

**Friends of the Taplow Reaches Environmental Society**

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S.D.C.  
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

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DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Dear Mr Motuel

As a group of local amateur environmentalists, the Draft Core Strategy is to be applauded for its emphasis on environmental issues. However, the significance of the Taplow Reaches of the Thames, and the potential impact of ill-considered development on them, merits enhanced recognition.

The Thames has been included as one of the four Regional Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, and we agree that this is a region where great gains in biodiversity can be delivered (1.2.27). However, in terms of the Living Environment, (1.3.3) the Thames merits recognition as being on par with Burnham Beeches and the Chilterns, which are singled out as particularly in need of having their resources conserved. In our view, the Thames should be included as a Special Area of Conservation (3.3.11). We suggest that The Thames be added to CP9 (p61) as "highest priority" along with the Chilterns and Burnham Beeches. We would go on to suggest that South Bucks stands possessed of the most beautiful reaches of the the Queen's Highway and one of the world's most famous rivers, and as such merits AONB status along with the Chilterns and Burnham Beeches (3.3.9)

In ecological terms, the area is very significant within South Bucks, but in addition, serves as feeder for an area reaching far beyond the actual boundaries falling within South Bucks. If the area falling within the boundaries of South Bucks is relatively small, it is, the beating heart of a much larger area, and vital nursery and habitat for a much larger area. As such, the reaches of the Thames running through South Bucks merit full consideration within the Core Strategy.

A plan of the area is attached. The Mill Race in particular is a backwater on the eastern shore of the Thames immediately downriver of Boulter's Lock which merits recognition for its high ecological status. This is the key area we would single out as a vital wildlife habitat, serving, for example, as breeding grounds, nursery and refuge of calm water for fish during flood conditions, bordered by established old growth along its riverbanks.

The Taplow Reaches and their environs support healthy communities of:

- **Birds' nesting and habitat:** Kingfishers, tawny owls, red kites, green woodpecker, wrens, herons, etc



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- **Waterfowl:** mandarin duck, great crested grebe, moor hen, Egyptian geese, Freshwater mussels
- **Flora:** Old growth trees, many planted in or before the 1890's
- **Insects:** Stag beetles
- **Bats:** pipistrelle and other species
- **Slow worm** and other invertebrates
- **Fish:** Gudgeon, barbell, chub, dace, roach, bream, rudd, rainbow trout, pike, carp, brown trout, salmon
  
- **Further species as cited by the EA as red data book species<sup>1</sup> ~**
  - A large diverse macroinvertebrate population, including snails, leeches, freshwater shrimp, water hog louse, mayfly, stonefly, bugs, damselfly, caseless and cased caddis fly
  - Three red data book species – *Leptocerus lusitanicus*, *Stenelemis canaliculata* and *Macronychus quadrituberculatus*
  - 13 types of mayflies, two stoneflies, two damselflies, six caseless caddis and thirteen cased caddis species

The Environment Agency was led to conclude that the area is home to **“such a high diversity of macroinvertebrates that it should be protected”**

Whether colonies of the following exist needs to be established:

- Dormice
- Great crested newts
- Brook lampreys
- Water voles

These are rare and valuable species, which merit recognition in the Core Strategy, along with the habitat which sustains them. The Draft Core Strategy needs to adequately reflect the significance of the area which the EA states are high on the Community Conservation Index ~

**“An index called the Community Conservation Index (CCI) summarises biodiversity and the rarity of the aquatic macroinvertebrate communities present [a score of]...greater than 20 indicates that red data book species are established and the site has high ecological value. The Thames at Boulters weir was ...surveyed in 2008 and ...had a CCI of 32.12 [to] 30.55. The area has such a high diversity...that it should be protected. The site is classed at Good Ecological Status and, under the terms of the WFD, no ecological deterioration fo the site can occur.”**

The conclusion of the EA was that no proposals for the area can be considered “until it is shown how freshwater biodiversity (ie habitats and species) is to be protected...” Restoration is not required, but rather recognition of the biodiversity which already flourishes. Left largely untouched for 50+ years, Mother Nature has made this an area of exceptional ecological importance. Human hand will muddy these waters at our

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<sup>1</sup> Their letter to Mr S Kyle dated 11/06/09



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peril. This is an area which, from being ecologically damaged, is healthy and flourishing, and which merits full recognition as such.

We thank you for considering these remarks and look forward to receiving a progress report from you as one of the stakeholder groups with a keen interest in this ecologically sensitive area.

Yours sincerely,

P.P.

