

## **T Thatcham**

### **Topography, Geology and Soils**

This area is defined by the built-up extent of Thatcham and covers the lower part of the valley slope and floor. The valley floor comprises Reading Beds overlain by extensive gravel deposits which give rise to silty alluvial gley soils containing extensive peat deposits on the valley floor. The lower valley slopes are formed of Reading Beds, with London Clays on the higher valley slopes and these give rise to loamy heavy clay stagnogley soils.

### **Historic Landscape**

Traces of the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century landscape have been largely removed or masked by the expansion of Thatcham. The town itself has been a settlement since the Early Medieval period (although there was also Roman occupation within the HECA) and the layout of its historic core, around the church and Broadway, is late medieval in date. Like other settlements in the Kennet valley, it was supported by a number of common open fields around the town and grazing on extensive meadows by the river. The outlines of some of these open fields have been preserved by some of the roads around Thatcham. Much of the open field and areas of meadow had been enclosed into privately owned and farmed fields by the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The remaining open field and grazing were enclosed through two Acts of Parliament in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Modern Landscape**

Thatcham began to grow significantly in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as housing estates and industrial areas were constructed on the fringes of the village. This has created a large settlement stretching along the A4 and covering most of the valley floor and side. Large housing estates were constructed on the west and south sides of Thatcham during the 1960s and 1970s and most land on all sides of the village had been developed by the 1990s. Recent development has shifted toward increasing the density of housing within Thatcham by knocking down large houses with sizeable gardens and building larger numbers of smaller houses in the cleared plot. Much re-development has occurred within the historic core to accommodate shopping and business needs. This has significantly eroded its character to an extent where it no longer looks or feels particularly historic despite the long history of the settlement.