Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan Review

ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Final Report

2003

CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning

Essex & Southend-on-Sea
Replacement Structure Plan Review

ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Approved By: Dominic Watkins

Signed: _____

Position: Senior Associate

Date: 2003

Final Report

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Environment Landscape Planning

Welcome

This study report is one of a series commissioned by Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council, the Joint Structure Plan Authorities (JSPAs). Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the report is factually accurate, its contents, opinions, conclusions and recommendations are entirely those of the consultant who carried out the study. The content should not be held to represent the views of the JSPAs. It is therefore being made available solely for information purposes as a background technical document.

This CD contains Adobe Acrobat file of the Essex Landscape Character Assessment. For ease of access the contents of the document are split into 3 separate files. Within those files bookmarks have been established to guide the user within the files and to various sections. To show these, click the Show/Hide Navigation Pane button , and then click the Bookmarks tab.

- **Section One** introduces the Landscape Character Assessment, explains its purpose, and describes the general approach and methodology for the study;
- A summary of the physical and cultural evolution of the landscape and an overview of the historic landscape can be found in **Section Two**, which also reviews the current planning policy framework for guiding change in the plan area;
- For those wishing to understand how this assessment fits into the hierarchy of landscape character assessments in England, **Section Three** explains the relationship of the national classification defined by the Character of England Map with the county-scale classification, and its relationship to more detailed District or other local assessments;
- Descriptions of the Landscape Character Areas and their sensitivity are provided in **Section Four;**
- A summary of the key issues for the planning and management of the landscape in the plan area can be found in **Section Five**.

Other Files reproduce
- the Assessment's cover and frontispiece
- the Preface Summary and Contents.
- and a series of better quality image files of the individual character areas

These documents require Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on the users computer. If you do not have this installed you can go to the Adobe Web site (www.adobe.com) for the downloadable Reader software.

Should you have any difficulties using this CD, have any comments about the approach taken, or wish to contact Essex County Council concerning any issues raised please contact the Landscape and Ecology Team, Waste Recycling and Environment, Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford. CM1 1HQ

Updated versions of this document may be published in due course. Please let us know if you would wish to be notified.

February 2003

PREFACE

This study report is one of a series commissioned by Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council, the Joint Structure Plan Authorities (JSPAs). Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the report is factually accurate, its contents, opinions, conclusions and recommendations are entirely those of the consultant who carried out the study. The content should not be held to represent the views of the JSPAs. It is therefore being made available solely for information purposes as a background technical document.

The Steering Group was chaired by Martin Wakelin (Landscape and Ecology Manager, Essex CC) and included:

- Crispin Downs (Landscape Consultancy Manager, Essex CC)
- Roy Lewis (Principal Policy Manager, Essex CC)
- Martin Scott (Principal Planner - Environment, Southend-on-Sea BC)
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The CBA project team comprised:

- Chris Blandford
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- Matthew Bright
- Justine Dowsing
- Andy Jones
- John Alvarez
- Amanda Davey

Chris Blandford Associates
July 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates to prepare an assessment of the character of the landscape within the area covered by the Replacement Structure Plan.

Based on the Countryside Agency's guidance, the Landscape Character Assessment focussed on establishing a 'baseline' of the existing character of the Essex landscape. The assessment involved a broad review of the landscape based on written sources, existing local assessments and an extensive survey in the field. The study identified thirty-five 'Landscape Character Areas' - geographical areas with a recognisable pattern of landscape characteristics, both physical and experiential, that combine to create a distinct sense of place (e.g. the *Brentwood Hills*). The emphasis of current landscape policy is on managing change through guiding necessary development to landscapes where the type and degree of change can best be accommodated without significant effects on the intrinsic character. Following the identification of distinctive Landscape Character Areas, an evaluation of the relative sensitivity of these areas to change was undertaken to inform strategic planning decisions.

It is intended that this study will provide a strategic understanding of the character and sensitivity of landscapes throughout the plan area to underpin landscape policies in the Adopted Replacement Structure Plan (April 2001). For example, the assessment identifies the particular character of the landscape to inform Policy NR1 (Landscape Conservation) and Policies NR2 and NR3 (Dedham Vale AONB and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB). It also provides the framework for the more detailed landscape character assessments of District areas to help inform the preparation of Local Plans encouraged by Policy NR4 (Landscape Character Assessment).

It is expected that this study will be of particular interest to elected members and officers in Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and the District Councils, and other statutory and non-statutory partnership organisations. Representatives of many of these stakeholders participated in the landscape assessment process through discussion workshops.

USER'S GUIDE

The assessment can be read as a whole, or alternatively specific sections can be consulted as required. A general outline of the report is provided below to guide the user to the relevant information:

- **Section One** introduces the Landscape Character Assessment, explains its purpose, and describes the general approach and methodology for the study;
- A summary of the physical and cultural evolution of the landscape and an overview of the historic landscape can be found in **Section Two**, which also reviews the current planning policy framework for guiding change in the plan area;
- For those wishing to understand how this assessment fits into the hierarchy of landscape character assessments in England, **Section Three** explains the relationship of the national classification defined by the Character of England Map with the county-scale classification, and its relationship to more detailed District or other local assessments;
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- A summary of the key issues for the planning and management of the landscape in the plan area can be found in **Section Five**.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This study is one of a series informing the review of the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan (RSP), leading to a First Alteration to be prepared in 2002 by Essex County Council & Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (the Joint Structure Plan Authorities – JSPAs). Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was commissioned in April 2001 by the JSPAs to undertake this study.

1.1.2 The study area is shown on Figure 1. It comprises the area covered by the Replacement Structure Plan, namely the administrative areas of Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council. For the avoidance of any doubt, this area excludes Thurrock Council.

1.1.3 The study area borders Suffolk and Cambridgeshire to in the north, Hertfordshire to the west and Greater London to the southwest. The Thames estuary marks the boundary with Kent to the south. The coast forms the eastern boundary of the study area, extending from the Thames in the south to the Stour Estuary in the north.

1.2 Study Context

1.2.1 Following the Countryside Agency/English Nature/English Heritage *Character Map of England* produced in 1997, Government policy set out in PPG7 *The Countryside; Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* has supported the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the intrinsic character of the countryside, identifying areas where conservation or restoration of existing character should be given high priority and guiding sustainable development.

1.2.2 The *Character Map of England* identifies five broad character areas in which the study area falls: the Greater Thames Estuary, the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, the Northern Thames Basin, the East Anglian Chalk and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths. The scale of this national study is useful as a regional planning tool but lacks the detail to feed into county-level strategies.

1.2.3 Character studies of parts of the study area have already been produced at a greater level of detail than the *Character Map of England*. These studies do not, however, necessarily use the same methods, nor are they at the same level of detail. This county-wide study provides the framework for future District and single-purpose studies, while providing a landscape character assessment in greater depth than the Countryside Agency's.

Figure 1 Study Area and Context

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 The purpose of the study is to:

- provide a landscape character assessment input into the structure plan process and to provide baseline information for sustainability appraisal;
- clarify issues for a subsequent landscape strategy for the County and Southend-on-Sea, including its enhancement;
- guide landscape management decisions by forming a basis for guidelines that allow the targeting of resources and actions to areas of greatest need;
- provide information for the promotion of public awareness of landscape character;
- provide a consistent landscape character assessment framework for more detailed assessments at the District level.

1.3.2 The key objectives of the study are to:

- provide a description of the landscape character of Essex and Southend-on-Sea, including its historic character, and cultural and local perceptions;
- identify key characteristics and appraise the condition of each character area, including the factors that influenced landscape change in the past, affect it now and that will affect it in the future;
- identify key issues arising from the landscape character assessment and discuss the options for policy development;
- identify and map the landscape's sensitivity to accommodating change by identifying the vectors of change and their potential impact within each landscape character area.

1.4 Approach and Methodology

1.4.1 The assessment methodology is based on that promoted by the Countryside Agency through their *Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance* (1999). It is expected that final guidance will be published by the Agency in 2002. Landscape character assessment usually takes the form of two separate but related stages; c*haracterisation* and *evaluation*.

Landscape Characterisation

1.4.2 Characterisation involves identifying, classifying and describing areas of distinctive character, i.e. what makes one landscape "different" from another. A landscape can be assessed by disassembling and analysing its component parts. Such an assessment makes it easier to subsequently evaluate what is important in a landscape, why it is important and how best to accommodate change and identify enhancement needs for the future.

1.4.3 The landscape includes visible, physical components (e.g. landform, vegetation, land use, settlement), visible, spatial components (e.g. scale, pattern, texture) and non visible components (e.g. sound and cultural associations). Whilst these do not lend themselves to accurate measurement, they can be easily described to give descriptions that are both relatively objective and are meaningful, avoiding value judgements.

1.4.4 From an understanding of the component parts of the landscape, it is possible to identify how particular combinations of these interact to create distinctive character. This then allows the classification of the landscape into areas that share common combinations of components (Landscape Character Types), and single, unique areas which are discrete geographical areas of a landscape type (Landscape Character Areas).

Landscape Evaluation

1.4.5 *Evaluation* of the landscape is associated with making informed judgements about the landscape. For the purposes of this study, this is related to the evaluation of the 'sensitivity' of the landscape to change.

Assessment Methodology

1.4.6 The landscape assessment involved the following elements: desk study, field survey, stakeholder involvement, characterisation and evaluation. In practice, the desk and field survey elements are undertaken iteratively to allow each activity to inform the other.

Desk Study

1.4.7 The desk study took into account existing relevant background reports, data and mapped information. In defining draft Landscape Character Areas, consideration was given to:

- *Physiography*: geology, soils, topography, flora, fauna and climate;
- *Human activity*: land use, settlement patterns, field enclosure type and patterns, landscape history, archaeology, the built heritage, industrial features;

More detailed existing and emerging classifications and descriptions of the landscape within specific District and other specific areas also informed the preliminary classification.

1.4.8 A series of map overlays were prepared to assist in defining areas of common character. The desk study resulted in a draft map of *Landscape Character Types* and *Landscape Character Areas* assessed at a scale of 1:50,000, and produced in a digital format fully compatible with GIS.

Field Survey

1.4.9 Field surveys were undertaken to test, validate and refine the preliminary/draft Landscape Character Areas identified through the initial desk studies. This involved two assessors systematically assessing each draft Landscape Character Area in the field from publicly accessible locations in sufficient detail for the purposes of the County-level assessment. In some areas, it was necessary to observe the landscape from a number of 'checkpoints' prior to the completion of a field survey sheet in order to adequately assess the draft Landscape Character Area. Further desk studies were undertaken as required during this period to inform the ongoing field surveys. As the field survey work was conducted during July and August, the influence of seasonal and meteorological variations on the character of the landscape was limited to references in existing literature.

1.4.10 The field survey information was systematically recorded on structured field survey sheets (included as Appendix B – see separately bound report). The survey sheets were structured to include:

- description of overall character
- checklist of dominant landscape elements
- checklist of characteristic features (landform, land use, field boundaries, historic features, vegetation cover)
- checklist of aesthetic/perceptual factors (views, scale, enclosure, variety, movement, unity)
- description of land use and settlement
- description of tree cover and field pattern
- description of recreation and amenity
- description of sensitivity to change/management issues.

1.4.11 In addition to the survey form, the field surveyors also recorded their observations on a map to show refinements to draft Character Areas, identify key visual relationships within and between areas, and the location of survey points.

Stakeholder Involvement

1.4.12 In accordance with current guidance from the Countryside Agency, stakeholders have been encouraged to become involved in the Landscape Character Assessment. It is expected that this study will be of interest to elected members and officers in Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (the JSPAs), the District Councils, and other partnership organisations. Representatives of many of these stakeholders participated in the landscape assessment process through commenting on draft documentation and participation in two workshops. The purpose of the initial workshop held in June 2001 was to:

- identify key sources of relevant information for informing the study
- develop a common understanding of variations in the character of the landscape
- discuss and comment on the draft classification of landscape divisions/character areas
- identify the key agents of landscape change that are (or are likely to) erode the character, quality and distinctiveness of different landscape units.

1.4.13 A second stakeholder workshop was held to discuss the final draft report. Comments made informed the final report. Further details about the stakeholder involvement can be found in Appendix A. Promotional activities are planned in the future by the JSPAs to raise public awareness of the Landscape Character Assessment.

Characterisation

1.4.14 The desk top analysis, field work and input from the stakeholder workshop were reviewed and combined to produce a final classification and description of the landscape. This is presented in Sections 3.0 and 4.0.

Evaluating Sensitivity of Landscape

1.4.15 Following the characterisation stage, a general assessment of the relative sensitivity of the character areas to the impacts of development/change was carried out. Landscape sensitivity is the degree to which a particular landscape character area can accommodate change without adverse consequences. Sensitivity is not absolute but is likely to vary according to the type/scale of change being considered. The sensitivity analysis was carried out principally to guide and facilitate subsequent work at County level. It is intended to inform:

- the identification of spatial options at a strategic level
- sustainability analysis of the structure plan proposals
- development of strategic design guidelines and initiatives

It also highlights issues that could be considered in greater detail at a local level or in relation to large scale development control issues.

1.4.16 An approach to defining sensitivity levels based upon good practice, adapted to the circumstances of Essex, is set out below. These were then applied in a sensitivity matrix to provide an indication of the sensitivity of each character area to different types/scales of

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL	**SENSITIVITY CRITERIA**	**ABILITY OF THE LANDSCAPE TO ABSORB IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER CHANGE**
HIGH	The landscape is very sensitive to this type/scale of development/change due to the potential for very adverse impacts on: ● Distinctive physical and cultural components or key characteristics ● Strength of character/condition of the landscape. ● AONB Landscape ● Landscape of high intervisibility/visual exposure ● Tranquil area with very limited opportunities for mitigation.	Unlikely to be capable of being absorbed. Presumption against development unless over-riding need.
MODERATE	The landscape is sensitive to this type/scale of development/change due to the potential for some adverse impacts on:· ● Distinctive physical and cultural components, or key characteristics ● Strength of character/condition of the landscape ● Landscape of moderate intervisibility/visual exposure· ● Area of fragmented tranquillity but there may be more opportunities to overcome these through appropriate siting, design and other mitigation measures.	May be capable of being absorbed. Developments to be considered on their individual merits.
LOW	The landscape is less sensitive to this type and scale of development/change due to the potential for only slight, or no damaging impacts on: ● Distinctive physical and cultural components or key characteristics ● Strength of character/condition of the landscape ● Landscape of low intervisibility/visual exposure ● Area with an absence of tranquillity and there are likely to be considerable opportunities for mitigation and/or landscape enhancement.	Likely to be capable in principle of being absorbed.

development/change. In order to make it useful it is necessary to identify, in broad terms, different categories of development pressure and land use change. To analyse sensitivity without such differentiation would have been less meaningful. The levels of sensitivity identified, rather than defining policy for a particular character area, are generalised statements that provide a pointer to issues that would need to be addressed in any development control or landscape planning context in that area. It is expected that further analysis would need to be carried out at a district level, in relation to a specific application with significant landscape or visual effects, or where there are cumulative impacts of several developments. The summary matrix in Appendix B allows the relative sensitivities of the character areas to different types of development/change to be compared.

1.4.17 The following types/scales of development/change were considered:

- Major urban extensions (>5ha) and new settlements
- Small urban extensions (<5 ha)
- Major transportation developments/improvements
- Commercial/warehouse estate/port development
- Developments with individual large/bulky buildings (e.g. large farm buildings, industrial plant)
- Large scale 'open uses' (e.g. golf courses, water bodies, major agricultural change, forestry, marinas, caravan parks)
- Mineral extraction/waste disposal
- Incremental small scale developments (e.g. minor highway improvements, small landform changes, farmstead intensification)
- Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons
- Decline in traditional countryside management.

2.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Since the end of the last ice-age over 10,000 years ago, the processes and patterns of landform, land cover and land use change have combined to create the contemporary appearance of the Essex landscape. Successive phases of human activity and settlement have influenced the development and character of the landscape in different ways. In particular, changes in the landscape since the war reflect the demands placed by society on land for agriculture and forestry, for housing, transport and minerals, and increasingly for recreation and leisure.

2.1.2 This section provides a summary of the physical and cultural influences on the evolution of the Essex landscape. A list of key references suitable for further reading can be found in the bibliography. Of particular relevance is *The Essex Landscape - A Study of its Form and History* (Hunter, 1999).

2.1.3 As this study has not attempted to pre-empt the results of the forthcoming *Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Study,* only a brief overview of the historic landscape is provided in this section. The Historic Landscape Characterisation Study will provide detailed documentation of the influence that patterns of historical land use have had on the present character and development of the entire study area. It is expected that the study will be completed in late 2001/early 2002.

2.1.4 This section also reviews the current planning policy framework for landscape protection, conservation and enhancement within the plan area.

2.2 Physical and Cultural Influences

Topography and Drainage

2.2.1 Essex is a county of low hills and undulating valleys, with extensive areas of low flat land near to the coast (see Figure 2). The altitude rises very gently from the coast towards the north-west, reaching about 30m around Chelmsford and just over 130m to the west of Saffron Walden. This gentle rise is interrupted by a series of low hills and ridges, the highest of which is Danbury Hill at 116m. The county has a large number of rivers, largely as a consequence of the proportion of clay soils. They are an important component of the county's topography, character and identity. The river corridors are frequently of landscape, nature conservation and heritage value, as well as providing public access opportunities and the focus of other recreational activities. The valleys to the north are steeper and more deeply cut.

