

Countryside Stewardship target statement for **Midvale Ridge**

Your application is scored and a decision made on the points awarded. Both top priorities and lower priorities score points but you should select at least one top priority.

Scoring is carried out (Yet to be provided...)

Choosing priorities

To apply you should choose at least one of the top priorities, and you can choose lower priorities - this may help with your application.

Top priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Biodiversity	Priority habitats
	Priority species
Water	Water quality
	Flood and coastal risk management
Historic environment	Designated historic and archaeological features
	Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance
Woodland priorities	Woodland management
	Woodland planting
Landscape	
Climate Change	
Multiple environmental benefits	

Lower priorities

Priority group	Priority type
Lower priorities	Water quality

	Archaeological and historic features
	Woodland

Biodiversity - top priorities

Priority habitats

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that maintains, restores and creates priority habitats.

Maintain priority habitat such as:

- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fen
- Lowland Meadow
- Coastal and flood plain grazing marsh
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland Heath

Restore priority habitats (especially proposals which make existing sites bigger or help join up habitat networks) such as:

- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fen
- Lowland Meadow
- Coastal and flood plain grazing marsh
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland Heath
- Traditional orchards

Create priority habitats – to extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation. Defra is looking for proposals to create priority habitat that will also contribute significantly to improvements in:

- water quality
- air quality
- flood and coastal risk management

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Proposals to maintain or restore Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs including SACs) with eligible features are a priority, and both on-site and off-site options (such as to reduce diffuse water and air pollution impacts on SSSIs) are relevant.

Priority species

For the majority of priority species found on the priority habitats listed above, their ecological requirements can be met through good generic habitat management. Managing for those essential elements associated with priority habitats - in particular bare ground, areas of scrub, varying sward structures will allow these species to thrive.

A number of priority species associated with the area require specific and tailored management and advice. You should carry out land management practices and capital works that meet the specific needs of the following priority species:

- *Epidalea calamita* Natterjack Toad (amphibian)
- *Emberiza calandra subsp. calandra/clanceyi* Corn Bunting (bird)
- *Vanellus vanellus* Lapwing (bird)
- *Streptopelia turtur* Turtle dove (bird)
- *Poecile montanus subsp. Kleinschimdti* Willow Tit (bird)
- *Thecla betulae* Brown Hairstreak (butterfly)
- *Grapholita pallifrontana* Liquorice Piercer (moth)
- *Apium repens* Creeping Marshwort (vascular plant)
- *Centaurea cyanus* Cornflower (vascular plant)
- *Sium latifolium* Greater Water Parsnip (vascular plant)

Further guidance on the priority species in this area that require more tailored targeted management and advice, as listed, can be found:

- [Links to guidance on those bespoke species' needs found in this area]

Parts of this area are targeted for their breeding wader assemblage, i.e. they contain area(s) assessed as being nationally significant for two or more species (of Lapwing, Redshank, Curlew & Snipe). Where your land includes such areas, you should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- maintain/enhance conditions for breeding waders

Parts of this area are targeted for their woodland bird assemblage, i.e. they contain area(s) assessed as being nationally significant for four or more species (of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Pipit, Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler, Marsh Tit, Lesser Redpoll and Hawfinch). Where your land includes such areas, you should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- maintain/enhance conditions for woodland birds

This area has also been identified as a hotspot for wild pollinators, farmland birds and other wildlife associated with the wider countryside – through the Wild Pollinator and farm Wildlife package implement these options to make sure these species thrive all year around:

- option 1
- option 2

Water - top priorities

Water quality

The area has particular issues with:

- Phosphates, nitrates, sediment and pesticides in the Windrush, Ock, Upper Great Ouse, Thame and Oxon Ray catchments –
- Phosphates, sediment and pesticides in the Upper Thames catchment
- Phosphates and pesticides in the Cherwell Catchment
- Nitrates affecting drinking water sources in the Thames (From Leach to Evenlode) and River Ouse from Newport Pagnall to Roxton
- Nitrates, phosphates and sediment to Cothill Fen SSSI

