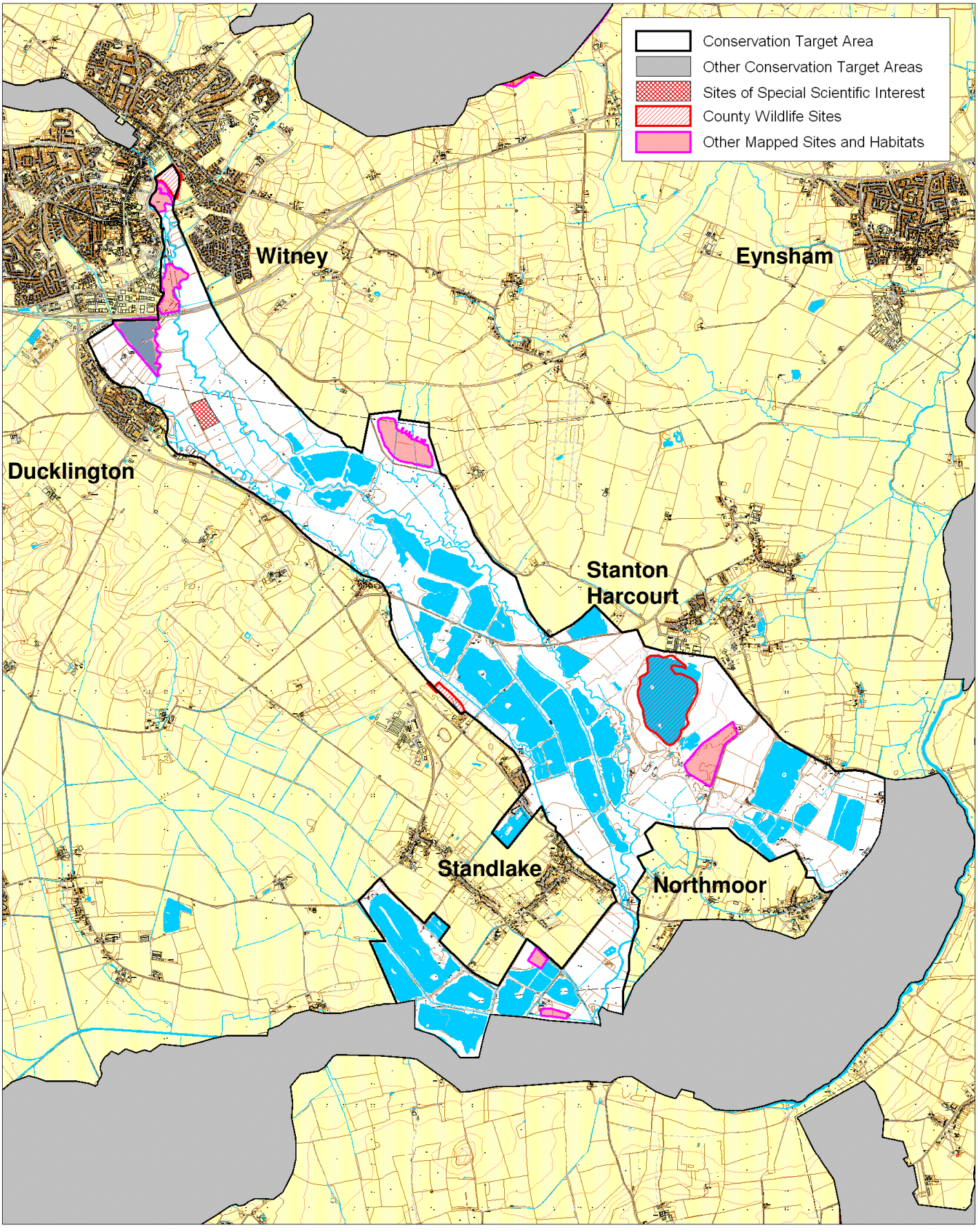
Archaeology: The Upper Thames Valley is widely regarded as one of the richest areas of archaeological interest in the country and gravel extraction in the Lower Windrush Valley has provided many opportunities for detailed archaeological research including extensive excavations at Dix Pit and restoration of the Devil's Quoits.

Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan Targets associated with this CTA:

1. Mesotrophic / Eutrophic standing waters – management[1].
2. Lowland Meadows – management, restoration and creation.
3. Ponds – management and creation (particularly of pond complexes).
4. Reedbed (and swamp) – management and creation.
5. Floodplain grazing marsh – 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".

Lower Windrush Valley Conservation Target Area



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CTA	Lowland Calcareous Grassland	Lowland Dry Acid Grassland	Lowland Meadows	Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh	Eutrophic Standing Waters	Mesotrophic Standing Waters	Lowland Fens	Reedbeds	Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland	Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	Wet Woodland	Traditional Orchards
Area of BAP Habitat in CTA (ha)			6.8	42.09	266.1	117.0	1.7	0.9		12.2		0.2
% of CTA area			0.5	3.0	18.9	8.3	0.1	0.1		0.9		0.0
% of county resource			0.6	0.9	28.5	100	1.5	3.5		0.3		0.1
2015 BAP targets	**Lowland Calcareous Grassland**	**Lowland Dry Acid Grassland**	**Lowland Meadows**	**Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh**	**Eutrophic Standing Waters – No targets for 2015**	**Mesotrophic Standing Waters**	**Lowland Fens**	**Reedbeds**	**Native Woodland**			**Traditional Orchards - No targets for 2015**
Maintenance (to be determined)	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-			-
Achieving Condition (to be determined)	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-			-
Restoration			1		-			-				-
Creation			1		-		-					-