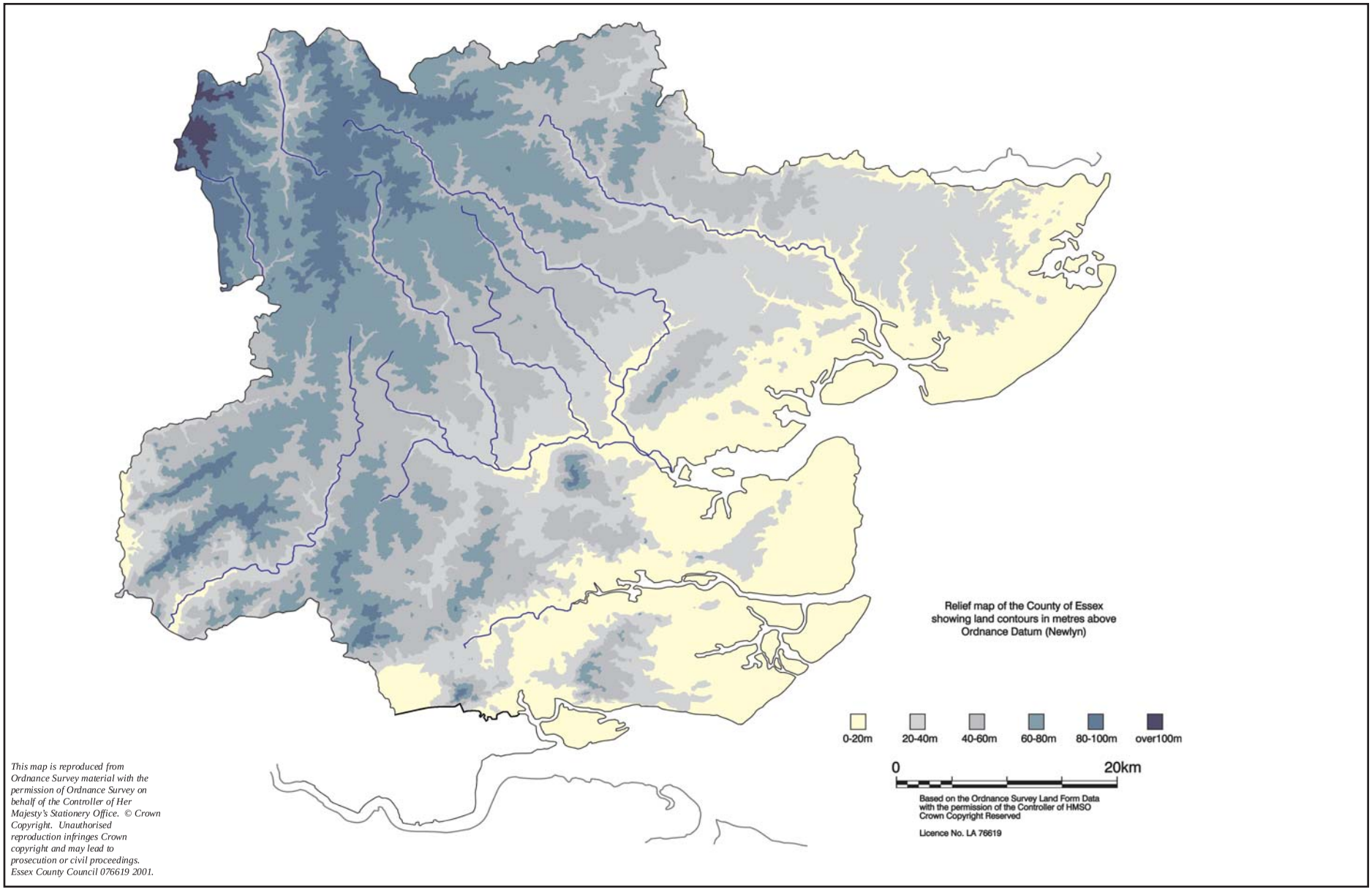


Figure 2 Topography and Drainage

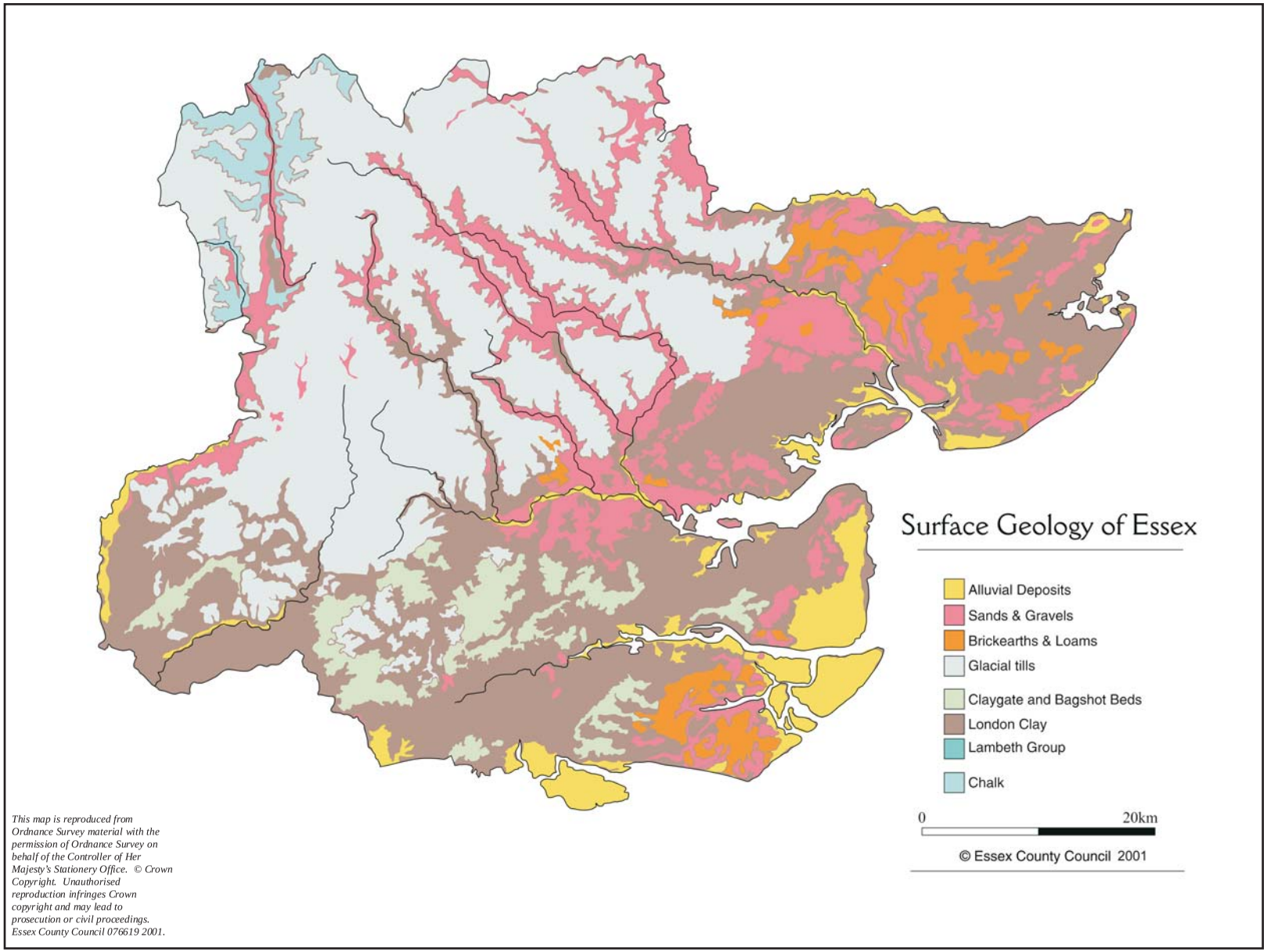


Figure 3 Geology

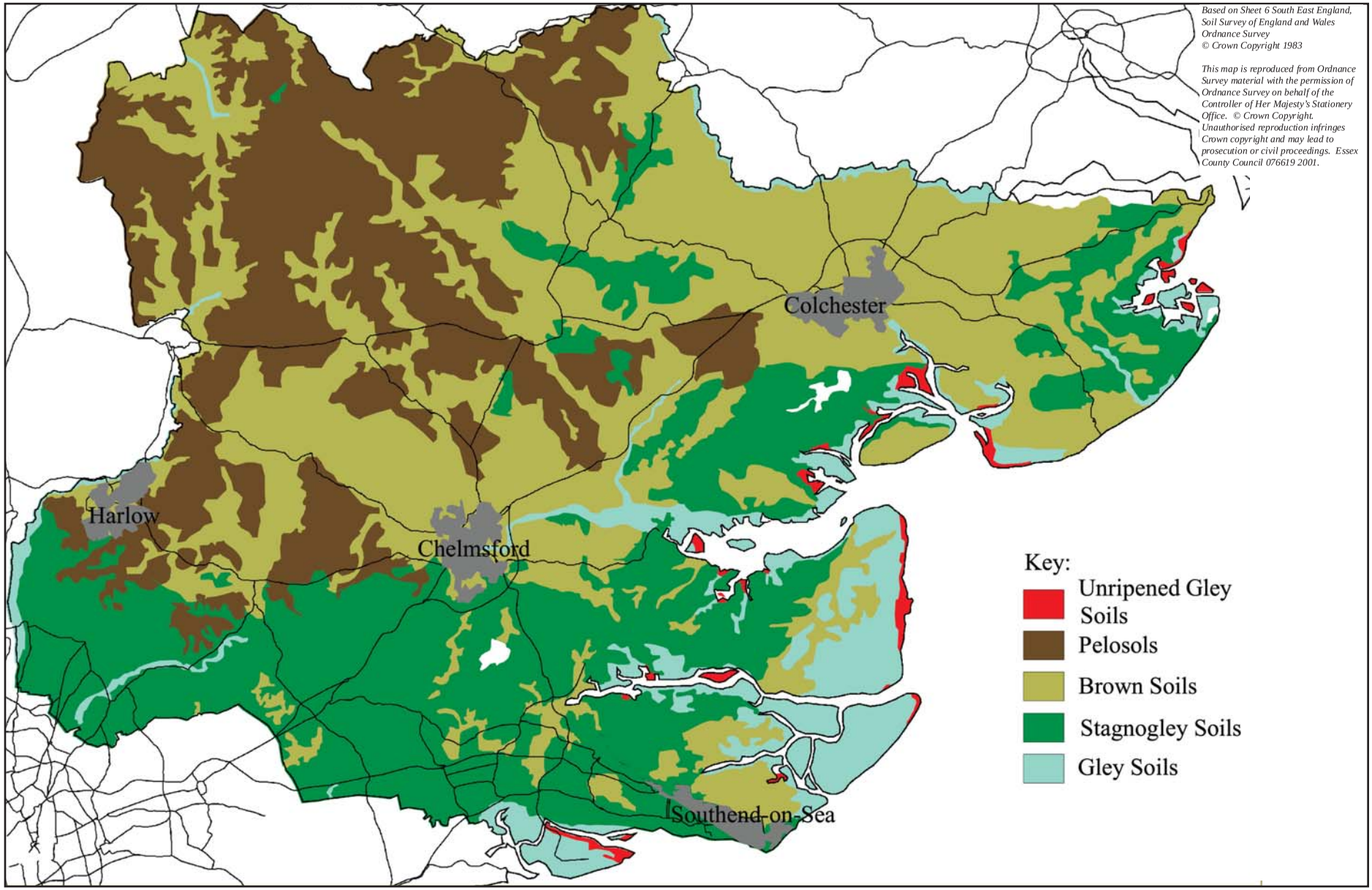


Figure 4 Soils

2.2.8 In the Anglian period, ice from the north covered Essex to a line running from Brentwood to Billericay to Colchester. Upon melting the ice left the vast sheet of Boulder Clay, which contains clay, flints and chalk, over central and northern Essex. The climatic fluctuations that followed led to periods of vegetation establishment, first woodland and then heathland, interrupted by colder periods with sea level falling. The ground has been disturbed by solifluction and windblown silts accumulated to form the brickearths and loam deposits.

2.2.9 Following the periods of glacial advance and retreat there have been continuous periods of sea level rising, with the rate fluctuating. Extensive deposits of sand and gravel are known to have come from former courses of the Rivers Thames and Medway. There are eight terraces of these sand and gravel deposits known as the Kesgrave Formations. Three further diversions of these rivers left the high-level East Essex Gravels on the Dengie peninsula, the low-level East Essex Gravels at Rochford and Shoeburyness and the lower Thames Terraces at Orsett Heath, Little Thurrock and Mucking. It is thought that sea levels stabilised in the medieval period.

2.2.10 In general, it is the nature and the quality of the Essex soils that has contributed to the success of the county in agricultural terms. Over half of the agricultural land in Essex is of 'best and most versatile' quality (Grade 1, 2 or 3A).

2.2.11 On the coastal marshes much of the land has been reclaimed. The soils are heavy gleys that undergo periodic waterlogging from fluctuations in the ground water table. Good arable yields have resulted from under-draining, levelling and liming. Grazing has been important on these soils, although problems can arise when the soils are wet in winter.

2.2.12 Inland from the marshes the soils that occur on the river terraces make up some of the best agricultural land in Essex. They are easy to work and naturally free draining brown soils, especially where Brickearth is present.

2.2.13 Soils on the London Clay are seasonally water-logged slowly permeable heavy clay soils. There are some lighter soils on foot slopes. The soils shrink and crack on drying, swelling on rewetting. When they are wet they are very sticky and plastic. They are not easy soils to cultivate; drainage is needed to grow arable crops.

2.2.14 On the hills that rise above the London Clay the capping of the fine sands of the Bagshot Beds by the pebbly clay drifts have led to soils that are easily cultivated, but they are acidic with low natural fertility. The soils on the boulder clay plateau to the north range from wet acidic clay soils to dry neutral/alkaline soils. All of these require under-draining for modern arable farming, making valuable corn land. The valley soils are complex but tend to be better

drained and were popular with early settlers. Those soils that fall on the chalk in the north west of the county are alkaline and free draining and cereal farming is widespread.

Land Use, Farming Pattern and Vegetation

2.2.15 Essex is one of the largest and most densely populated counties in England. In spite of this 75% of the county is farmed and agriculture is the major land use in rural areas. This means that farming practices have considerable influence on landscape character and natural habitats. With over half of the agricultural land being on high-grade soils there is an emphasis on cereal production in favour of livestock farming. Winter wheat is the main crop, but in recent years oil seeds and pulses have grown in importance. Dairy farming has declined to 80 herds with beef and other livestock also in the decline. Sheep farming has however increased by 25%. The change toward arable farming accelerated during the 1950's and 1960's.

2.2.16 The pattern of the Essex landscape is complex and varied. The changes can be subtle, influenced by the changes in soil or geological structure as much as by the land use. There is a rich legacy of ancient woodlands, hedgerows, tracks and archaeological sites, due to early enclosure in Essex. The only substantial area where this was not the case is in the chalk lands to the north west of the county, with its large fields and intermittent hedgerows.

2.2.17 There are rich corn growing areas on the boulder clays, with intersecting river valleys, woodlands and hedgerows. Ancient royal forests are still dominant at Epping, Hatfield and Writtle. The hills of Danbury and Little Baddow Ridge are well wooded.

2.2.18 There are also degraded areas of the county where excessive removal of trees, woodlands and hedgerows has opened the landscape wide. Intrusive man-made features, such as overhead power lines, industrial complexes and oil refineries are a major element in the landscapes of South Essex and the Lee Valley and in between Brightlingsea and Clacton.

2.2.19 There have been several initiatives aimed at encouraging farmers and landowners to plant up small woodlands and tree belts, through grant aid. This is particularly the case in the Thames Chase Community Forest area where the aim is to provide extensive opportunities for forestry and farming activities, outdoor recreation, education, new habitats for wildlife and a visually interesting landscape. So far 115ha of new woodland, 245ha access land, 214ha non woodland habitats have already been created, as well as 14km of new hedgerows.

2.2.2 Most Essex rivers flow towards either the Thames or the North Sea. Only the Cam flows northward. The rivers Stour in the north, Lea and Stort in the west and the Thames to the south, form the county boundary. Principal rivers within the county are the Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer, Crouch, Mardyke and Roding. The Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and tributaries rise in the plateau to the north and flow south where their estuaries are extensive and contribute to the deeply indented coastline. The Crouch flows east across the undulating lowland to the south of the plateau and when joined by the Roach forms an estuary complex that includes the islands of Wallasea, Potton and Foulness. The Mardyke and Roding flow southwards into the River Thames estuary.

2.2.3 The coastline is mainly marshland with short stretches of cliff between the Colne and Stour estuaries and at Southend. Shingle spits and shellbanks are also a feature of the estuaries.

Geology and Soils

2.2.4 The underlying geology of the Essex landscape has been dominated by the events in the Quaternary period, primarily by the Pleistocene Ice Age, but also by the climatic oscillations that have occurred before and since. These have generated deposits that have a strong influence on the landscape and overly much of the area. The geology and soils in the study area are shown on Figures 3 and 4 respectively.

2.2.5 The solid geology of Essex forms part of the eastern sector of the London Basin chalk syncline. Chalk outcrops in the north west of the county, near Saffron Walden. Tertiary deposits such as the Thanet Sands, Woolwich and Reading Beds and the Blackheath Beds (known as the Lambeth Group) are buried by Quaternary deposits. London Clay is the thickest Tertiary deposit, with an extensive outcrop across the centre of the county running east west, capped locally by the loamy Claygate and sandy Bagshot Beds. This is a stiff, dark, bluish-grey clay that weathers, on exposure, to brown and shrinks and cracks in dry weather.

2.2.6 Throughout the Quaternary Essex has been subjected to periodic ice advances and retreats as the climate has cooled and warmed. This has led to a complex mix of glacial, proglacial and periglacial deposits overlying each other.

2.2.7 Extensive sands and gravels were deposited in the Pleistocene ice age. Succeeding deposits have overlaid these, but exposures are common on the valley sides and on the Tendring plateau. Soil forming processes in the succeeding interglacial left the upper part of the sands and gravels reddened and clay enriched. Periglacial structures commonly disturb the layers.

Settlements, Buildings and Communications

2.2.20 The county is primarily characterised by a pattern of dispersed settlement, primarily of medieval origin, with only limited nucleation and urbanisation. The principal towns tend to have identifiable historic cores and in the case of Colchester, and other smaller settlements, these can be traced back to at least the Roman Period. The study area contains many historic buildings and this is reflected in the 14,000 plus listed structures currently identified within the area.

2.2.21 Up until the 19th century, the principal building material in Essex was timber, and timber frame buildings are of great importance in the development of the county's buildings. Timber frames were typically infilled with wattle and daub, and later often coated with limewash plaster. In the south east weatherboarding was more common. The predominant building material today is brick, and London Clay still provides a source of red bricks and tiles. Other important historic building materials include clay lump, puddingstone in coastal areas and clunch and flint from the chalk in the north west of Essex.

2.2.22 The proximity of Essex to London and to the coast, with the natural harbours of Harwich and Ipswich bringing trade and goods to the region has meant that for centuries the communications across the county have been of great importance. The road that runs from London to Ipswich, via Chelmsford and Colchester represents a travel route that dates at least to the roman period and may be earlier. The line of the road has altered, but the communication corridor remains an important one. Other major connections with London include those to Southend and to Cambridge. A number of trunk roads in Essex across the county. The A12 runs past Brentwood, Chelmsford and Colchester and out of the county through Dedham Vale. The A120 runs across the northern centre of the county from Stansted Airport through Colchester to Harwich. The motorways of the M25 and the influence of the M11 cut a band through the western edge. An extensive network of railway lines also crosses the county. This busy network of transport corridors stands in contrast to the more tranquil character of the Essex countryside.

2.3 Historic Landscape

2.3.1 The study area has an extremely rich historic environment, which has revealed evidence for human occupation stretching back nearly 250,000 years. This depth and continuity of occupation has led to the development of a diverse landscape that contains elements of all major periods of British prehistory and history.

2.3.2 The study area contains a diverse and substantial resource of archaeological deposits ranging from 250,000 year old stone and wood tools from Clacton, through extensive prehistoric and roman remains, on to Saxon and Norman settlement and military sites, through numerous deserted medieval and later settlements to the industrial remains from the last 200 years. This diversity reflects the full range of human occupation in the British Isles and is realised in both sub-surface and above ground remains.

2.3.3 Particularly notable elements include the vast cropmark landscapes of the sand and gravel soils in places such as the Stour Valley and Tendring plain; the Roman city of Colchester with its early '*colonia'* and associated pre-roman Iron Age settlement is of international significance, whilst the coastal regions contain buried archaeological evidence relating to human occupation stretching back prior to the end of the last glaciation. Other notable features include the 900 or so medieval moated sites across the Glacial Till aream (chalky boulder clay), the extensive remains of salt making and wildfowl management features in the coastal zone and the numerous roman villa sites found throughout the study area.

2.3.4 The landscape of Essex is best described, for the most part, as 'ancient countryside' characterised by small irregular fields interspersed with commons, woods and a generally dispersed settlement pattern. This a complete contrast to the medieval open field landscapes of the Midlands with their nucleated and centralised village settlement systems. This ancient countryside has been well studied and documented by authors such as Hunter (2001) and Rackham (1976).

2.3.5 Essex contains areas of ancient managed woodland such as Hatfield Forest and Epping Forest. It also contains a diverse range of designed landscapes such as parks and gardens from a range of periods, including the exceptional Audley End. Another, often neglected, element of the historic landscape is the marshland grazing landscapes of the coastal zone. These have severely reduced in extent and it has been estimated that since the 1930's almost 60 per cent of marshes have been lost in Greater London, the Thames Estuary and adjacent coastal areas of Kent and Essex.

2.3.6 Despite the effects of agricultural intensification and urban development over the last 50 years, it is the overall complexity and intricate nature of the ancient countryside that gives the Essex landscape its distinctive character.

2.3.7 Particularly noticeable built elements of the historic landscape within the study area include dispersed rural post-medieval and medieval farmsteads, historic centres of many towns and villages, coastal heritage features including harbours and boatyards, industrial sites such as Waltham Gunpowder Works, and the Second World War defence networks, such as the General Headquarters Defensive line.

2.4 Planning Policy Framework

2.4.1 This section provides an overview of the planning policy framework relevant to the study area and the Landscape Character Assessment. Relevant policy designations within the study area are shown on Figure 5.

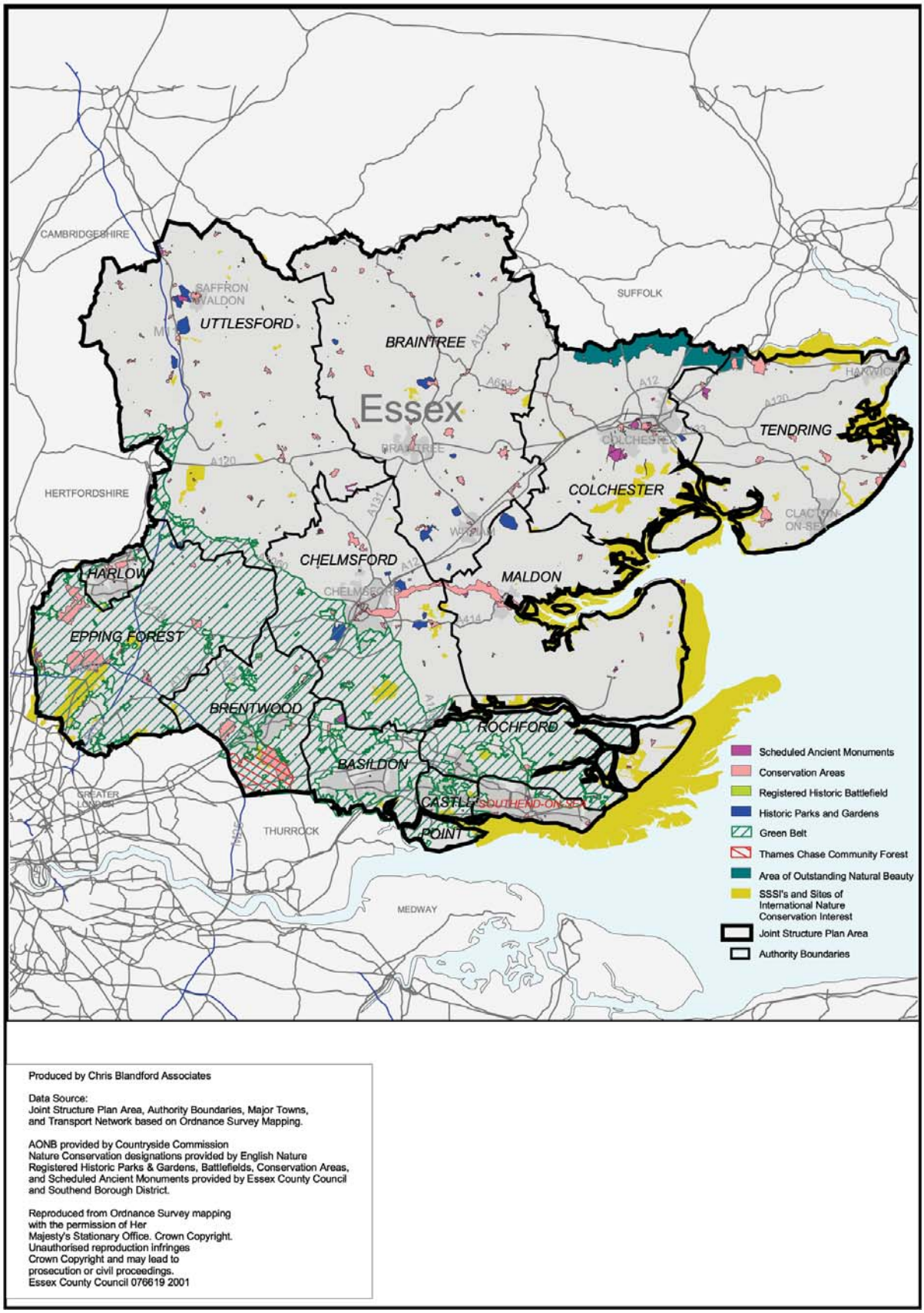
Landscape Planning Context

2.4.2 Attractive landscape settings, where a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness is maintained and enhanced, are essential to economic and social development and prosperity. Balancing the demand for land for housing, economic activity, transport infrastructure and recreation with the long term sustainable maintenance of natural resources, including landscape character, is a key role of the planning system.