You should consider options and capital works that address these issues. These are detailed in X guidance document. These options help to improve water quality by controlling the source or the movement of potential pollutants. For this area, this includes:

- nutrients from fertilisers and manures
- sediment problems from soil erosion and run-off
- pesticides from their use and disposal

Flood and Coastal Risk Management

Applications that select options to address flood risk issues within the area will also be welcomed, primarily within the flood risk priority areas of **Priorities yet to be provided**

You should consider options that:

- reduce the amount and rate of surface water run-off
- reduce soil erosion
- slow the movement of floodwaters on floodplains

These are detailed in X guidance document.

Historic environment - top priorities

Active management is important for the long term survival of historic environment remains and to protect them against damage and decay brought about through cultivation, scrub growth, burrowing animals or poor maintenance. These features cannot be recreated once they have been lost.

In this area there are a number of designated heritage features and other historic environment features reflecting the long human occupation of this landscape. Many are of Iron-Age or Romano-British origin. The area is important for the survival of medieval ridge and furrow and the associated remains of deserted settlements. *Characteristic farm buildings include [XXXX with some rare examples of XXX buildings/materials].* The 2014 Heritage at Risk 2014 survey has identified [XXX %] of designated features as being 'at risk', particularly from *[insert most significant threats (relevant to land management)]*¹ **AWAITING FIGURES**

The following historic environment features are a high priority for active management in this area:

- Designated Features - archaeological features of national significance (Scheduled Monuments), Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG).
- Designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings and non-domestic historic buildings on holdings
- Undesignated historic and archaeological features of high significance which are part of the Selected Heritage Inventory for Natural England (SHINE)

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that:

- revert archaeological sites under cultivation to permanent grass
 - reduce damaging cultivation and harvesting practices through minimum tillage or direct drilling where this offers a suitable level of protection
 - remove scrub and bracken from archaeological or historic features
 - maintain below-ground archaeology under permanent uncultivated vegetation or actively manage earthworks, standing stones and structures as visible 'above ground' features
 - maintain and restore historic water management systems, including those associated with water meadows and designed water bodies
 - restore historic buildings that are assessed as a priority in the area.
 - address the condition of **Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**, through the proactive maintenance or restoration of structures or features that make a major contribution to the design intentions or feel of the parkland, provide for their biodiversity and amenity value].
 - deal with specific issues that are causing damage or decay to archaeological and historic features, but which are not covered by standard options.
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Woodland - top priorities

Woodland management

Management of all woodland to improve structure and species mix is important for biodiversity and to make them more robust in relation to future threats such as climate change, pests and diseases.

Certain types of woodland are a high priority for bringing into management, including:

- protected woodland – those designated for their national biodiversity value
- priority woodland habitat – other unmanaged broadleaved woodland
- priority species – all woodland within current red squirrel range, or within areas important for woodland butterfly and woodland bird species
- Planted Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) restoration – conversion of conifer plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites to broadleaf woodland where they are in close proximity to existing broadleaf woodland
- United Kingdom Forestry Standard – unmanaged conifer woodland within catchments subject to eutrophication and acidification, both to reduce pressures on the water environment and improve biodiversity

Woodlands not included in the categories above are a lower priority for management.

All management should comply with the United Kingdom Forestry Standard and other relevant guidance such as 'Managing Ancient and Native Woodland in England'.

High priority woodlands or woodland management initiatives in this area include:

- Peri-urban woodland close to Oxford
- Bernwood Forest
- Tubney Woods complex

Woodland planting

High priority areas for the planting of new woodlands include:

- biodiversity – planting to buffer and link existing woodlands and other semi natural open habitats within priority woodland habitat networks
- water quality – planting designed to reduce and intercept diffuse pollution from agriculture
- flood risk – planting designed to increase infiltration of heavy rain into the ground, reduce erosion, or slow the flow of floodwaters on floodplains

In order to provide the required biodiversity and/or water benefits, new woodland planting needs to be in the right part of the landscape and to the right design.

