

Site Name

Ouzel Valley, Leighton-Linslade

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITE DESIGNATION FORM

SITE LOCATION, ACCESS, OWNERSHIP, STATUS & SUITABILITY

(1) **Name of site:** Ouzel Valley, Leighton-Linslade, Bedfordshire

(2) **National grid reference:** SP 915 264

(3) **Unitary authority:** Central Bedfordshire

(4) **Site access and local amenities**

The site is traversed by a system of public footpaths and is close to the start of the 40-mile Greensand Ridge Walk. There are a number of choices to reach this site, including starting at the beginning of the Greensand Ridge Walk at the bridge in Linslade and walking along the river valley, or driving via Plantation Road turning left into Taylors Ride and approaching from the top of the cliff. Park at the end of Taylors Ride, just as the road bends sharply right – there is a track to the left here which leads over a cattle grid to the Greensand Ridge footpath where it rises from the Ouzel valley and crosses the road. There are no amenities at the site and parking is restricted to a few vehicles which need to be parked thoughtfully.

(5) **Site ownership:** Not known

(6) **Mineral rights ownership:** N/A

(7) **Is permission needed to access the site?** a. No ✓ b. Yes

(8) **Site status:** Active Disused Historical Managed Restored New Other ✓

(9) **Suitable for visits by:** a. General public ✓ b. Small parties ✓ c. Large parties ✓

d. Primary school ✓ e. National Curriculum ✓ f. AS/A-Level ✓

g. Adult ✓ h. Undergraduate teaching i. Research

(10) **Site suitable for frequent visits by parties?** a. No b. Yes ✓

(11) **Should collecting and hammering be encouraged at the site?** a. No ✓ b. Yes

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SITE DESCRIPTION		
(12) Exposure type:	a. Inland natural outcrop ✓	b. Road cutting
	c. Railway cutting	d. Active quarry/pit
	e. Disused quarry/pit	f. Old mine workings
	g. Mine dump	h. Active mine
(13) Dimensions of area of interest: A 1km stretch of incised valley.		
(14) Main interest(s):	a. Structural	b. Geomorphological ✓
	c. Mineralogical	d. Palaeontological
	e. Petrological	f. Stratigraphical
(15) Summary description and reason for designation An accessible and safe section of the River Ouzel which shows down-cutting and incision through a series of Pleistocene river terraces. There are intermittent exposures of Woburn Sands along the valley sides, especially where badgers have been active.		
(16) What threats exist for the site? None evident at present.		
(17) What additional work is required to enhance the site? None – appropriate information leaflets are currently available (see below).		
(18) Published/unpublished references to the site and wider area Friend, P. 2008. <i>Southern Britain</i> . HarperCollins Publishers. 414 pages. Shephard-Thorn, E. R. <i>et al.</i> 1994. <i>Geology of the country around Leighton Buzzard</i> . Memoir for the 1:50 000 geological sheet 220 (England and Wales), London, HMSO. <i>Ice Age sand and gravel – the basics</i> . B&LGG information leaflet. www.bedsrigns.org.uk <i>The River Ouzel – its wild past</i> . B&LGG information leaflet. www.bedsrigns.org.uk		

SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE		
(19) Does the site exhibit features of local/regional importance?	a. No	b. Yes ✓
(20) Is the site already a designated SSSI?	a. No ✓	b. Yes
(21) Collector interest:	a. Rare species	b. Common species
	c. Local significance	d. Regional significance
	e. National significance	
(22) List of confirmed fossils, minerals, etc: N/A		

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HISTORICAL/AESTHETIC VALUE		
(23) Does the site have important historical associations?	a. No ✓	b. Yes
(24) Does the site form a key part of an attractive or evocative landscape?	a. No	b. Yes ✓
<p>(25) Full description of site and its significance</p> <p>The River Ouzel rises as a chalk stream from a spring near the Dunstable Downs. This part of its valley is highly sinuous and the result is a beautiful meandering valley with all the expected sedimentological and geomorphological processes evident: incised bends, lateral accretion surfaces, ox-bow cut-offs and fine-grained sediment build-up resulting from the gently flowing river. The valley here is quite spectacular as it drops suddenly from 120m OD to 80m in the flood meadow.</p> <p>However, the Ouzel's history was far from tranquil. The evidence for this can be found in the form of large, rounded pebbles that occur in the river terraces flanking the river. Pebbles of this size would have required a strongly flowing river in order to be transported, a river far bigger and more dynamic than the present Ouzel.</p> <p>During the latter stages of the Ice Age the ancestral Ouzel was probably a large, braided river system with a powerful flow regime, particularly during the summer months when nearby ice masses were melting rapidly and releasing enormous volumes of water. The fast flowing river cut down into its present valley in several phases as sea-level fell. Each down-cutting phase produced a step (or terrace) on the side of the valley. Two distinct terraces can be seen in the sides of the valley here, and the top of the terraces are approximately 2 and 5m above the floodplain.</p> <p>The Ouzel generally flows in a broad, flat floodplain as it meanders over the clay vales north and south of Leighton Buzzard, but where it cuts through the relatively resistant rocks of the Greensand Ridge the valley sides become steeper and the floodplain narrows. This is particularly evident around Corbettshill Farm where a spur of resistant sandstone has deflected the river sharply westwards.</p> <p>The River Ouzel is historically important as it separated the two quite distinct villages of Linslade and Leighton Buzzard from the time of their Anglo-Saxon beginnings.</p>		

RECORDER'S DETAILS	
(26) Name: Dr Jill Evers	(27) Organisation: Consultant geologist working on behalf of B&LGG
(28) Date of designation: August 2005	

CURRENT SITE CONDITION
(29) Site condition at March 2009 is GOOD; assessed by Martin Whiteley.

NOTES
(30) Form revised and updated by Dr Martin Whiteley, B&LGG Local Geological Site Manager, November 2009. For further details contact mjwhiteley@yahoo.co.uk