2.4.3 The Government is committed to the protection of the countryside and sees it as a vital part of our environmental heritage, to be passed down to future generations. This is reflected in the placement of the concept of sustainable development firmly at the heart of the UK approach to planning. The foundations of Britain's approach to sustainable development was set out in 'This Common Inheritance' in 1990, and developed into a clearly defined policy framework in 'Sustainable Development - The UK Strategy' (1994). Practical guidance as to how to implement sustainable development through the planning system is given in 'Planning for Sustainable Development - Towards Better Practice', DETR, 1998.

2.4.4 In 'special areas' of the countryside with valued features of conservation interest, new development is often constrained by land use planning policies within development plans. Conservation and development may be compatible where the potential for conflict can be reduced through policies that encourage sensitive development (in terms of location, scale and design), minimising landscape impacts whilst also maximising countryside benefits. In both urban fringe and rural areas, new development can provide the opportunity to regenerate and enhance severely degraded landscapes through land rehabilitation and the creation of new or improved landscapes and habitats, with access arrangements for public enjoyment where appropriate.

2.4.5 Designating 'special areas' in development plans in the absence of positive polices for managing change in the wider countryside is increasingly regarded as an unsatisfactory way in which to meet sustainability aims and objectives (see PPG7 below). Local landscape designations may not necessarily ensure the enhancement or restoration of landscape character, and can often lead to the devaluation of other non-designated landscapes elsewhere in the plan area. Increasingly, the challenge is to develop policies that recognise and respect



Produced by Chris Blandford Associates

Data Source:
Joint Structure Plan Area, Authority Boundaries, Major Towns, and Transport Network based on Ordnance Survey Mapping.

AONB provided by Countryside Commission
Nature Conservation designations provided by English Nature
Registered Historic Parks & Gardens, Battlefields, Conservation Areas, and Scheduled Ancient Monuments provided by Essex County Council and Southend Borough District.

Figure 5 Planning Context

the distinctive character of *all* landscapes, and not just those considered to be 'special'.

PPG 7 The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development

2.4.6 Planning Policy Guidance Notes set out the Government's policies on planning issues and the operation of the planning system. PPG7, *The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (February 1997; as amended March 2001) gives guidance on how the Government's objectives for rural areas should be reflected in development plans and planning decisions. It aims to ensure both rural prosperity, and protection and enhancement of the countryside. PPG7 places emphasis upon safeguarding the countryside for its own sake, and as a national asset, whilst acknowledging that different areas exhibit different characteristics and abilities to accommodate essential change.

2.4.7 PPG7 requires a fundamental reassessment of local countryside designations (such as *Special Landscape Areas*). The guidance indicates that designations should only be maintained or extended where there are good reasons to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. In reviewing development plans, PPG7 advises that the function and justification of existing local countryside designations should be rigorously considered, and where these are retained, planning authorities should ensure that they are soundly based on a formal assessment of the qualities of the countryside or the contribution of such areas to urban form.

2.4.8 The need for planners and other policy makers to be more proactive in managing change, rather than simply trying to prevent it, is reinforced by PPG7, and in Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice (DETR, 1998 para. 4.3.2). This states that the priority now is to find new ways of enriching the quality of the whole countryside whilst accommodating appropriate development, in order to complement the protection that designations offer. This guidance is in line with the 'character approach' to planning advocated by the Countryside Agency (Planning Tomorrow's Countryside, 2000).

RPG9 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (March 2001)

2.4.9 Regional Planning Guidance provides a regional framework for the preparation of local authority development plans, and other regional strategies and programmes. RPG9 is the Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, which includes the Shire County, Unitary and District Councils for Essex. RPG9 covers the period up to 2016.

2.4.10 In its Environmental Strategy and the Countryside, RPG9 states that 'a high quality environment is essential to the future prosperity of the South East'. Furthermore, the Guidance notes that 'the effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources are fundamental aspects of the vision for this Region which is highly urbanised and subject to development pressures.' In this context, RPG9 encourages 'positive planning' for the care and maintenance of the Region's environment.

2.4.11 In addition to nationally and internationally designated areas, RPG9 specifically recognises that 'the wider countryside of the South East is valuable in providing countryside around and between towns, undeveloped coast, extensive open space and river corridors.' Protection and enhancement of the region's landscape, biodiversity and the built and historic heritage is a core principle of the Guidance in this respect.

Structure Plan Policy

2.4.12 The current strategic planning policies of the JSPAs for the development and use of land in Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council are set out in the Adopted Replacement Structure Plan (April 2001). The Written Statement contains specific landscape policies that focus on identifying areas, characteristics and features that are considered to require protection and/or enhancement; other key sectoral and area-based policies elsewhere in the JSP that provide the framework for development also include landscape issues as a key consideration.

2.4.13 The overall approach of the Adopted RSP to landscape protection and enhancement is discussed below.

Statutory Landscape Designations

2.4.14 The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation recognises the national importance of the scenery, and indicates that priority should be given to the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty. Large scale industrial or commercial development is considered to be inconsistent with the objectives of designation, although regard should be given to the economic and social development needs of local communities and rural industries. This is reflected in Policy NR2 (Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) which states:

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is of national importance and will be subject to the most rigorous protection from inappropriate development. Conservation, enhancement and management measures will be carried out by the local authorities to promote its natural beauty and special character. Within the Area:-

1. *Development will not be allowed unless it is compatible with conserving and enhancing the Area's landscape character and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside;*
2. *Development located outside but near to Dedham Vale AONB will not be permitted if it would seriously detract from views into or out of the Area.*

A similar policy also applies in relation to the proposed extension of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Policy NR3).

2.4.15 Whilst not strictly a landscape designation, the statutory protection afforded by the Green Belt provides a large area in which development on greenfield sites in the countryside outside of existing urban areas is strictly controlled. Two of the principal functions of the Green Belt in Essex are (Policy C1):

- *assist in safeguarding the open countryside surrounding London from encroachment by urban development;*
- *preserve the setting and special character of historic towns located within the Belt.*

2.4.16 Both of these statutory Green Belt functions are of benefit in protecting the character of the countryside in this area.

Landscape Conservation and Enhancement Policies

2.4.17 The Adopted RSP places a strong emphasis on the character of the landscape. This is clearly reflected in the policy framework developed under the heading of 'Natural Resources' which is concerned with the protection and enhancement of the landscape in the round, including nationally designated landscapes, historic landscape features, nature conservation and biodiversity, and the urban fringe. This approach is further supported by the eight objectives for the area's natural and built environment set out in Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy (Protecting the Natural and Built Environment). Policy CS2 seeks to maintain and conserve the quality of the natural and built environment by:

1. *Safeguarding and enhancing the character and townscape of the urban environment;*
2. *Giving priority to protecting and enhancing areas designated as having intrinsic environmental quality at international, national and strategic level;*
3. *Sustaining and enhancing the rural environment, including conserving the countryside character and the protection of the countryside for its own sake;*
4. *Protecting and enhancing the landscape, wildlife and heritage qualities of the coastline;*
5. *Enhancing and managing by appropriate use, land in the Metropolitan Green Belt and urban fringe;*
6. *Retaining the best and most versatile land for agriculture;*
7. *Preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the area;*
8. *Managing the demand for water resources by controlling the location, scale and phasing of development so as to protect environmental and nature conservation interests.*

2.4.18 The Adopted RSP advocates the need for District Authorities to develop a better understanding of their local landscape character to allow essential change to be positively managed and planned for. Formal landscape character assessments are an essential pre-requisite for the identification of the particular landscape characteristics that need to be protected, conserved and enhanced. Policy NR4 (Landscape Character Assessment) states:

Landscape character assessments should be prepared of District areas, identifying the particular character of different areas of the countryside, to help inform the preparation of Local Plans. Development will not be allowed which would detract from the visual quality of these areas. Until such assessments have been completed, Special Landscape Areas, where they are currently defined in adopted local plans, will be taken to identify areas where conservation or restoration of existing character should be given high priority.

2.4.19 Policy NR1 (Landscape Conservation) sets out a general policy which seeks to ensure that:

The natural beauty, amenity and traditional character of the landscape will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Development must respect its landscape setting and will not be permitted if it would cause permanent destruction or damage to the character of the landscape. Development will not be permitted which would have a material adverse impact, even of limited duration, on the character and appearance of the landscape, including specific landscape features of identified importance.

2.4.20 In addition, the Adopted RSP gives specific attention to the historic dimension of the landscape in Policy NR5 (Historic Landscape Features) which states:

> *Development will not be permitted which would have a materially adverse impact upon the historic and archaeological importance, existing landscape character, and physical appearance of Ancient Landscapes, Ancient Woodlands, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Protected Lanes. Conservation, enhancement and management measures will be encouraged and implemented within these defined areas so as to retain and promote their historic and landscape interest. Any proposals which would give rise to a material increase in the amount of traffic using Protected Lanes will not be permitted.*

2.4.21 The importance of protecting and enhancing woods, trees and hedgerows is reflected in Policy NR9 (Woodland and Tree Cover), which states:

> *The landscape will be enhanced by increasing the coverage of woodland and hedgerows using locally native species in ways which are in keeping with the character of the landscape, through such measures as grant-aided schemes and taking opportunities provided by the consideration of new development proposals. Where appropriate existing woods, trees and hedgerows will be protected for their wildlife and historic importance.*

2.4.22 The Adopted RSP also includes two area specific polices which seek strategic landscape improvements. These include:

> *Policy NR10 (Thames Chase Community Forest)*
> *The establishment of a Community Forest at Thames Chase is supported for the purposes of landscape improvement, outdoor recreation, nature conservation, forestry and farming. Any development proposals within the Forest area will be subject to other policies in this Plan for controlling development in the Metropolitan Green Belt.*
>
> *Policy NR11 (The Urban Fringe)*
> *The local planning authorities will work together and with other agencies to provide opportunities for the enhancement and effective management of land in the urban fringe through, for example, such measures as landscape improvement, habitat creation, enhanced public access and improving damaged or degraded land. Any development proposals will be subject to other policies in this Plan for controlling development in the Metropolitan Green Belt and the rural areas beyond the Green Belt.*

2.4.23 The Adopted RSP also contains strategic policies that seek to conserve and enhance features of heritage value in the landscape. These include policies for:

- Historic Settlements (Policy HC1)
- Conservation Areas (Policy HC2)
- Listed Buildings (Policies HC3/HC4)
- Archaeological Sites (Policies HC5/HC6)

2.2.24 Policies CC1 – CC2 provide appropriate protection in relation to the conservation of the natural and heritage values of the undeveloped coast.

2.4.25 Policy NR6 (Nature Conservation Sites) includes reference to the protection, conservation and enhancement of 'natural features' of local value, and encourages the 'appropriate management of all sites and features of the landscape that are of defined importance for nature conservation'. These features are likely to include landscape elements such as hedgerows, trees, stream corridors, woodlands, field ponds, etc. Policy NR6 also includes reference to Policy BE5 (Planning Obligations) in relation to securing management agreements or other compensatory provisions for necessary development adversely impacting on designated sites. There is not currently a similar policy in relation to landscape enhancement and compensatory measures in the RSP.

Summary

2.4.26 When read as a whole, the strategic policies in the Adopted RSP generally provide a robust framework within which District authorities can develop appropriate landscape policies for guiding change and development in the landscape. In addition, the classification and assessment of the county landscapes will provide an essential tool for informing appropriate change and new development within this policy framework.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section explains the relationship of the national classification of 'Regional Character Areas' defined by the Character of England Map with the county-scale classification, and its relationship to more detailed District or other local assessments.

3.2 Regional Character Areas

3.2.1 The Countryside Agency/English Nature/English Heritage *Character Map of England* identifies five broad 'Regional Character Areas' in which the study area falls (see Figure 6):

- Greater Thames Estuary (81);
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths (82).
- South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (86);
- East Anglian Chalk (87);
- Northern Thames Basin (111);

3.2.2 These Regional Character Areas are at the top of the hierarchy used to describe landscape character, and provide the framework for the assessment of more detailed character areas within Essex. The Regional Character Areas are illustrated in Figure 8, and their key characteristics are summarised below:

Greater Thames Estuary

- Extensive open spaces dominated by sky within low-lying landscape. Numerous coastal estuaries extend the maritime influence inland.
- Strong feeling of remoteness. Mudflats populated by a large and varied bird population.
- Traditional unimproved wet pasture grazed with sheep and cattle. Extensive drained and ploughed productive arable land protected from floods by sea walls, with some areas of more mixed agriculture on higher ground.
- Open grazing pastures patterned by a network of ancient and modern reed-fringed ditches and dykes, numerous creeks and few vertical boundaries such as hedges or fences.
- Hedgerows and trees absent from large, rectilinear fields with trees on the higher, drier pockets of ground near farmsteads and dwellings.
- Distinctive military heritage on the coastline.
- Low steep clay cliffs facing towards Essex across the Thames estuary.

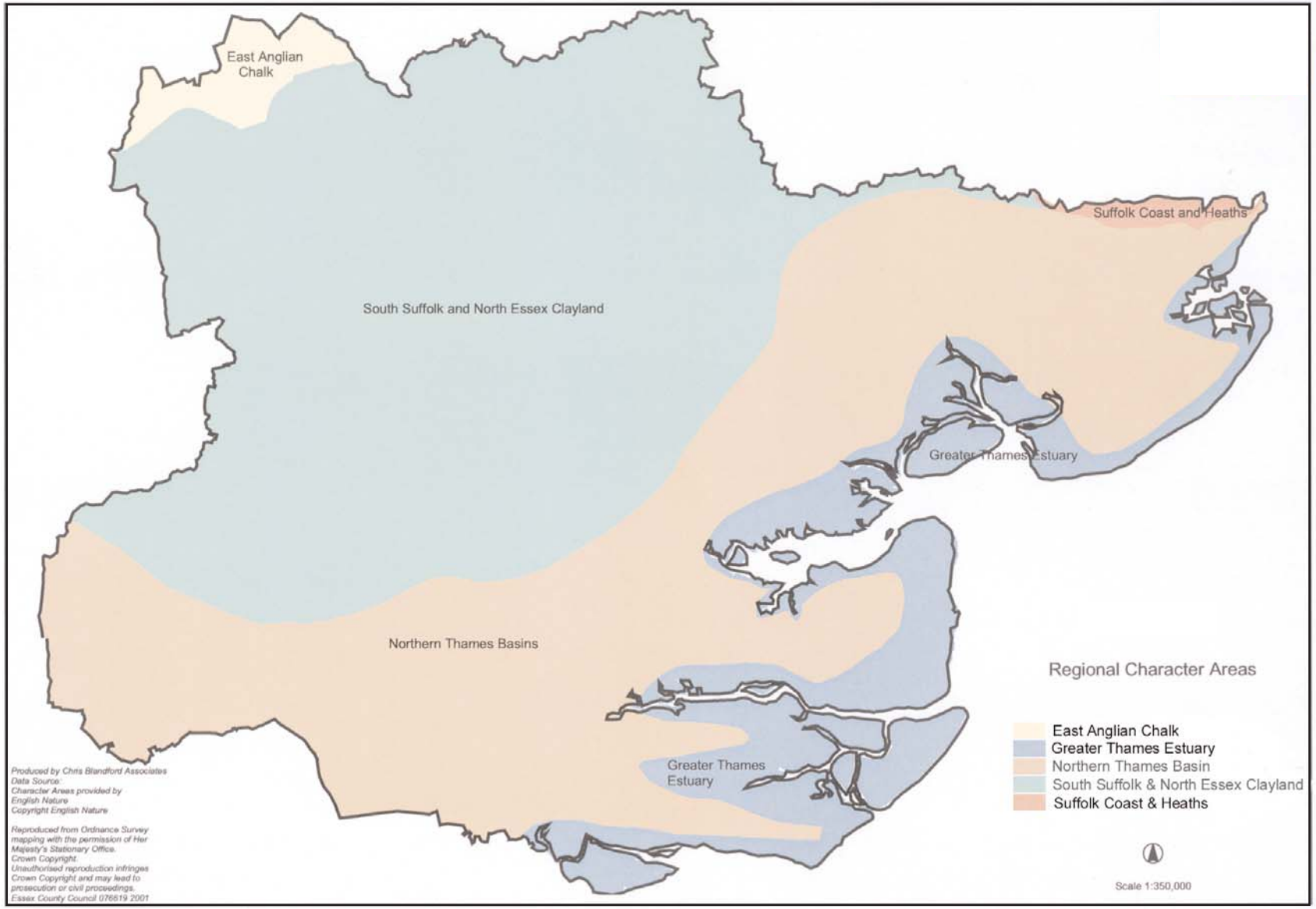


Figure 6 - Regional Character Areas

- Numerous small villages and hamlets related to the coastal economy of fishing (at Mersea), boatbuilding and yachting.
- Pressure on major estuaries, from urban, industrial and recreational developments.
- Thames edge marshes subject to major developments including ports, waste disposal, marine dredging, urbanisation, mineral extraction, prominent power stations and petrochemical complexes.

Suffolk Coast and Heaths

- Distinct topography and land cover caused by crag deposits forming free draining and easily worked acidic sands and gravels.
- Largely unspoilt mosaic of estuaries, saltmarsh, grazing marsh, reedbed, river valleys, arable, heath and woodland with strong coastal influence.
- Large commercial ports including Harwich and seasonal influx of yachts provide interest and a variety of scale along the estuaries.
- Large conifer plantations, closely associated with heathland and birch scrub.
- Small nucleated villages and isolated farmhouses. Brick buildings with colour washed walls and pantiles.
- Coastal towns and villages combined with sailing are a tourist attraction.
- String of landscaped parkland along A12 in the west and along the Stour estuary.

South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland

- Flat, chalky, boulder clay plateau dissected by undulating river valley topography.
- Predominantly arable with wooded appearance. Some pasture in valley floors. Irregular field pattern; remnant Ancient Countryside.
- Scattered farmsteads, deep ditches and moats, parishes with scattered, small settlements around commons with isolated hamlets. Concentration of isolated moated sites.
- Timber-framed and colour-washed houses, sometimes faced with Georgian red brick. Impressive churches. Large villages and frequent towns most with medieval street plans and timber-frame houses. Rich heritage of barns. Fewer settlements and more 20th century development towards coast, with several large estates.
- Cultural association with Constable and tourist attraction of preserved, archetypal, lowland pastoral Dedham Vale with historic vernacular buildings.
- Hedgerow trees are elm with hornbeam. Woods rarely large but some of ancient coppice. Typical pattern of copses connected by hedgerow. Skyline mostly wooded with some bare ridgelines.
- Winding road pattern with wide verges and strong hedgerows although impact of Dutch Elm disease apparent. Sunken hollow lanes a feature.

East Anglian Chalk

- Distinctive, open, variable topography of the Chalk, a continuation of the Chilterns.
- Large-scale rolling downland, mainly arable, with distinctive beech belts along roads and in hilltop clumps and ash-dominated woodland.
- Long straight roads, open grass tracks, isolated 19th century white or yellow brick farmhouses and distinctive nucleated villages, generally within valleys.
- Few large towns and influence of Cambridge on major transport routes; enlarged commuter villages which still retain their rural character.
- Generally muted colour range with distinctive pale soils and building materials.
- Significant linear ancient or Roman earthworks.

Northern Thames Basin

- Diverse plateau landscape divided by a series of broad river valleys and extensive areas of broadleaved woodlands.
- Large towns of Hertfordshire, M25 and M1 motorways, railway line and prominent electricity pylons.
- Arable floodplain land with hedgerow-deficient field boundaries. Open grazing land in certain areas.
- Many river valleys extensively modified by reservoirs, gravel pits, artificial wetlands, river realignment and canals.
- Red brick villages in the smaller valleys contrast with the heavily developed larger valley floodplains. Organic field boundaries defined by water courses and woodland clearances.
- Plateau areas used for arable agriculture with regular field shape of 18th century enclosures.

3.3 Landscape Character Types

3.3.1 Within the framework provided by the Regional Character Areas, the study area has been further classified into 'Landscape Character Types' - broad tracts of landscape with similar characteristics that may re-occur in different parts of the County. These generic landscape divisions have been defined from analysis of geological, soils, topographical and land cover maps, informed by key references such as Hunter (1999).

3.3.2 At it simplest level, the study area comprises three broad zones of landscape. Inland from the coastal plain lies a zone of wooded hills and London Clay, which in turn gives way to the extensive plateau of glacial till that dominates much of the study area. In the extreme northwest of the study area, chalk landscapes more characteristic of Cambridgeshire are

evident. River valleys cut across and dissect these areas, many of which form significant estuaries where they meet the coast. Overlaying this physiographic pattern are large areas dominated by urban land uses to the extent that they create distinct landscape types in their own right.

3.3.3 The distribution of the Landscape Character Types are shown on Figure 7, and described in Section 4.0. The seven Landscape Character Types are:

- Chalk Upland Landscapes
- Glacial Till Plateau Landscapes
- River Valley Landscapes
- Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes
- London Clay Landscapes
- Coastal Landscapes
- Urban Landscapes

3.3.4 As hedgerows make a very important contribution to the character of Essex an indication of the hedgerow species associated with the broad landscape types is provided to accompany the description of their key characteristics. However, it must be emphasised that there may be significant local variations in species depending on the age of hedgerows and local soil types. It is therefore suggested that as and when district character assessments are carried out, that hedgerow species associated with local landscape types are looked at in more detail.

3.4 Landscape Character Areas

3.4.1 The study has identified thirty-five different 'Landscape Character Areas' - geographical areas with a recognisable pattern of landscape characteristics, both physical and experiential, that combine to create a distinct sense of place. The distribution of the Landscape Character Areas are shown on Figure 8, and described in Section 4.0.