High priority areas for new planting or local initiatives prioritising woodland creation in this area include:

- Bernwood – buffering and linking ancient woods especially to reduce run-off speeds and intercept phosphates
- Great Western Community Forest (i.e. peri-urban woods east of Swindon linking existing woods and intercepting phosphates)
- Oxford City Forest – linking and buffering existing woods (Wytham, Bagley) to improve ecological resilience and reduce speed of run-off

Landscape – top priorities

High priorities are the management, restoration or re-creation of landscape features that contribute significantly to the local character by reinforcing the overall pattern and scale of the landscape, together with other important features that give an area its unique and distinctive sense of place.

Top priority in the Midvale Ridge is the restoration of these features:

- Small Woods
- Permanent pasture
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- In field trees
- Bankside Trees
- Arable margins and winter stubbles

Climate Change

Climate change will pose variable threats and opportunities in different landscapes. Priority should be given to targeted features and issues that are particularly vulnerable to or affected by climate change.

You should carry out land management practices and capital works that help to:

- make existing priority habitat sites bigger
- extend or link priority habitat to increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation
- reduce the impacts of climate change on local communities, for example by targeted planting of woodland to reduce flood risk
- reduce loss of carbon and emissions of other greenhouse gases
- increase carbon uptake, for example by tree planting
- increase carbon storage, for example by converting arable land to permanent grassland
- provide shade for wildlife and livestock

Multiple environmental benefits

Opportunities for multi-objective agreements

You should look to provide for multiple priorities by selecting options that achieve multiple environmental benefits.

In the Midvale ridge you have the greatest opportunity to achieve multiple objectives with:

- establish new wetland habitat in the Frilford and Sandford Brook Catchments where they're likely to improve water quality, reduce run-off rates into watercourses, add to biodiversity and landscape character and protect historical features
- establish new wet woodland within *priority area xx* upon the floodplain of the river *xx* to benefit biodiversity, landscape character, water quality, flood risk and historic features
- change arable cropping systems to low-intensity grassland within *priority area xx* where the new management system will protect historical features and benefit farmland birds, water quality, landscape character, groundwater resources, flood risk and biodiversity
- restore hedgerows to manage water flow, decrease soil erosion, create wildlife habitats and corridors, and strengthen the local landscape
- select options such as the use of rural sustainable drainage systems, buffer strips and erosion control in the *Cole and Thame* catchment to improve both water quality and support flood risk management
- maintain woodland in *xx* area to support *xx* species in the wider landscape

Lower priorities

You should select one of the top priorities. However, you can also select lower priorities as well as this will attract points used to score your application.

You should consider the following other priorities that are of specific interest in this area.

Water quality - lower priorities

Water quality

In addition to the top priorities, this area has particular issues with:

- nutrients from fertilisers and manures
- sediment problems from soil erosion and run-off
- pesticides from their use and disposal

You should consider options and capital works that address these issues. These are detailed in X guidance document. These options help to improve water quality by controlling the source or the movement of potential pollutants.

Historic environment - lower priorities

The Historic environment features set out below are a lower priority.

- Maintain designated and undesignated traditional farm buildings.
- Undesignated SHINE features of medium and low Significance
- Priority Undesignated Historic Parklands

Woodland – lower priorities

Woodland Management

Woodlands not included in the top priority categories listed above are a lower priority for management but may still be supported.

Woodland Planting

Areas are prioritised for new planting based on their potential to create biodiversity and water benefits. Woodland planting schemes are scored depending on where the proposed scheme is in relation to the opportunity maps for woodland planting in England and how well the planting design will benefit biodiversity and water.

Lower priorities for appropriately designed biodiversity schemes exist across the whole of England. Opportunities for new woodland planting for water only exist in certain parts of England.

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