3.4.2 As the table below shows, the Landscape Character Areas are sub-divisions of the seven generic divisions of the landscape:

Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Areas
(A) Chalk Upland Landscapes	North West Essex Chalk Farmlands (A1)
(B) Glacial Till Plateau Landscapes	Central Essex Farmlands (B1) North Essex Farmlands (B2) Blackwater/Stour Farmlands (B3) Gosfield Wooded Farmlands (B4)
(C) River Valley Landscapes	Cam Valley (C1) Stort Valley (C2) Lee Valley (C3) Roding Valley (C4) Chelmer Valley (C5) Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys (C6) Colne Valley (C7) Stour Valley (C8)
(D) Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes	Epping Forest & Ridges (D1) Brentwood Hills (D2) Danbury Hills (D3) Tiptree Ridge (D4)
(E) London Clay Landscapes	South Essex Farmlands (E1) South Colchester Farmlands (E2) Tendring Plain (E3) North Colchester Farmlands (E4)
(F) Coastal Landscapes	Thames Estuary (F1) Crouch & Roach Farmland (F2) Dengie & Foulness Coast (F3) Blackwater Estuary (F4) North Blackwater/Colne Coastal Farmlands (F5) Mersea Island (F6) Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast (F7) Hamford Water (F8) Stour Estuary Slopes (F9) Stour Estuary (F10)
(G) Urban Landscapes	Harlow & Environs (G1) Chelmsford & Environs (G2) South Essex Coastal Towns (G3) Colchester & Environs (G4)

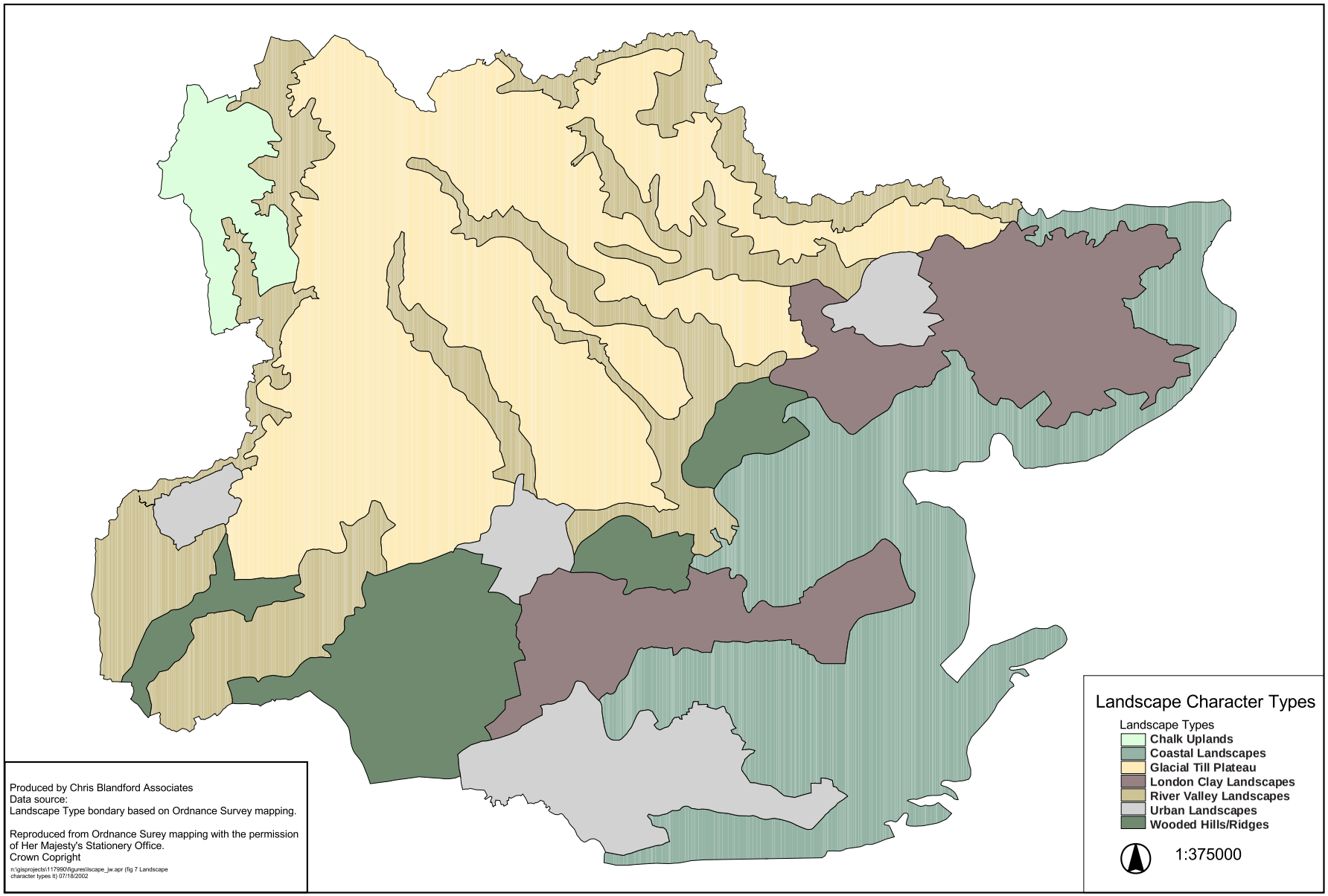


Figure 7 - Landscape Character Types

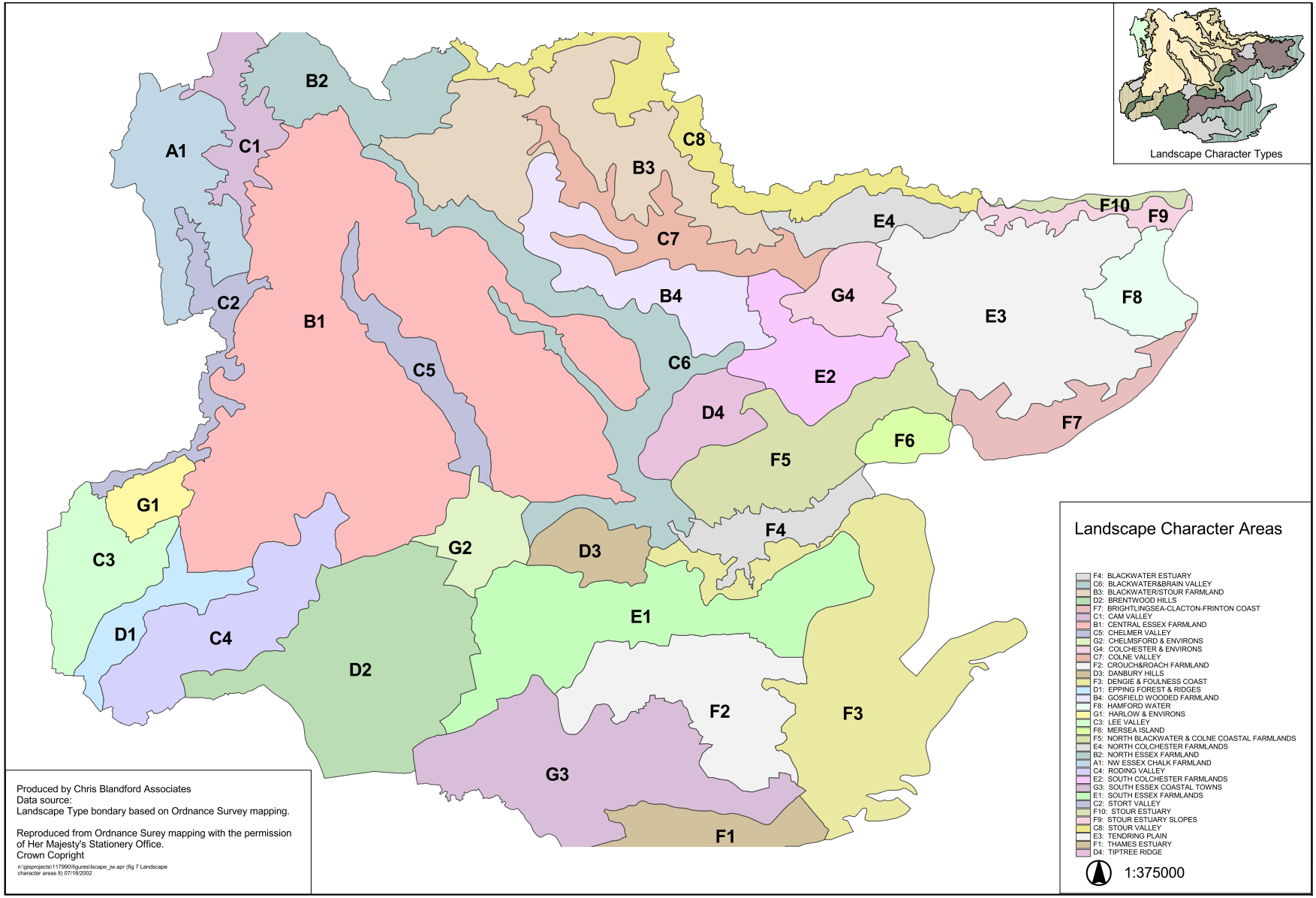


Figure 8 - Landscape Character Areas

3.5 District Level Assessments

3.5.1 This county-level classification of Landscape Types and Landscape Character Areas provides the framework for more detailed landscape character assessments of District areas as required by the Adopted RSP Policy NR4 (Landscape Character Assessment) to help inform the preparation of Local Plans. A district assessment completed is:

- Tendring District Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for Tendring DC, November 2001);

3.5.2 This study also provides a framework for other 'sub-county' assessments. These include for example:

- The Dedham Vale Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Landscape Design Associates for the Countryside Commission, 1997);
- Thames Chase Landscape Assessment (Landscape Design Associates for the Thames Chase Community Forest Unit, 1995);
- Mid-Essex Coast Landscape Assessment ('SAIL' Project, Draft, 2001);
- Essex Coast Environmentally Sensitive Area Landscape Assessment (ADAS for MAFF, 1994);
- London-Stansted-Cambridge Potential Growth Area Study - Landscape Appraisal (Essex CC Landscape Consultancy, Internal Draft, 2001).

4.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PROFILES

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section describes the character of the Landscape Character Areas identified by the assessment. Following an introduction to the Landscape Character Types within which it is located, each Character Area 'profile' is structured thus:

- key characteristics
- summary of overall character
- landscape condition
- past, present and future trends for change
- sensitivity evaluation.

4.1.2 A selection of photographs are also included to illustrate relevant aspects of the landscape represented by particular Character Areas.

4.1.3 It is important to note that the boundaries between the Landscape Character Areas may not always represent an abrupt change in character. In contrast to the well-defined lines depicted on the maps, the character of an area may be more clear and distinctive in the centre, with transitions at the edges where the influences of land cover, land use, settlement and field pattern may be less consistent. So that the landscape merges with that of adjacent character areas sharing characteristics with them as part of a continuum. This does not imply that the landscape character of transition areas is any less important.

4.1.4 A summary matrix of the sensitivity evaluations for all the character areas is provided in Appendix B. This should be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 - 1.4.17.

4.2 Chalk Upland Landscapes (A)

4.2.1 The Chalk Uplands in north west Essex are a small part of the more extensive East Anglian Chalk that forms a narrow continuation of the chalk ridge, extending from the Chilterns to south west Norfolk.

4.2.2 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn and Ash, with occasional Blackthorn, Elderberry, Dogwood, Hazel, Beech, Field Maple, Oak, Dog rose, Spindle, Wayfaring tree.

4.2.3 The Chalk Uplands comprises one Landscape Character Area within the study area:

North West Essex Chalk Farmland (A1)

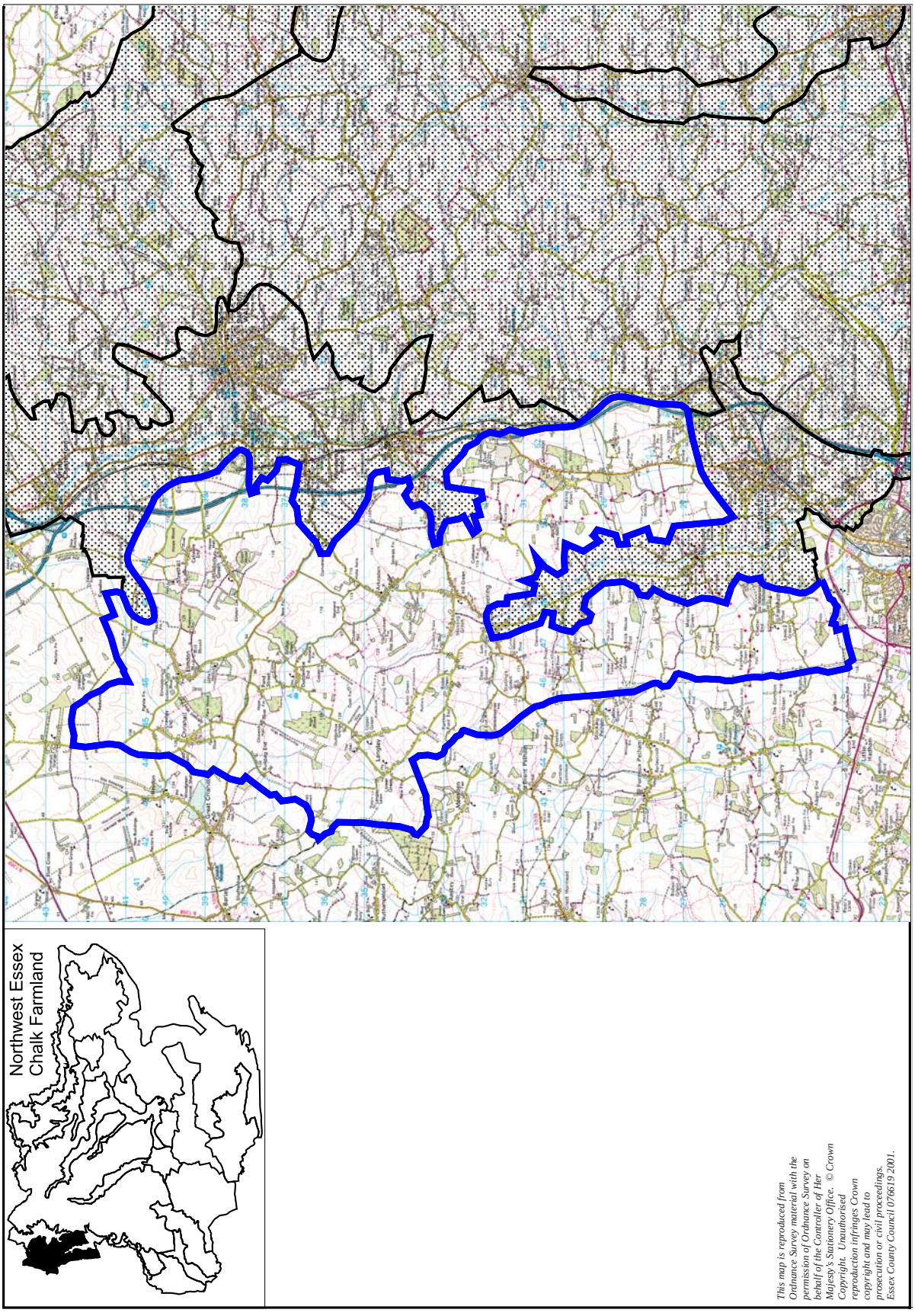
4.2.4 *North West Essex Chalk Farmland (A1)*

Key Characteristics

- Strongly rolling landform of broad roundbacked ridges.
- Large scale arable farmland.
- Distinctive elevated, expansive and generally open character.
- Panoramic views from ridgetops.
- Dispersed blocks of woodland and isolated copses.
- Sparse settlement pattern, small linear villages alongside stream courses, and hamlets with greens.
- Mostly tranquil and remote character.

Overall Character

The North West Essex Chalk Farmland is a strongly rolling landscape of broad ridges, separated by valleys with small narrow streams. Large to very large arable fields are defined by broken hedgelines, drainage ditches or grassy tracks. Relatively few hedgerows, and widely spaced blocks of woodland and copses result in a generally open character. Sweeping views across the undulating arable farmland are punctuated by dispersed woods and copses, in the south and west partly interrupted by power lines. Panoramic views occur from the higher ground of the broad ridgetops. Villages are widely spaced in the valleys, and smaller


Northwest Essex
Chalk Farmland
This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Essex County Council 076619 2001.

hamlets are focused around greens on higher ground. A sparse dispersed settlement pattern and narrow lanes with few major roads crossing the area, other than the M11 on the eastern fringes, help to create a largely remote and tranquil character.

Character Profile

Geology

- Upper/Middle Chalk and Glacial Till (chalky boulder clay). The chalk is much overlain by the till, but is exposed on the northerly escarpment, and on some of the valleysides.

Soils

- Heavy clay soils on the broad ridgetops, freer draining chalky soils on the valleysides and on the escarpment.

Landform

- Strongly rolling landform. A moderately sloped escarpment occurs near the northern boundary of the area, but the landform predominantly comprises broad, roundbacked, undulating ridges, divided by valleys with small streams such as Wicken Water and Bourne Brook.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Remnant pockets of chalk grassland associated with road verges/tracks. A few small calcareous meadows.
- Ancient ash/maple/hazel woodland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- A large scale field pattern with straight boundaries, associated with parliamentary enclosure, some more organic in shape to the south. Small-medium size fields in valleys and around settlements. Field boundaries defined by low fragmented hedges, drainage ditches and grass verged tracks.

Farming pattern

- Predominantly arable landuse, with small pockets of pasture around settlements.

Woodland/tree cover

- Deciduous/mixed woodlands, some large widely dispersed, isolated small copses and coniferous plantations. Localised concentrations of woodland around Strethall, Quendon and Elmdon. Bare northern escarpment.
- Hedgerow trees, small and scattered mainly hawthorn and ash.
- Small groups of trees or copses around many of the settlements which contribute to their setting and tree lined narrow streams.

Settlement pattern and built form

- A sparse (relative to many other areas of Essex), and a mixed settlement pattern. Small linear villages in stream valleys. Dispersed hamlets typically with greens on the higher ground. A few isolated farmsteads.
- Typical historic vernacular of clunch and colour washed plastered buildings with thatch roofs, some flint and brick buildings. Limited modern development.

Communications

- Mainly winding lanes, with some straight 'enclosure' roads.
- M11 cuts through parts of the eastern side of the character area.

Other landscape features

- Small historic parks of Quendon (Deer Park), Woodhall and Waterside.
- Windmills at Roast Green, and Castle mound at Clavering.
- Farm ponds/moats.
- Chalk quarry at Ugley.

Landscape Condition

- The relatively small number of farmland hedgerows are in poor condition due to lack of management, and tend to be fragmented. Thicker, better managed hedgerows are locally associated with settlements.

- Woodlands are in moderate condition. There is evidence of neglected coppice in some.

- Streamside vegetation is a strong feature of some valley bottoms, but in others it has been lost or eroded by intensive farming practices.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Cartographic evidence indicates that unusually in Essex open field systems were the subject of late 'enclosure'.

- Intensification of arable farming since the Second World War, has led to the removal of hedgerows or their fragmentation due to a lack of management. Pylon routes in the south and west of the area are a visual intrusion. 1960s/1970s infill has occurred in the villages and hamlets out of keeping with the vernacular.

- Small scale village infill and expansion if not sensitively sited and designed, could further erode local distinctiveness. Pressure for telecommunication/radio masts, particularly along the M11, may be difficult to absorb in this landscape because of its openness.

- The most significant factor shaping the future of the landscape is likely to continue to be agricultural. Changing subsidy regimes may bring opportunities for landscape restoration of chalk grassland, and for hedgerow and woodland management. Pressure for new features such as irrigation reservoirs and larger farm buildings, will require very sensitive siting and design if they are to be successfully absorbed into this landscape.

NORTH WEST ESSEX CHALK FARMLAND (A1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Visually exposed landscape. • Mostly tranquil. • Distinctive settlement pattern/form/character.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Visually exposed landscape. • Mostly tranquil. • Distinctive settlement pattern/form/character.	H
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Visually exposed landscape. • Mostly tranquil. • Landform character.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Visually exposed landscape. • Landform character. • Mostly tranquil.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Visually exposed landscape. • Landform character. *Appropriate siting in relation to landform, existing settlement, as well as massing form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Generally open character. • Visually exposed landscape. • Widely dispersed woodland pattern. *Important to respond to large scale open character, use of woodlands as focal points on ridgetops. (May be opportunities for habitat restoration of open chalk grassland.)*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Landform character. • Visual exposed landscape. • Mostly tranquil.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Distinctive character and setting of settlements. • Character of the lanes.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Visually exposed landscape. • Mostly tranquil. *Location/route alignment in relation to landform is critical.*	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerowed field pattern. • Woodland condition. • Chalk grassland road verges.	M

Note:

(a) *Very visually exposed ridgetops/sides in the landscape have a high sensitivity level to categories 5, 9.*
(b) *With regard to Category 3, online improvement of the M11 would be of moderate sensitivity.*

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.3 Glacial Till Plateau Landscapes (B)

4.3.1 The Glacial Till Plateau dominates the north and west of the study area, and is part of the extensive claylands that stretch from north Essex into south Suffolk and beyond. It is heavily dissected by the River Valley landscapes that cut into the boulder clay.

4.3.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- Gently undulating, glacial boulder clay ('till') plateau dissected by major river valleys.
- Predominantly arable, with some wooded areas and an irregular field pattern.
- Scattered farmsteads, hamlets and large villages, and relatively few towns.
- Historic buildings are frequent features in the landscape – these include timber-framed and colour-washed houses, and a rich selection of historic barns.
- Woodland blocks and hedgerows visually link together to form an often wooded skyline.
- Winding road pattern away from major routes, with verges and strong hedgerows.

4.3.3 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Ash and Field Maple, with occasional Elm, Oak, Hazel, Dogwood, Elderberry.

4.3.4 The Glacial Till Plateau comprises four Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- Central Essex Farmlands (B1)
- North Essex Farmlands (B2)
- Blackwater Farmlands/Stour Farmlands (B3)
- Gosfield Wooded Farmlands (B4)

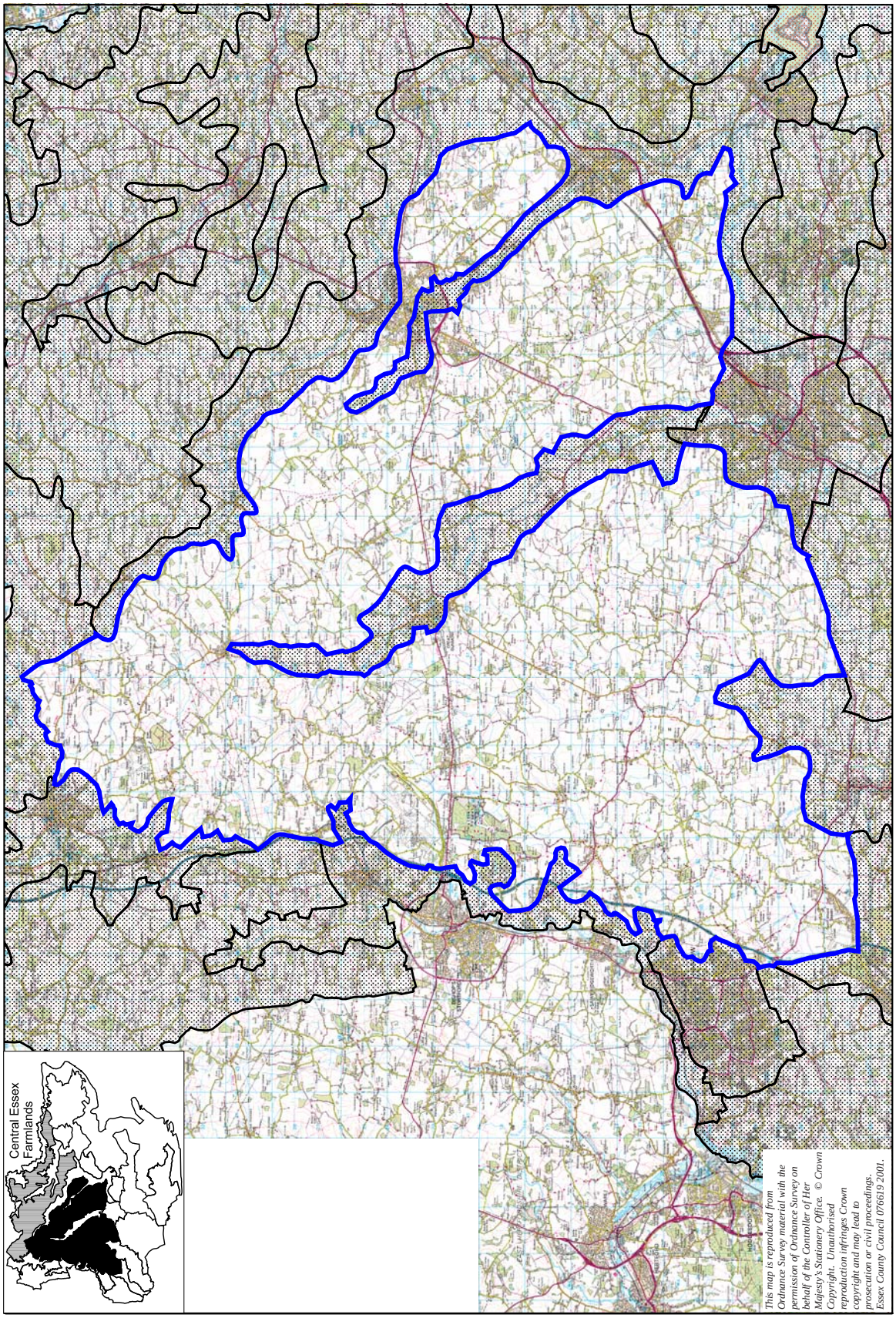
4.3.5 *Central Essex Farmlands (B1)*

Key Characteristics

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches.
- Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and ponds.
- A concentration of isolated moated farmsteads.
- Network of narrow, winding lanes.
- Mostly tranquil character away from major roads and Stansted Airport.

Overall Character

The Central Essex Farmlands is an extensive area of gently undulating arable farmland bisected by the Chelmer Valley. Irregular fields are enclosed by thick but intermittent hedgerows, or just marked by grassy banks and ditches. In long views scattered small woods and copses, and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small isolated hamlets and farmsteads, often straggling along lanes, with a few widely separated towns and larger villages. Narrow strip greens and moated farmsteads are distinctive features of the area. Away from the A120, A130, A12, M11 road corridors/Stansted Airport and its flightpaths,


Central Essex Farmlands
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large parts of the area have a tranquil character, embracing tracts of fairly secluded countryside.

Character Profile

Geology

- Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay).

Soils

- Slowly permeable calcareous clay soils. Some deep well drained calcareous clay and fine loamy soils.

Landform

- Gently undulating plateau 30-90 m in height.
- Locally more rolling, where dissected by small shallow valleys of streams and brooks.
- Some areas to the south almost flat, e.g. around Boreham.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient ash-maple woodland with hazel coppice, also oak-hornbeam woodland.
- Pockets of calcareous/neutral meadows and marsh.
- Alder-carr in some river/stream valleys.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Irregular field pattern. Predominantly medium size fields, but small fields occur around settlements. Localised areas with large fields where hedgerows have been removed.
- Fields bounded by thick hedgerows or solely by banks and ditches.

Farming pattern

- Mainly arable, small areas of pasture, associated with settlements.

Woodland/tree cover

- Scatter of small-medium size woodlands and small copses with irregular indented outlines.
- Occasional poplar tree belts and small mixed plantations of regular shape.
- Some areas where woodland cover is more sparse.
- Hatfield Forest is a large important area of ancient coppice and wood pasture with pollarded trees.
- Intermittent hedgerow trees of oak, ash, hornbeam. Localised areas with more frequent hedgerow trees, e.g. around Terling/Fairstead, and the northern Roding villages.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Frequent hamlets (ends, greens, tyes) and farmsteads with only a few villages and towns.
- Rich historic architectural detail in market towns such as Thaxted, as well as in many of the smaller settlements.
- Typical historic vernacular of half timber, colour wash plaster, thatch and pegtile roofs, some decorative pargetting.
- Some villages near A12 corridor have more modern suburban development.

Communications

- Many small, narrow winding lanes, sometimes taking dramatic right angled turns. Variable width grass verges. Lanes are often sunken where valleys are crossed.
- Major A120, A130 and M11 roads cross parts of the area.

Other landscape features

- High density of moated farmsteads.
- Spire of Thaxted church is a local landmark in the north.
- Large castle mounds at Pleshey, Gt Canfield.
- A few small historic parklands, e.g. Terling Place and New Hall Boreham.
- London Stansted Airport - extensive flat runways and large buildings.
- Various small active and disused airfields e.g. North Weald, Boreham.
- Two locally visually prominent pylon routes cross east-west in close proximity north of Thaxted, and another route runs north-south between Braintree and Chelmsford.
- Sand and gravel pits near Boreham and Chigwell St James.
- Small irrigation reservoirs are common.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the hedgerows and woodlands overall is moderate. In some parts many hedges have been lost, or are very fragmented. In others, such as around Terling they are well managed.

- Localised erosion of character occurs due to sand and gravel workings.

- The condition of the small settlements overall is good. However, some farmsteads have large visually intrusive modern sheds and/or conifer planting out of character.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The landscape was subject to early enclosure and then evolved gradually.

- However, significant change has occurred since the Second World War with rationalisation of field pattern and loss of hedgerows associated with agricultural intensification. This is now considered to have peaked.

- Future trends for change may include increasing urban and transportation developments especially associated with the major road corridors. This may include pressure related directly or indirectly to Stansted Airport expansion and potential growth area in RPG9.

- The main influence on the landscape will probably continue to be agricultural. Pressures could include larger farm buildings, irrigation reservoirs, forestry and various recreational uses near urban areas. Equally changes in the agricultural subsidy regime could bring opportunities for conservation and restoration of hedgerow pattern, and improved management of woodlands.

CENTRAL ESSEX FARMLANDS (B1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of hedgerow and woodland pattern. • Tranquil character away from existing major road corridors/Stansted. • Distinctive settlement pattern/form. *Possible opportunities for landscape enhancement in areas of poorer landscape condition and/or weaker strength of character e.g. westside of Chelmsford, northside of Boreham, east of Hatfield Peveral. Could create new landscape frameworks that respect traditional character/pattern of hedgerows, woodlands and linear greens in settlements.*	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate intervisibility of the landscape. *Possible opportunities to improve some existing visually poor urban edges.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Woodland/hedgerow pattern. • Irregular grain of the landscape. • Tranquil character away from existing major road corridors/Stansted. *Selection of appropriate route alignments and responding to woodland form/pattern in design of mitigation planting is critical.*	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate intervisibility of the landscape. • Integrity of hedgerow and woodlands pattern. *Appropriate siting, massing, form and colour as well as strong landscape frameworks respecting traditional character are important.*	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate intervisibility.	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerow pattern. • Woodland shape and character. • Moderate intervisibility.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of hedgerow and woodland pattern. • Moderate intervisibility. • Tranquil character away from existing major road corridors/Stansted.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character and setting of small settlements/farmsteads. • Distinctive character of the lanes.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate intervisibility of the landscape. • Tranquil away from existing major road corridors/Stansted.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow condition/pattern. • Woodland condition.	M

Note:

(a) *Some areas in good condition and/or with strong strength of character, e.g. Terling/Fairstead area would have a high sensitivity to most types of development/change.*

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

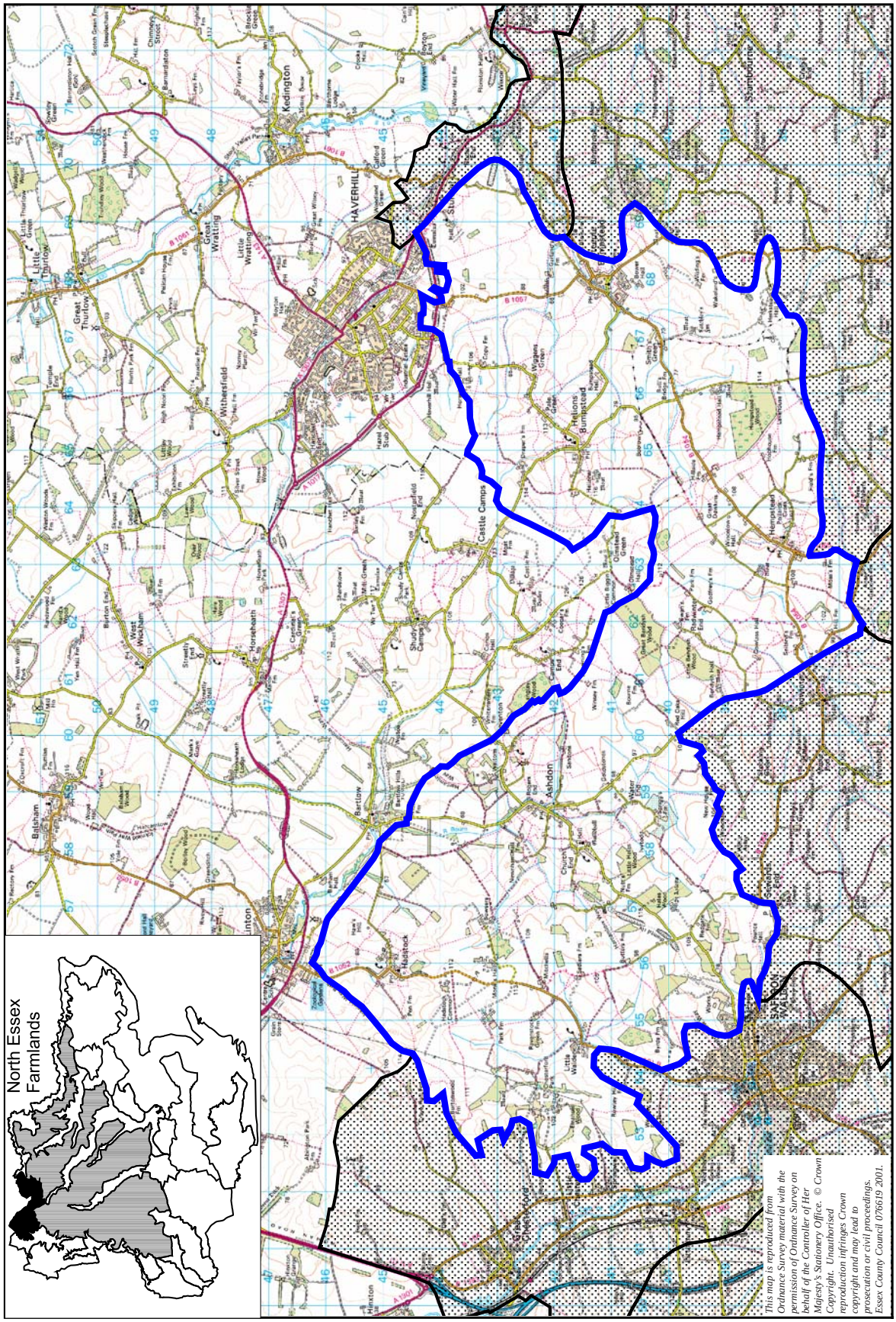
4.3.6 *North Essex Farmlands (B2)*

Key Characteristics

- Strongly undulating landform dissected by small valleys. Distinctive, elevated broad flat topped ridges.
- Medium to large scale arable field pattern.
- Sense of openness and space on high ground with wide views.
- Contrasting semi-enclosed character of some valleys.
- Relatively low density of small villages, hamlets and farmsteads.
- Mostly remote/tranquil character.

Overall Character

The North Essex Farmlands is a large scale arable landscape which compared with other areas of the glacial till plateau is more rolling. The highest land has large or very large arable fields which form strong bands of colour across the landscape, and wide views are possible from the open roads. Occasional trees and hedgerows stand out against the simple unified background but woodlands are infrequent. This contrasts with a more enclosed character in the valleys. Small nucleated and linear villages/hamlets nestle in the valleys, with only a few large farmsteads dotted on the higher ground. These all tend to have a very traditional character in which the local vernacular dominates.


North Essex Farmlands
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Character Profile

Geology

- Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay), small area of chalk near Bartlow.

Soils

- Slowly permeable calcareous clay soils, small areas of well drained coarse and fine loamy soils, and calcareous soils.

Landform

- Undulating landform.
- Broad flat topped ridges up to 130 m elevation.
- Narrow valleys with small streams.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient ash/maple woodland with nationally rare oxlip.
- Small calcareous meadows.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Large regular and irregular fields. Some very large fields. Bounded by low trimmed hedgerows, banks and ditches.
- Medium size fields in the valleys with a stronger hedgerow pattern.

Farming pattern

- Dominated by arable farmland.
- Some pasture associated with small settlements.

Woodland/tree cover

- Sparse woodland cover in the north east of the area.
- Scatter of small deciduous woodlands, mixed copses in the valleys. A few large blocks of woodland extending onto higher ground, e.g. Hempstead Wood, Little Bendysh Wood.
- Mixed tree belts near Bartlow.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Small nucleated and linear villages/hamlets strung out along lanes, mainly in the valleys or along spring lines.
- Relatively low density of settlement compared with other areas of the glacial till plateau.
- Vernacular of half timber and colour wash plaster, thatch and pegtile. Some brick and flint.

Communications

- Mainly narrow winding lanes, a few straight roads.
- No major roads cross the area.

Other landscape features

- Occasional moated farmsteads.
- Prominent radio mast on high ground near Herkstead Hill Farm.
- North-south pylon route is visually prominent in the landscape north of Little Walden.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows are often fragmented in poor condition.

- The character of small settlements and farmsteads is good with few incongruous features.

- Agricultural/light industrial buildings are locally intrusive south of Hadstock.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- It appears parts of the area were subject to late enclosure of open field system with creation of large fields with straight boundaries.

- Intensification of arable farming since the Second World War has led to further rationalisation of field pattern and creation of some very large fields with loss of hedgerow boundaries.

- There may be some pressure in future for additional masts on high ground which would be very difficult to absorb and could have a damaging cumulative impact.

- The main future influence on the landscape will probably remain agricultural. Any change will need to respond to the simple large scale character of the landscape.

NORTH ESSEX FARMLANDS (B2)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides. • Mostly tranquil/remote character.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides. • Mostly tranquil/remote character.	H
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides. • Mostly tranquil/remote character.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides. • Mostly tranquil/remote character.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides. • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Distinctive settlement character. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Woodland pattern. *Any change would need to respond to simple large scale character of the landscape.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides. • Mostly tranquil/remote character.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Setting and character of small settlements. • Simple undisturbed character of the lanes.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgelines. • Mostly tranquil/remote character.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Coppice management in woodlands. • Hedgerow condition.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

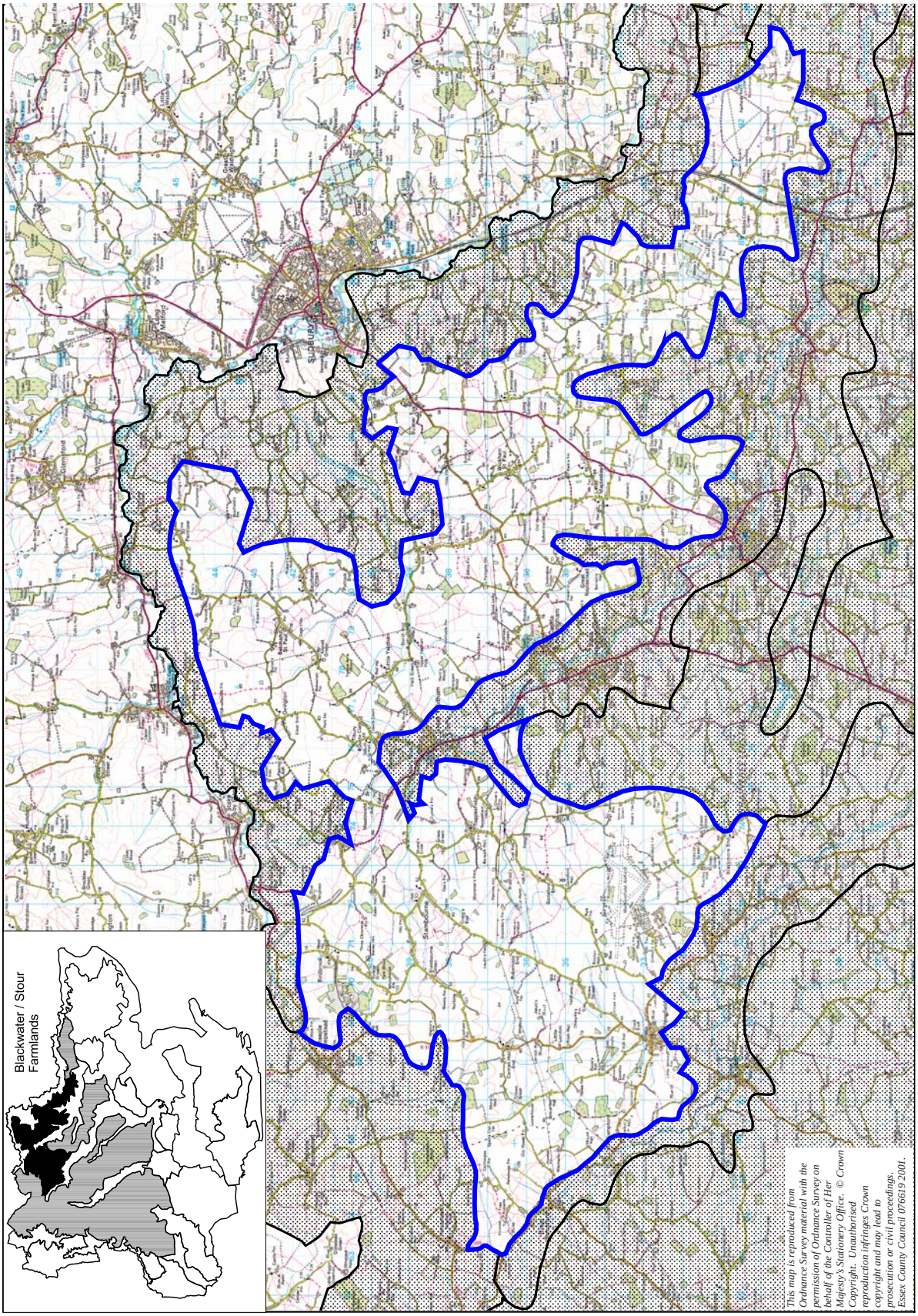
4.3.7 *Blackwater and Stour Farmlands (B3)*

Key Characteristics

- Very gently undulating or flat landform.
- Large scale arable field pattern.
- Infrequent small blocks of woodland, some mature hedgerow trees on field boundaries.
- Wide views across the farmland.
- Small villages, hamlets with a wealth of historic buildings.
- Tranquil character.

Overall Character

The Blackwater and Stour Farmlands is a landscape dominated by large arable fields with relatively few hedgerows and woodlands, except in localised areas, resulting in an open character. Continuous views are common across the farmland to low horizons punctuated by intermittent lines of mature trees. Electricity pylons and telegraph poles are the only other strong vertical features in the flat to gently undulating landscape. Small villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads make up the settlement pattern with no towns in the area contributing to a remote tranquil character.


Blackwater / Stour Farmlands
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Character Profile

Geology

- Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay)

Soils

- Mostly slowly permeable calcareous clay soils, some fine loamy soils.

Landform

- Very gently undulating or flat.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient ash-maple and oak-hornbeam woodlands. Some small leafed lime woods.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Medium to large regular and irregular fields. Localised areas with very large fields.
- Fragmented/remnant hedgerow boundaries.
- Some small fields with a stronger hedgerow pattern in the south east.

Farming pattern

- Arable farmland is the dominant land use.
- Only very small areas of pasture.
- A few orchards in the south east.

Woodland/tree cover

- Large areas with very few woodlands.
- Locally more frequent woods around Alphamstone/Pebmarsh and north west of Finchingfield.
- Occasional broken lines of mature hedgerow trees in field boundaries.
- Settlements often have a tree'd setting.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Mainly linear hamlets and isolated farmsteads along lanes.
- A few nucleated villages, e.g. Finchingfield, Toppesfield.
- Limited modern development associated with settlements.
- Typical historic local vernacular of colourwash plaster, decorative pargetting, half timber, thatch and pegtile roofs.

Communications

- No major roads cross the area.
- Sparse network of narrow, winding lanes.

Other landscape features

- Spains Hall historic parkland.
- Visually prominent east-west pylon route in the north of the area.
- Wethersfield Airstrip.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of many of the farmland hedgerows is poor, but sometimes are more intact in the vicinity of woodland blocks.

- The condition of the small settlements is good with limited out of character modern development.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Since the Second World War there has been extensive hedgerow loss. This is now considered to have reached its peak.

- Future influences on change are likely to be mainly agricultural. New farm buildings, irrigation reservoirs may be particular pressures. Changes in subsidy regimes may bring opportunities for restoration of hedgerows and woodlands.

BLACKWATER AND STOUR FARMLANDS (B3)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Mostly tranquil character. Settlement pattern/character. *May be opportunities to absorb change with strong woodland, hedgerow frameworks.*	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Mostly tranquil character. • Settlement pattern and character.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Mostly tranquil character.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate to high intervisibility. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Moderate to high intervisibility. *Possible opportunities for restoration of hedgerows and woodlands*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Mostly tranquil character.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Settlement character.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Mostly tranquil area.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Very intermittent hedgerow pattern, infrequent woodlands.	L

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

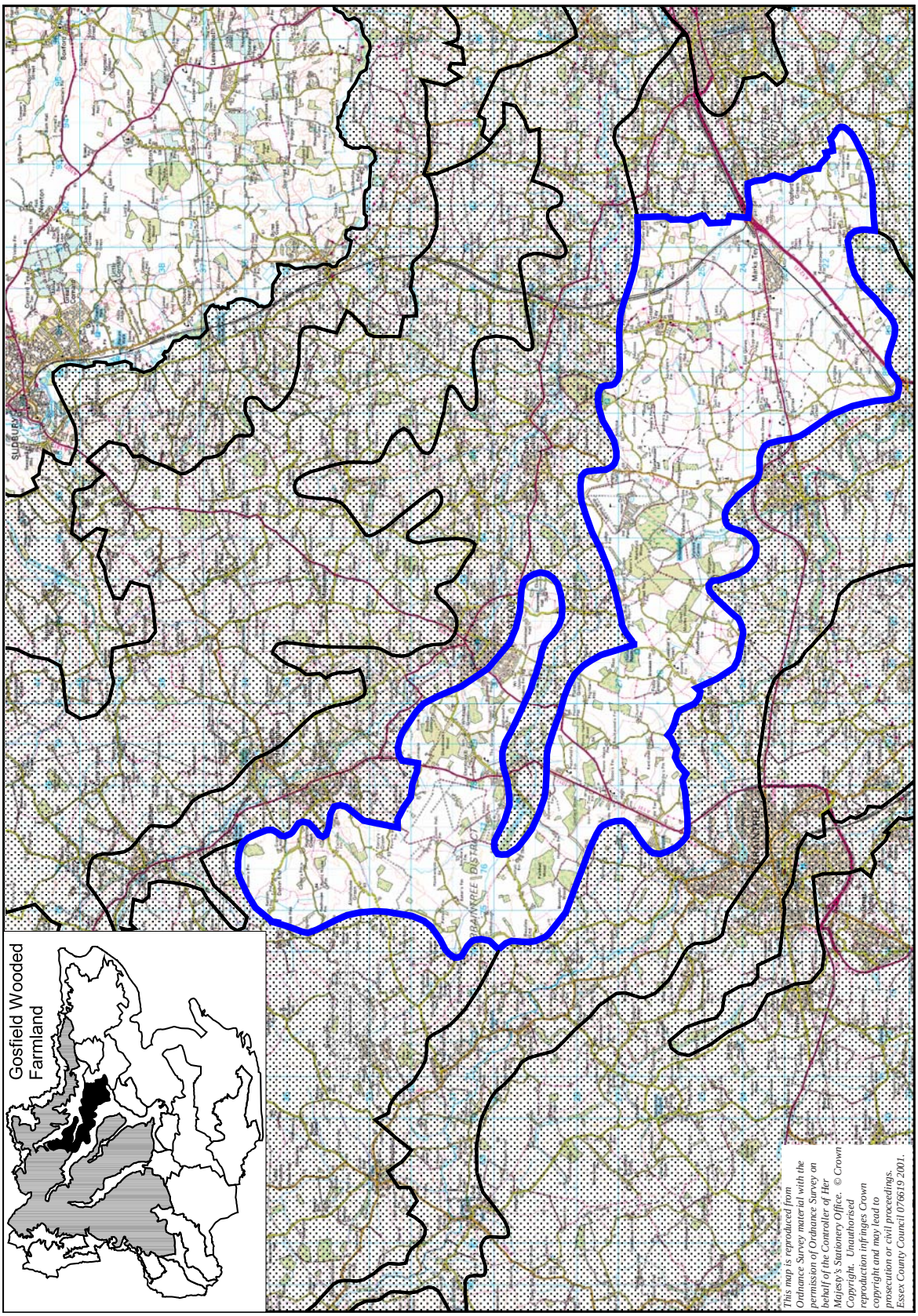
4.3.8 *Gosfield Wooded Farmlands (B4)*

Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating landform.
- Strong pattern of large and small woods, including distinctive ancient limewoods.
- Irregular medium size arable fields, bounded by thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees.
- Enclosed character.
- Many small farmsteads, occasional hamlets and villages.

Overall Character

The Gosfield Wooded Farmland is a gentle and well wooded landscape. Medium size, irregular fields are set within a mostly strong structure of woodland blocks and wide hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees giving a strong sense of enclosure. However, occasional long views across the farmland are possible where hedgerows permit. The settlement pattern is particularly characterised by scattered small farmsteads, nestling into field corners, and the woodland edges. Away from the edge of Braintree and the A120/A12, the area has a tranquil character.


Gosfield Wooded Farmland
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Character Profile

Geology

- Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay)

Soils

- Slowly permeable calcareous clay or fine loamy soils.

Landform

- Flat to very gently undulating.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient lime woods, e.g. Great and Little Monks Wood and Grange Wood.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Medium size irregular hedged fields, some small.

F*arming pattern*

- Mainly arable farmland.

Woodland/tree cover

- Relatively high tree cover.
- Numerous blocks of deciduous/mixed woodland, some interlocking, concentrated in the centre of the area. More dispersed in the south and north.
- Both large and small woods.
- Mature hedgerow trees particularly ash/oak.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Fairly sparse settlement pattern.
- Many scattered small farmsteads along lanes.
- A few hamlets and small villages. Some 20th century ribbon development along A1017, B1024.
- Large village of Marks Tey on the main A120.
- Typical vernacular of white/pink colour wash plaster buildings, some examples of brick, half timber and weatherboarding.

Communications

- Narrow sinuous lanes.
- Few major roads cross the area apart from the A120/A12(T) in the south.

Other landscape features

- Historic parklands of Gosfield Hall /Markshall.
- Small airstrip near Horneywood Farm and disused airfield north of Gosfield Hall Park.
- Radio masts near Gosfield and Colne Road.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the hedgerows and woodlands is generally good.

- Some localised visual intrusion is caused by masts.

- The condition of the settlement is moderate. Settlements on the main roads tend to have more out of character modern development

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Unlike other character areas in the glacial till plateau division, there is little evidence of significant recent change in the landscape. Some introduction of conifers into areas of ancient woodland has occurred.

- Some pressure for urban development at the edge of Halstead and larger scale development on the edge of Braintree is possible in the future.

GOSFIELD WOODED FARMLANDS (B4)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of pattern of woodlands and hedgerows. • Strong strength of character/good condition of much of the landscape. • Tranquil character of much of the area.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Low to moderate intervisibility.	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Tranquil character of much of the area.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of pattern of woodlands and hedgerows. • Tranquil character of much of the area. • Strong strength of character/good condition of much of the landscape.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Intrinsic character of the settlements. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern. • Woodland pattern/character.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of pattern of woodlands/hedgerowed fields. • Tranquil character of much of the area.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Intrinsic character of small settlements/lanes.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Tranquil character of much of the area.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow condition. • Woodland condition.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.4 River Valley Landscapes (C)

4.4.1 The River Valleys are a significant component of the county's topography, character and identity. The valleys to the north are steeper and more deeply cut, becoming shallower as the rivers flow either south into the Thames or east into the North Sea. Only the Cam flows northwards. The Stour, Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and their tributaries rise in the Glacial Till Plateau to the north, and flow east to form extensive estuaries at the coast. The Crouch flows east across the south of the county, and joins the Roach to form a further estuary. The Rivers Lee, Mardyke and Roding flow southwards into the River Thames estuary. The valleys contain river corridors that are frequently of landscape, nature conservation and heritage value.

4.4.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- The river valleys dissect the boulder clay plateau. They are smaller and steeper in the upper valley reaches, revealing underlying gravel and sand deposits on the valley sides.
- Parts of the valleys are extensively modified by reservoirs, current and reclaimed gravel pits, landfill sites, artificial wetlands, river realignments and canals.
- Smaller, intimate tree-lined valleys with small rural settlements contrast with the more developed major river valley floodplains.

- Organic field shapes are common as they are defined by the valley topography.
- The high ground of the plateau allows ‘tunnelled’ views through deciduous woodland to the valley bottom.
- The river courses are often marked by their associated vegetation.
- Settlements along the valleys reflect the historic use of them for access into the county.

4.4.3 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Ash, with occasional White Poplar, Crack Willow, White Willow, Alder, Oak, Field Maple, Goat Willow, Black Poplar, Elm.

4.4.4 The River Valleys comprise eight Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- Cam Valley (C1)
- Stort Valley (C2)
- Lee Valley (C3)
- Roding Valley (C4)
- Chelmer Valley (C5)
- Blackwater & Brain Valley (C6)
- Colne Valley (C7)
- Stour Valley (C8)

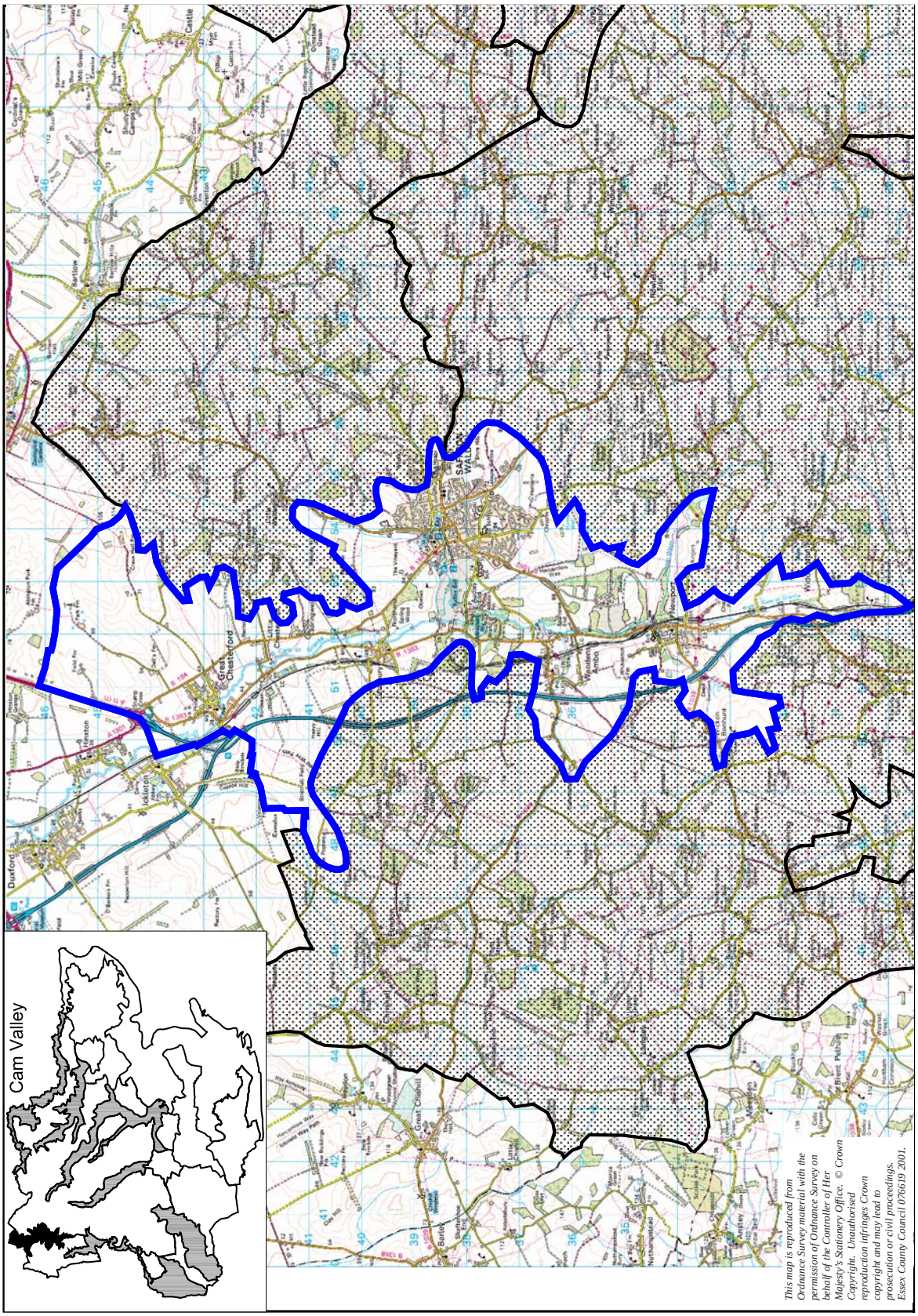
4.4.5 *Cam Valley (C1)*

Key Characteristics

- Broad valley. Strongly rolling valleysides in the north, gentler slopes to the south.
- Predominantly large scale, open arable farmland on the valley slopes.
- Enclosed character of the valley floor with lush riverside vegetation
- Nucleated settlement pattern.
- Extensive historic parkland between Littlebury and Newport.

Overall Character

The Cam Valley is a wide and relatively deep valley, with distinctive smooth undulating chalkland hillslopes in the north, becoming shallower and gentler to the south. Large regular arable fields on the valleysides are divided by very broken hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. In contrast, the valley floor has a more enclosed intimate character with dense riverside trees/woodland and small fields. Historic parks such as Audley End and Shortgrove introduce a strong pastoral character to the valley between Littlebury and Newport with sweeping grasslands studded with parkland trees, as well as boundary woods and treebelts following the contours. A string of small villages are situated along the lower slopes of the main valley, and the small town of Saffron Walden occupies a tributary valley to the west. The M11 and a pylon route are locally visually prominent in the landscape.


Cam Valley
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Character Profile

Geology

- Upper/Middle Chalk, Sand and Gravels.

Soils

- Well drained brown calcareous soils and flinty sandy loams. Seasonally waterlogged alluvial soils.

Landform

- Broad valley up to 1.5 km wide/65 m amplitude of relief. Strongly rolling valleysides with a flat valley floor in the north. Tributary valleys create marked spurs and ridges Gentler slopes south of Newport with a narrow valley floor.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Remnant chalk grassland in roadside verges on the valleysides. Calcareous fen/marsh, alder carr woodland on the valley floor.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Large scale mostly regular field pattern on the valleysides, and low trimmed or fragmented hedges. Small linear fields on the valley floor divided by drainage ditches or hedges.

Farming pattern

- Arable land use on the valleysides, pasture and arable on the valley floor.

Woodland/tree cover

- Typically open valleysides, with a few isolated plantations and treebelts. However, between Littlebury and Newport a much higher tree cover associated with parkland woods/treebelts.
- Strongly vegetated river course with strips of wet alder/willow woodland and poplar plantations.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Strong nucleated settlement pattern (unusual in Essex). Small to medium size villages, single small town of Saffron Walden, and only a few isolated farms on the valleysides.
- Historic vernacular varies from brick and flint, more common in the north, to pink, white and green colour wash plastered timber frame buildings, some with decorative pargetting.
- Wealth and variety of architectural detail in the historic core of Saffron Walden.

Communications

- Historic roads and lanes skirt the edge of the floodplain/lower valleysides, only crossing the valley at a small number of bridging points.
- The present day M11 follows higher parts of the western valleysides and crosses the valley in the far north.

Other landscape features

- Two very large historic parks of Audley End and Shortgrove Park (18th Century Capability Brown landscapes) occupy the valley between Littlebury and Newport.
- Saffron Walden Church tower/spire is an important local landmark dominating the town and the surrounding landscape.
- Large common with maze in Saffron Walden.
- Iron Age hillfort of Ring Hill.
- A few disused chalkpits. Active chalk quarry near Newport. (Sand and gravel workings near Little/Great Chesterford).
- Pylon route crossing the valley near Littlebury is visually prominent.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows on some valleysides are in poor condition due to lack of management and intensive arable farming practices.

- Some valley floor pastures are in poor condition due to overgrazing.

- The extensive areas of historic parkland are in good condition.

- The condition of the settlements is good.

- Gravel workings, chalk pits, pylons and the M11 currently create some localised visual intrusions in the landscape.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Significant past influences on the development of the landscape include its early use as a communications route, late enclosure of the valleyside open fields, and the establishment of large, parkland estates.

- Intensification of arable farming since the Second World War has led to the loss/fragmentation of hedgerows on the valleysides.

- Commons, meadows, parkland and visually prominent chalkland slopes surrounding Saffron Walden are an important part of its setting and character, and would be vulnerable to large scale development.

- Small scale infill and expansion of the smaller settlements is also a likely pressure for change, and respect for their landscape setting and character is an important issue.

- Continuing decline in traditional grazing of riverside meadows due to expansion of horsiculture is a current and likely future trend.

CAM VALLEY (C1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of undisturbed valley floor and of historic parklands. • Coalescence of small settlements.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Landscape setting of towns.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of valley floor and of historic parklands. *Alignment and appropriate design of landform would be critical.*	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of undisturbed valley floor and of historic parklands.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Some visually exposed valleysides. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of valley floor. *May be opportunities for restoration of hedgerows and chalk grassland.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Visually exposed valleysides. • Landform character. • Integrity of undisturbed valley floor and of historic parklands.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character and setting of the smaller settlements. • Some visually exposed valleysides.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Some visually exposed valleysides.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of valley floor meadows and valleyside hedgerows.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.4.6 *Stort Valley (C2)*

Key Characteristics

- Shallow and narrow valley with moderately sloping arable valleysides.
- Fairly enclosed character due to the frequency of hedgerows/hedgerow trees, small woods/copses and riverside trees.
- Small pastures and large floodplain meadows on the valley floor.
- Numerous small estates and parklands.
- Substantially undeveloped character.

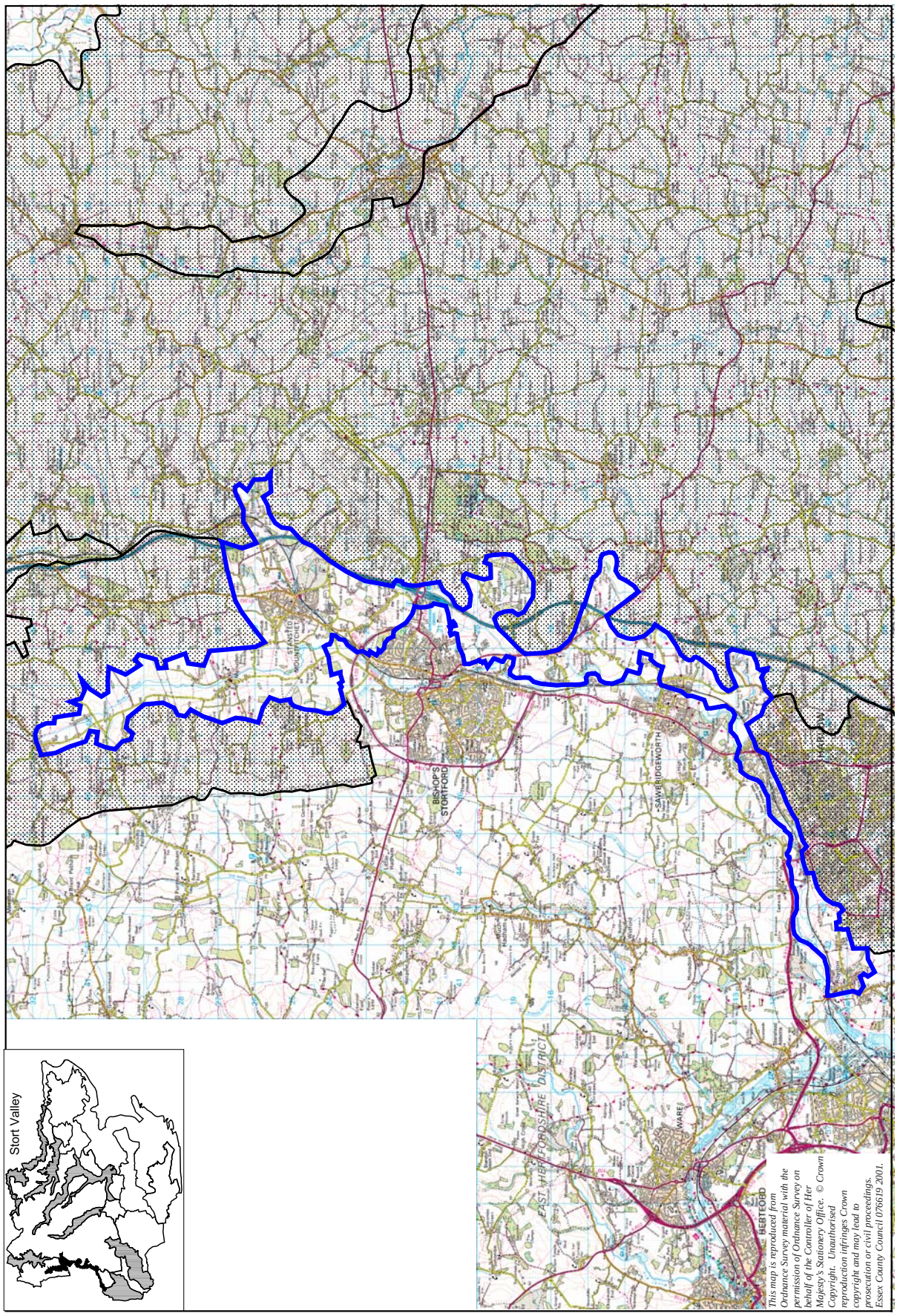
Overall Character

The Stort Valley is shallow and fairly narrow for much of its length, only opening out north west of Harlow where large floodplain meadows extend over the valley floor. A patchwork of pasture and wetland vegetation along the course of the river contrasts with the arable fields of the valleysides, but thick hedgerows, small woods and tree belts provide a sense of enclosure. Views are mostly confined and urban development and major roads are only occasionally visible. Church spires are an occasional feature appearing above wooded skylines.

Character Profile

Geology

- Sands and Gravels, Alluvium, Upper Chalk and Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay).


Stort Valley
STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET
BISHOP'S STORTFORD
SAWBRIDGEWORTH
HARLOW
EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT
WARE
HERTFORD
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Soils

- Seasonally wet alluvial clay soils on valley floor. Well drained coarse or fine loamy soils and calcareous clay soils on the valleysides.

Landform

- Shallow valley with predominantly moderately sloped valleysides, some gentle. Very narrow valley floor from near source to Bishop Stortford. Average 300 - 400 m width south of here.
- A few small tributary valleys.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Calcareous fen/marsh.
- Unimproved hay meadows.
- Wet alder/carr woodland.
- Some ancient mixed deciduous woods on valleysides.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Unenclosed meadows, or small linear fields divided by drainage ditches and hedges on valley floor.
- Medium to large sized hedged fields on valleysides.

Farming pattern

- Pasture on valley floor, arable on valleysides.

Woodland/tree cover

- Linear wet woodlands, poplar/willow plantations and riverside trees on the valley floor.
- Many small valleyside woods and copses.
- Very dense tree cover in some tributary valleys.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Urban edge of Harlow influences the character of the centre of the valley.
- Small villages and dispersed hamlets on valleysides.
- A few large villages much expanded by modern development, e.g. Stansted Mountfitchet, Lower Sheering.
- Historic vernacular of colour washed plaster and pegtile roofs. Some half timber and brick.

Communications

- Winding lanes run along the upper valleysides, and only cross the valley at a few bridging points.

- The railway to Cambridge runs within some sections of the valley but is generally hidden by vegetation.
- M11 crosses a few of the smaller tributary valleys and the Stansted junction is on the fringe of the area.
- The A414 and the A120 also cross the valley.

Other landscape features

- Strongly meandering River Stort course.
- Church spires are distinctive landmarks.
- Windmill/castle at Stansted Mountfitchet.
- A few sand and gravel pits.
- Numerous small estates and parklands, e.g. Stansted Hall, Maunden House, Sheering Hall, Hallingbury Park.
- Iron age hillfort at Wallbury.
- Mills and Brewery Malthouses.

Landscape Condition

- There are localised areas of abandoned, or overgrazed pastures.

- Overall the condition of hedgerows and woodlands in the farmland is moderate to good.

- The condition of the settlements is moderate to good. A few villages show signs of poor quality modern development.

- Light industrial sheds on the valley floor at the northern edge of Harlow are visually intrusive.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Traditional use of the valley floor for grazing meadows and the valleysides for arable farming by the farms and small estates had a strong influence in the development of present day character.

- Given the proximity of major road and rail routes, there may be further pressure for major urban development. Due to the small scale enclosed character of the valley, with its strong tree cover, any such development would be very difficult to absorb.

STORT VALLEY (C2)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of valley floor/small parklands. • Intrinsic small scale character of most of the valley. • Tranquil in character in the north. • Strong strength of character/good condition of much of the landscape.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Landscape settings. • Low to moderate intervisibility.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of valley floor/small parklands. • Low capacity for additional routes. • Tranquil character in the north. • Strong strength of character/good condition of much of the landscape.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of valley floor/small parklands. • Intrinsic small scale character of most of the valley. • Strong strength of character/good condition of the landscape. • Tranquil character in the north.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Uncommon intrusive influences. • Low to moderate intervisibility.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of valley floor/small parklands. • Intrinsic small scale character of most of the valley.	H
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of valley floor/small parklands. • Tranquil character in the north. • Uncommon intrusive influences. • Strong strength of character/good condition of much of the landscape.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Uncommon intrusive influences. • Character of the lanes/settlements. • Low to moderate intervisibility.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Uncommon intrusive influences. • Tranquil character in the north of the area. • Low to moderate intervisibility.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of floodplain meadows and small pastures.	M

Note:

(a) *The landscape would have a high sensitivity level to any large scale mineral extraction.*

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.4.7 *Lee Valley (C3)*

Key Characteristics

- Very broad, flood plain occupied by wet gravel pits, woodland and a variety of fragmented agricultural, recreational and small scale industrial land uses.
- Rolling farmland to the east, typically with bold blocks of woodland and linear tree belts on valleysides and ridges.
- Significant clusters of active and derelict glasshouse land use.
- Extensive views from higher ground within the area.

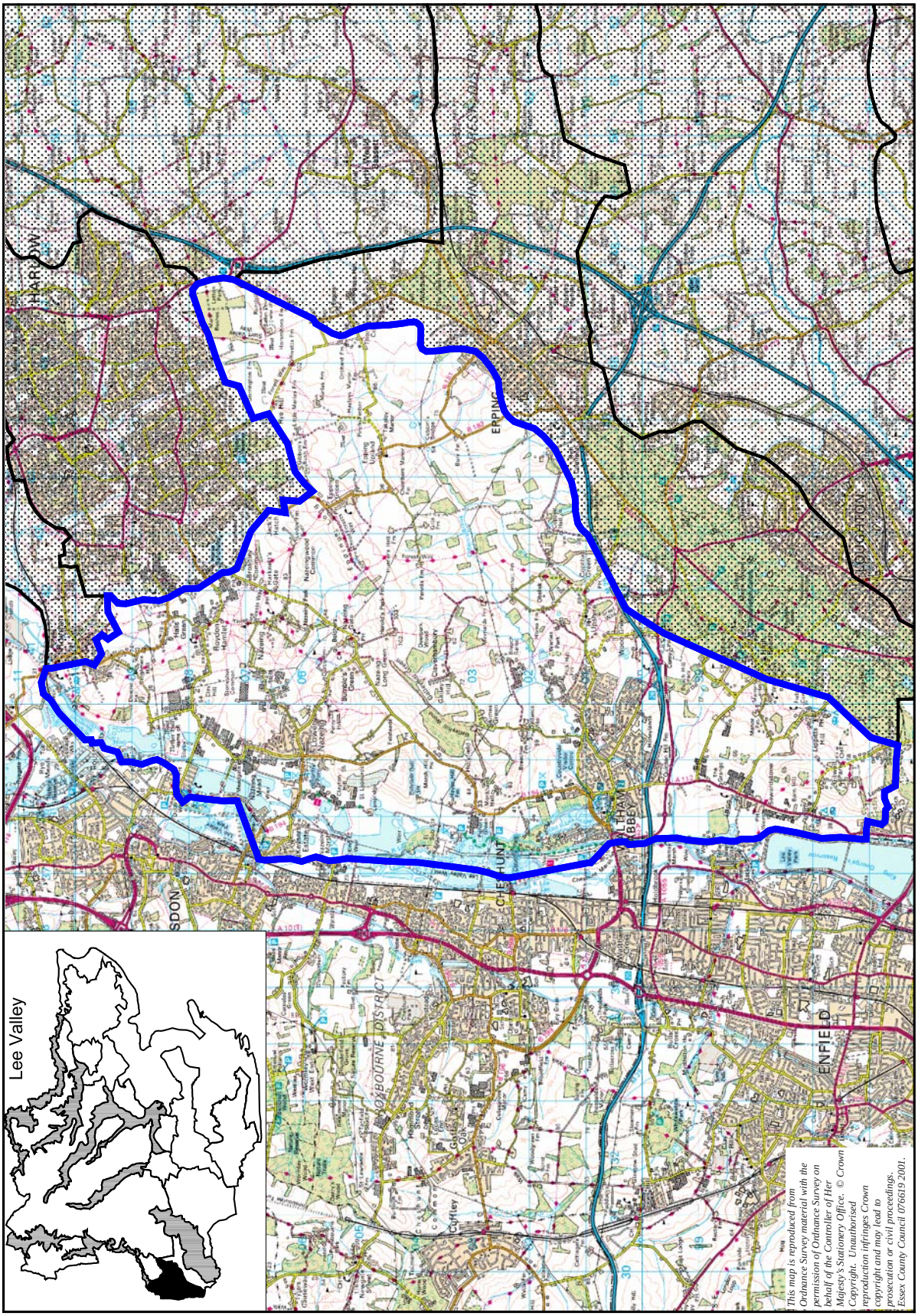
Overall Character

The Lee Valley Character Area includes a wide flat valley floor, adjacent moderately sloping eastern valleysides, and a series of connected smaller tributary valleys and broad ridges, aligned approximately north east to south west. Large wet gravel pits on the valley floor are dotted with islands and promontories. These are enclosed by regenerating woodland in the south, creating a secluded character, but are associated with a complex disjointed pattern of land use in the north of the area. Open, rolling farmland to the east on the London clay soils of the ridges and valleys, has a strong pattern of hedgerowed fields, blocks of woodland and linear tree belts. Wide views across the area are obtained from high ground, and pylons and glasshouses interrupt these in parts.

Character Profile

Geology

- Sands and Gravels and Alluvium on main valley floor. London Clay on the valleysides.


Lee Valley
EPPING
ENFIELD
CHESHUNT
WALTHAM ABBEY
HODDESDON
BROXBOURNE DISTRICT
Cuffley
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Soils

- Seasonally wet alluvial clay soils, fine loamy/silty soils, slowly permeable calcareous soils.

Landform

- The River Lee Valley is very broad with a wide flat valley floor, and undulating eastern valleysides made up of distinctive rounded low hills/small ridges.
- To the east of the main valley a number of small tributaries of the Lee such as Cobbins Brook and Nazeing Brook are located in narrower north east to south west aligned valleys with broad ridges between them.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Alder/willow woodland, marsh and a few unimproved wet meadows on the valley floor.
- Mixed ancient woodland on the valleysides.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Field pattern absent from much of the valley floor. Some unenclosed meadows divided by drainage ditches near Waltham Abbey.
- Regular, hedgerowed, field pattern of small to medium size fields on the valleysides/ridges. Some large fields with more fragmented hedgerow boundaries around Epping Upland.

Farming pattern

- Mainly arable farmland.
- Some pasture on valleysides in the west of the area.
- Small holdings, horticultural use in parts.

Woodland/tree cover

- Dense woodland scrub cover on main valley floor, including natural regeneration of willow, alder, and planted areas.
- Strong pattern of valleyside/ridgetop woodlands and copses, but around Epping Upland only a few isolated tree belts.
- Hedgerow oak trees.
- Willow and poplars along stream courses in the farmland.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Mixed pattern of large and small villages, hamlets, farmsteads and modern houses strung out along lanes. More sparse settlement pattern further east.
- Historic vernacular of colour washed plaster, weatherboarding and brick.

- A number of the villages have much development of a suburban character, e.g. Nazeing.
- Main town of Waltham Abbey has a strong historic core but also large modern estates.

Communications

- Network of small winding lanes.
- Main valley has a north-south route on the valleysides with only a few east-west crossing points.
- M25 crosses the southern fringe of the area.

Other landscape features

- Large wet gravel pits dominate the valley floor. In the south these tend to be surrounded by woodland. In the north they occur with active gravel workings, caravan parks and small industrial works.
- Active and derelict glasshouses are a feature around Nazeing, Roydon Hamlet and near Waltham Abbey.
- Lee navigation is a raised canal with locks. Variety of other natural and man made watercourses.
- Significant area of historic parkland at Copped Hall. A number of smaller estates such as Nazeing Park and Monkhams Hall.
- Waltham Abbey Church is an important local landmark.
- Historic gun powder works at Waltham Abbey.
- Pylon routes run north to south in the main valley and cross the area west to east.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the valley floor landscape is mixed. It is good where woodland has developed around the wet gravel pits, but poor in the north of the area.

- The condition of the farmland hedgerows and woodlands is moderate to good, but a significant area with a fragmented hedgerow pattern in poor condition occurs around Epping Upland.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Sand and gravel extraction, commencing in the early 1900s, has been a major influence on the development of the main valley floor landscape. Earlier less efficient extraction methods allowed the development of reedbeds and extensive alder, willow, birch scrub/woodland, suggestive of the early valley landscape prior to clearance for pasture.

- Residential expansion, the development of glass house industry and the use of valley floor landscape for a variety of other industrial and recreational uses have created a disturbed character to parts of the valley floor.

- Future pressures for change may include further development of recreational land uses, urban expansion of Waltham Abbey, and of Harlow which is adjacent to this character area, as well as small scale infill expansion of villages. These require sensitive siting and design if they are to be successfully accommodated in the landscape but could in some cases present opportunities for landscape enhancement and restoration where landscape condition is poor.

LEE VALLEY (C3)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Visual exposure of ridgetops, valleysides. • Integrity of valley floor/valleyside hedgerows/woodlands. • Coalescence.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/valleysides. *Some opportunities to improve some existing poor urban edges around Waltham Abbey and Harlow.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/valleysides. • Integrity of valley floor. • Landform character. • Low capacity for further change.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/valleysides. • Integrity of valley floor. *Siting, massing, form and colour and strong landscape frameworks are critical.*	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/valleysides. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/valleysides. • Integrity of valley floor/valleyside hedgerows/woodlands. *Possible opportunities to enhance areas in poor condition, e.g. in the north of the main valley, around Epping Upland with new landscape frameworks.*	L
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/valleysides.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Low capacity for further change.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/valleysides. • Low capacity for further change.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerows and small woodlands on valleysides.	M

Note:

(a) *Both visually exposed ridgetops/valleysides and large parts of the main valley floor are highly sensitive to most forms of large scale built development.*

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

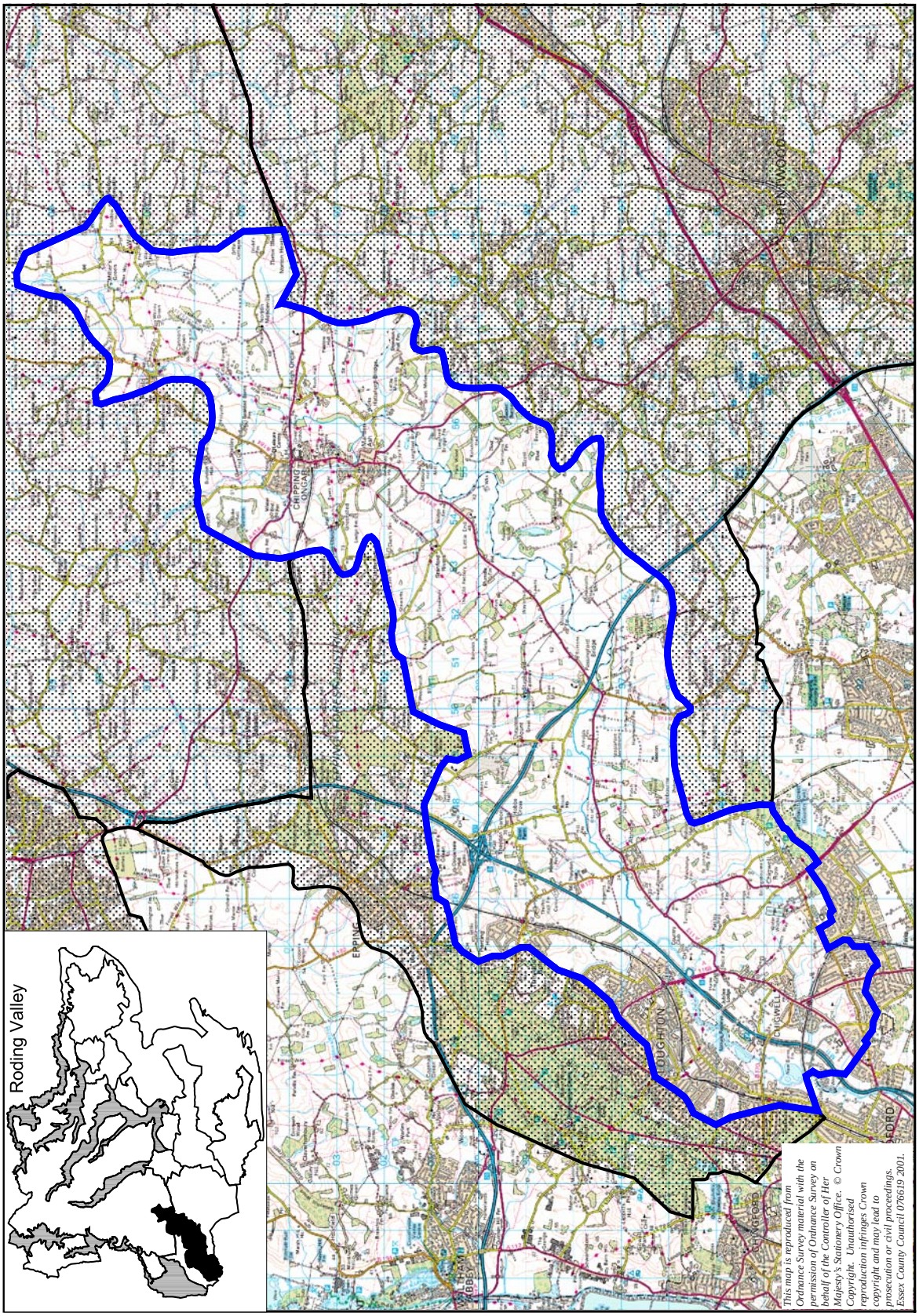
4.4.8 *Roding Valley (C4)*

Key Characteristics

- Wide valley, deepening to the south.
- Gently to moderately undulating valleysides, occasionally intersected by small tributary valleys.
- Strong pattern of valleyside vegetation with thick hedgerow field boundaries, many hedgerow trees and scattered small woodlands.
- Meadows on flat valley floor, with occasional riverside trees.
- Tranquil character except in the south.

Overall Character

The Roding Valley is a broad and gentle valley. Where the valley deepens in the south and there are a number of tributary valleys joining, the landform becomes quite complex with rounded low hills aligned at right angles to the main valley. Arable fields of contrasting scale on the valleysides are typically enclosed by wide hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees, and sometimes by woodland. The river meanders through small meadows on the valley floor with only a few riverside trees. The valley is quite sparsely settled for much of its length, but dense urban settlement occurs at Loughton. The M11, M25/railway corridors within the valley bottom or traversing the valley are visually prominent in the south.


Roding Valley
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Character Profile

Geology

- Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay), London Clay, Alluvium

Soils

- Deep well drained and slowly permeable calcareous clays, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils, deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform

- Broad valley, shallow in the north, becoming fairly deep south west of Abridge.
- Very narrow valley floor north of Langford Bridge, wider southwards.
- Gently to moderately undulating valleysides.
- Connecting smaller tributary valleys dissect the valleysides.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Hay meadows, flood meadows, marsh, unimproved grassland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Small fields bounded by hedges or ditches on the valley floor.
- Varied field pattern of irregular and regular small, medium and large hedged fields on the valleysides.

Farming pattern

- Mainly arable, some pasture on the valley floor.

Woodland/tree cover

- Scattered small woods, copses and tree belts on the valleysides.
- A few linear woods on valley floor north of Chipping Ongar, including a few poplar plantations.
- Hedgerow oak/ash.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Sparse settlement pattern of small villages/hamlets on the valleysides and occasional isolated farmsteads.
- Typical local historic vernacular of colourwash plaster in the north, weatherboarding and brick in the south.
- Absence of settlement on valley floor.
- In far south of valley urban settlements of Loughton and Chigwell have a suburban character.

Communications

- Long sections of the valley are not crossed by any roads except at a few bridging points and lanes are often situated towards the top of the valleysides.
- M11 and M25 cross the valley in the south, and A414 in the centre.

Other landscape features

- Wet gravel pits near Loughton.
- Pylon route is locally visually prominent crossing the valley near Howletts Hall.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows are in moderate to good condition but with localised areas of fragmented hedgerows on valleysides.

- Many pastures in the south of the valley are in poor condition due to overgrazing associated with horsiculture.

- The condition of the small settlements is good.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- It would appear since the Second World War there has been conversion of some valleyside pasture to arable, and rationalisation of field patterns associated with agricultural intensification.

- Future trends for change may include major transportation improvements and both urban development and recreational pressures on urban fringe or/less viable agricultural land in the south.

RODING VALLEY (C4)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of hedgerow pattern/small woodlands. • Integrity of valley bottom. • Strong strength of character, good condition of much of the valley. • Mostly tranquil character.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Some visually exposed valleysides.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Landform character. • Integrity of hedgerows pattern/small woodlands. • Mostly tranquil character.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of pattern of hedgerows and woodlands. • Integrity of the valley bottom. • Mostly tranquil character.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Intrinsic character of the valley bottom.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of hedgerow pattern/small woodlands. • Intrinsic character of valley bottom.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Intrinsic character of the valley bottom. • Integrity of hedgerow pattern/small woodlands. • Mostly tranquil character.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Intrinsic character of small settlements/lanes.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Integrity of the valley bottom. • Mostly tranquil character.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedges and small woodlands.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

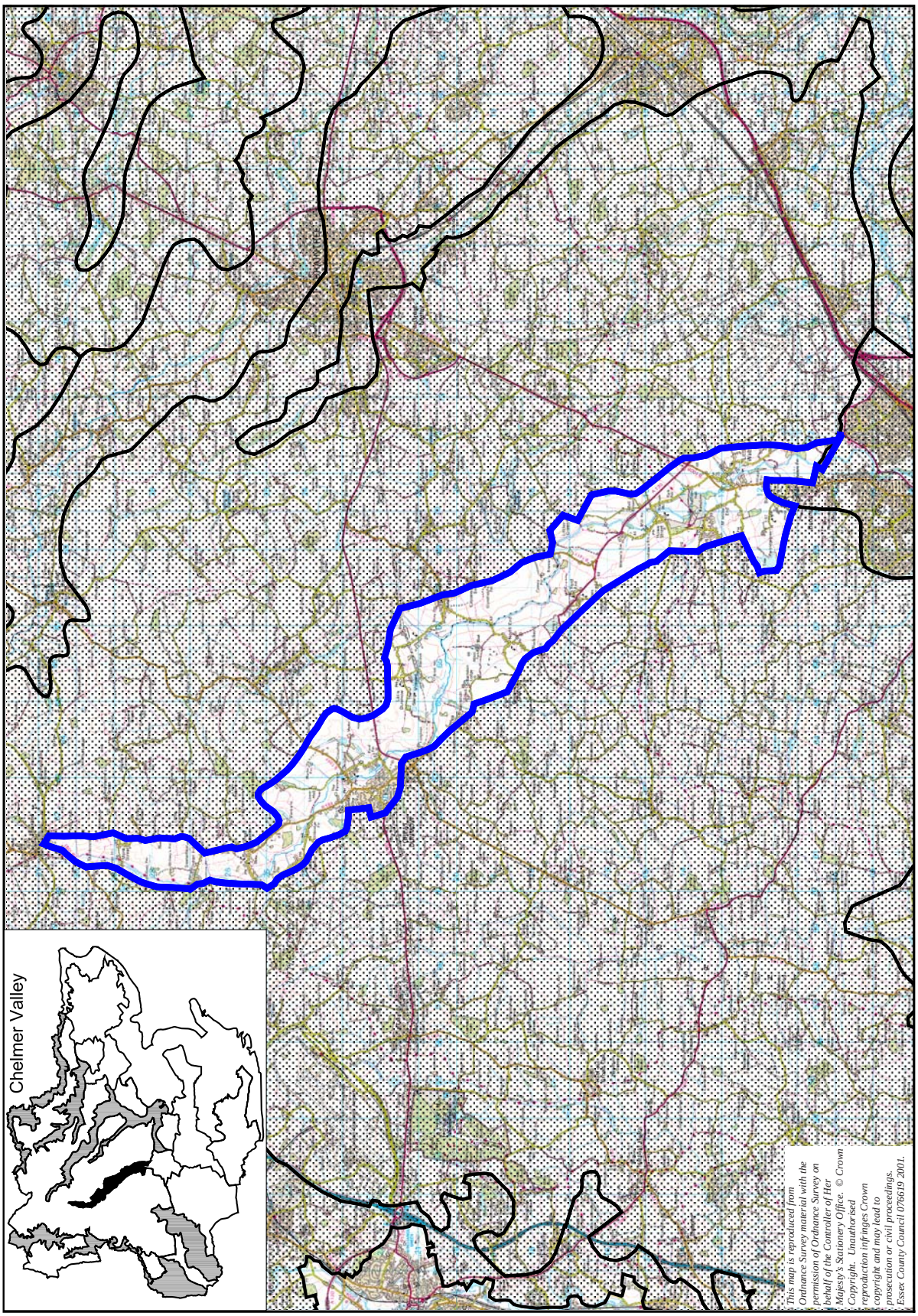
4.4.9 *Chelmer Valley (C5)*

Key Characteristics

- Narrow valley, with a restricted valley bottom.
- Dense riverside trees.
- Arable valleysides with a fairly open character.
- Small linear settlements occupy the upper valleysides or straggle down to a few bridging points.
- Historic watermills and Second World War pillboxes are distinctive features.
- Mostly tranquil character.

Overall Character

The Chelmer Valley character area extends from the north west of Essex to the edge of Chelmsford. It is a narrow valley within the surrounding very gently undulating glacial clay plateau. The valley bottom has an enclosed character with many riverside and hedgerow trees and a string of small wet woodlands. As a result available views are quite confined and often framed. The valleysides have a more open character with low gappy hedgerows, scattered hedgerow trees and only occasional woods. The majority of the settlements are small with very limited modern development. Only a few major roads cross the valley so this contributes to its substantially tranquil character.


Chelmer Valley
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Character Profile

Geology

- Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay), London Clay, Sands and Gravels

Soils

- Deep well drained fine loamy, coarse loamy and sandy soils, slowly permeable calcareous clay soils.

Landform

- Narrow and shallow valley.
- Moderately sloped valleysides in the north, becoming more gentle south of Great Dunmow.
- Narrow valley floor.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Flood meadows, valley fen.
- A few ancient woodlands.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Small to medium size irregular often gappy hedged fields on valleysides.
- Linear fields divided by drainage ditches and hedges on valley floor.

Farming pattern

- Mainly arable, some pasture on valley floor.

Woodland/tree cover

- Occasional small woods/copses on valleysides.
- Localised concentrations of wet woodland with poplar plantations on the valley floor, e.g. near Little Waltham.
- Dense riverside trees.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Dispersed small villages and hamlets on valleysides often associated with bridging points, e.g. Duton Hill.
- A small number of isolated farmsteads on the valleysides.
- Market town of Gt Dunmow.
- Local vernacular of half timber, colour wash plaster with some decorative pargetting, thatch and pantile roofs.

Communications

- A130 skirts the edge of the valley and crosses it in a few places.
- A120 traverses the valley at Great Dunmow.

Other landscape features

- Langleys Historic Park.
- Historic watermills.
- Small humpbacked bridges.
- Brewery at Hartford End.
- Second World War pillboxes.
- Sand and Gravel Pits near Belstead.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of valleyside vegetation is mixed with many fragmented hedgerows.

- On the valley floor there is some evidence of abandonment of grazing of valley floor meadows.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The landscape has remained relatively stable over long periods of time. Agricultural intensification since the Second World War has resulted in the loss of some valleyside hedgerows.

- Future trends for change may include urban development pressures near Great Dunmow and Chelmsford, and transportation improvements. Agricultural change may lead to alternative uses being sought for less viable agricultural land in valley bottom, although there may also be opportunities for landscape enhancement as a result of alterations to subsidy regimes.

CHELMER VALLEY (C5)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Integrity of valley bottom. • Mostly tranquil character.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Visual exposure of some valleysides.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Intrinsic small scale character of valley. • Integrity of valley bottom. • Mostly tranquil character.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Intrinsic small scale character of valley. • Integrity of valley bottom.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Intrinsic small scale character of valley.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of valley bottom. • Small scale character.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Integrity of valley bottom. • Mostly tranquil character.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Intrinsic character of settlement and narrow lanes.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Mostly tranquil character.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of valley bottom meadows/vegetation and valleyside hedgerows, woodlands.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

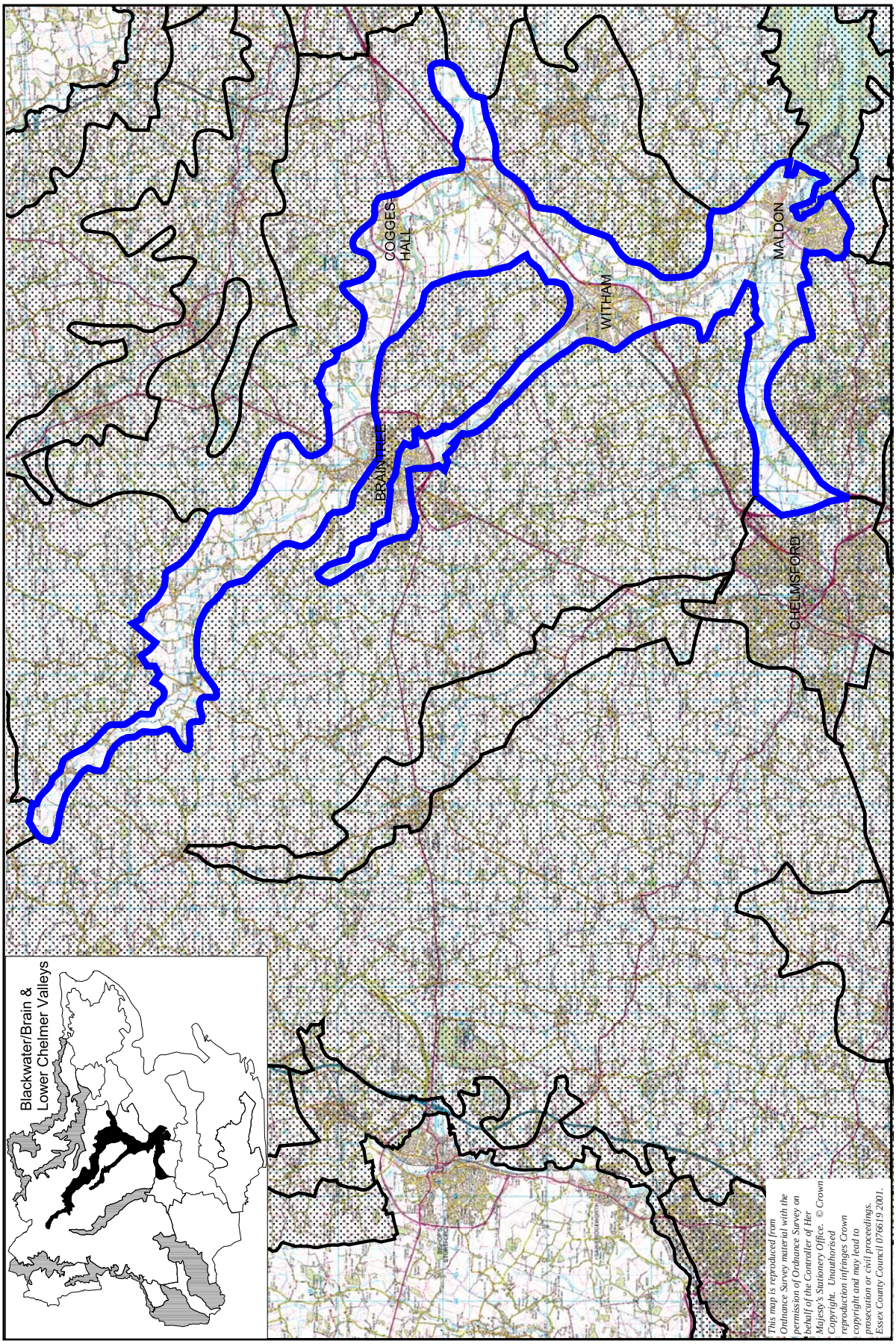
4.4.10 *Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys (C6)*

Key Characteristics

- Shallow valleys.
- Predominantly arable farmland with well hedged medium to large fields.
- The Brain and the Upper Blackwater Valleys are narrow with undulating valleysides.
- The Lower Chelmer, and the Blackwater near Maldon, have wide flat valley floors, and gentle valleysides.
- Extensive linear poplar and willow plantations are a distinctive feature.

Overall Character

The Brain and the Upper Blackwater valleys are relatively narrow with moderate slopes. By contrast, the Lower Chelmer and the Blackwater, south of Langford, have wide floodplains with gentle valleysides and are more open in character. Medium scale, arable farmland dominates throughout their length, with a predominantly strong pattern of hedgerow boundaries with frequent hedgerow trees. Tree cover is high along the banks of the rivers with willow and poplar plantations common as well as pockets of wet alder/willow woodland. Small settlements are dispersed along valleysides or cluster around a few key bridging points. The towns of Braintree, Witham and Maldon occupy valleyside locations, but along with the major roads that cross the area have a limited impact on character.


COGGES HALL
WITHAM
MALDON
BRAINTREE
CHELMSFORD
Blackwater/Brain & Lower Chelmer Valleys
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Character Profile

Geology

- Mainly Sands and Gravels, some Alluvial Deposits, Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay)

Soils

- Deep well drained fine loamy, coarse loamy and sandy soils, slowly permeable calcareous clay soils, deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform

- Shallow valleys.
- The upper Blackwater (also known as the River Pant above Braintree) and the Brain Valleys are relatively narrow, with moderately sloped valleysides.
- The Lower Chelmer and Lower Blackwater (below Braintree) have gentle valleysides.
- The Lower Chelmer, and the Blackwater south of Langford Bridge have wide flat valley floors/floodplains.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Some ancient mixed woodland on valleysides.
- Alder carr.
- Unimproved grazing meadows.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Generally medium size irregular hedged fields on valleysides and valley floor.
- Some large fields in the Lower Chelmer Valley.

Farming pattern

- Arable farmland is dominant.
- Some pockets of pasture on the valley floor.

Woodland/tree cover

- A few widely dispersed small woods and copses on the valleysides.
- Extensive poplar/willow plantations on Blackwater valley floor from Braintree to Witham.
- Dense riverside trees along the Brain and the middle part of the Blackwater Valley.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Sparse settlement pattern in the upper valleys above Braintree.
- Scattered farmsteads, hamlets and small villages on the valleysides.
- Medium size towns of Braintree, Witham and Maldon occupy valleyside/valley floor locations.

- Local vernacular of colour wash plaster and half timber in the north, more weatherboarding and brick in the south.

Communications

- Roads and lanes run along the top of the valleys or occasionally cross at right angles.
- Main A120 crosses the Blackwater and Brain valleys near Braintree.
- Major A12(T) crosses the Lower Chelmer Valley near Chelmsford, and runs within the Blackwater Valley floor near Witham.

Other landscape features

- Pylon routes cross the Lower Chelmer/Blackwater Valleys.
- Braxted, Sistead Hall, Faulkbourne Hall historic parks.
- Golf courses at Black Notly and Sisted.

Landscape Condition

- Farmland hedgerows are generally in good condition, although there are localised areas of fragmentation.

- The condition of the settlements is mixed. Some of the towns such as Braintree and Witham have intrusive industrial and housing development and some modern out of character infill tends to occur in the villages close to them.

- Gravel workings are locally visually prominent.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Past influences on change were mainly agricultural, but the expansion of the towns of Braintree, Coggeshall, Witham and Maldon, together with the development of sand and gravel workings in the 20th Century had localised impacts.

- There are likely to be continued urban development, and associated transportation and recreational development pressures in the A12 corridor and near Braintree.

BLACKWATER/BRAIN/LOWER CHELMER VALLEYS (C6)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of valley floors. • Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors. • Intrinsic small scale character of most of the valleys. • Tranquil character in parts.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Integrity of the valley floor. • Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors.	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of valley floors. • Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors. • Landform character.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Intrinsic small scale character of most of the valleys. • Integrity of valley floor. • Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors. • Landform character. • Tranquil character in parts.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Landform character. • Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors. • Integrity of the valley floor.	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors. • Integrity of valley floor.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of the valley floor. • Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors. • Tranquil character in parts.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Integrity of the valley floor.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Some visually exposed valleysides/open valley floors. • Intrinsic small scale character of most of the valleys.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of woodlands and hedgerows.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

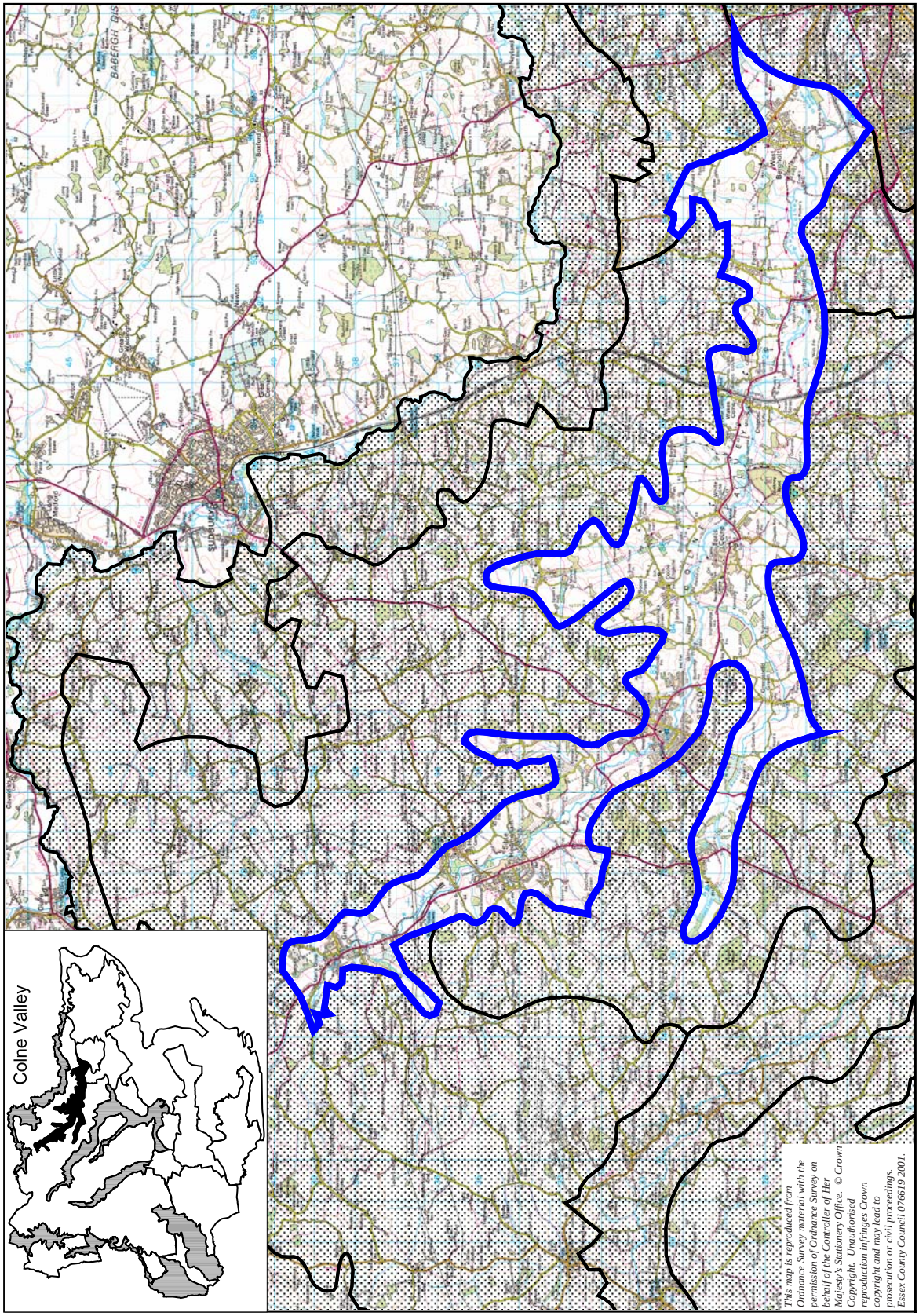
4.4.11 *Colne Valley (C7)*

Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley of variable width with numerous small tributary valleys.
- Gently to moderately undulating valleysides.
- Narrow valley bottom, mainly pasture.
- Arable valleyside farmland with frequent small woodlands.
- A series of small towns and villages at bridging points.
- Historic mill buildings are distinctive features.

Overall Character

The Colne Valley is a narrow valley with strongly rolling valleysides in the north, tending to widen out and become somewhat more gentle south of Halstead. The valley bottom is narrow comprising small linear meadows/pastures and wet woodlands. On the valleysides medium scale arable farmland dominates, but enclosure is provided by a strong pattern of hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees and small woods. Typically small settlements occupy the lower valleysides located at bridging points, with few major roads crossing the area.


Colne Valley
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Character Profile

Geology

- Sands and Gravels, London Clay, Alluvial Deposits, Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay)

Soils

- Deep well drained fine loamy and coarse loamy soils, slowly permeable fine loamy and calcareous clay soils.

Landform

- Shallow valley, gentle to moderate sloped gently undulating valleysides. Locally more strongly undulating between Sible Hedingham and Halstead.
- Narrow valley floor.
- A few narrow tributary valleys with moderate slopes.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Mixed ancient woodland including lime woodland, e.g. Chalkney Wood.
- Unimproved meadows.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Medium size regular and irregular hedged fields on the valleysides.
- Small linear hedged fields on valley floor.

Farming pattern

- Arable farmland dominates on valleysides.
- Pasture along the valley bottom.

Woodland/tree cover

- Both small and large woodlands on valleysides, less frequent west of Wakes-Colne.
- Hedgerow trees on valleysides.
- Small linear woods on valley floor and dense riverside trees.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Settlement mainly absent from the valley floor.
- Some small towns, nucleated large villages and small hamlets at key bridging points along the river.
- Occasional isolated farmsteads along lanes on the valleysides.
- Traditional vernacular half timber, plaster, pantile and thatch.

Communications

- Network of sinuous and straight lanes.
- The A1124 runs through the valley.
- Disused railway line. Short section used as the Colne Valley steam railway.

Other landscape features

- Watermills.
- Wet gravel pits near White Colne.
- Colne Valley Steam Railway.
- Castle at Headingham.
- Chappel viaduct.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the farmland hedgerows and of the small woodlands is moderate to good. Occasionally there are fragmented hedgerows.

- Localised intrusion of poor quality housing and industrial development occurs around some of the larger settlements.

- Some parts of the valley floor have extensive horsiculture with associated overgrazing and replacement of hedgerow boundaries with paddock fencing.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Past influences on change were mainly agricultural, but the railway led to expansion of some of the towns.

- Urban development pressures within the relatively narrow valley corridor are likely to remain high. Given the small scale character of the valley these are difficult to integrate. Ongoing pressure for associated recreational development can also be expected.

COLNE VALLEY (C7)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of the valley bottom. • Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Visual exposure of some valleysides.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some valleysides.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of the valley bottom. • Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Landform character. • Visual experience of some valleysides.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of the valley bottom. • Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Visual exposure of the valleysides.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Intrinsic small scale character of the valley. • Landform character. • Moderate intervisibility.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Hedgerow field/woodland pattern.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of the valley bottom. • Visual exposure of some valleysides. • Landform character.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Integrity of the valley floor.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Visual exposure of some valleysides. • Integrity of the valley/intrinsic small scale character.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow and woodland condition.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

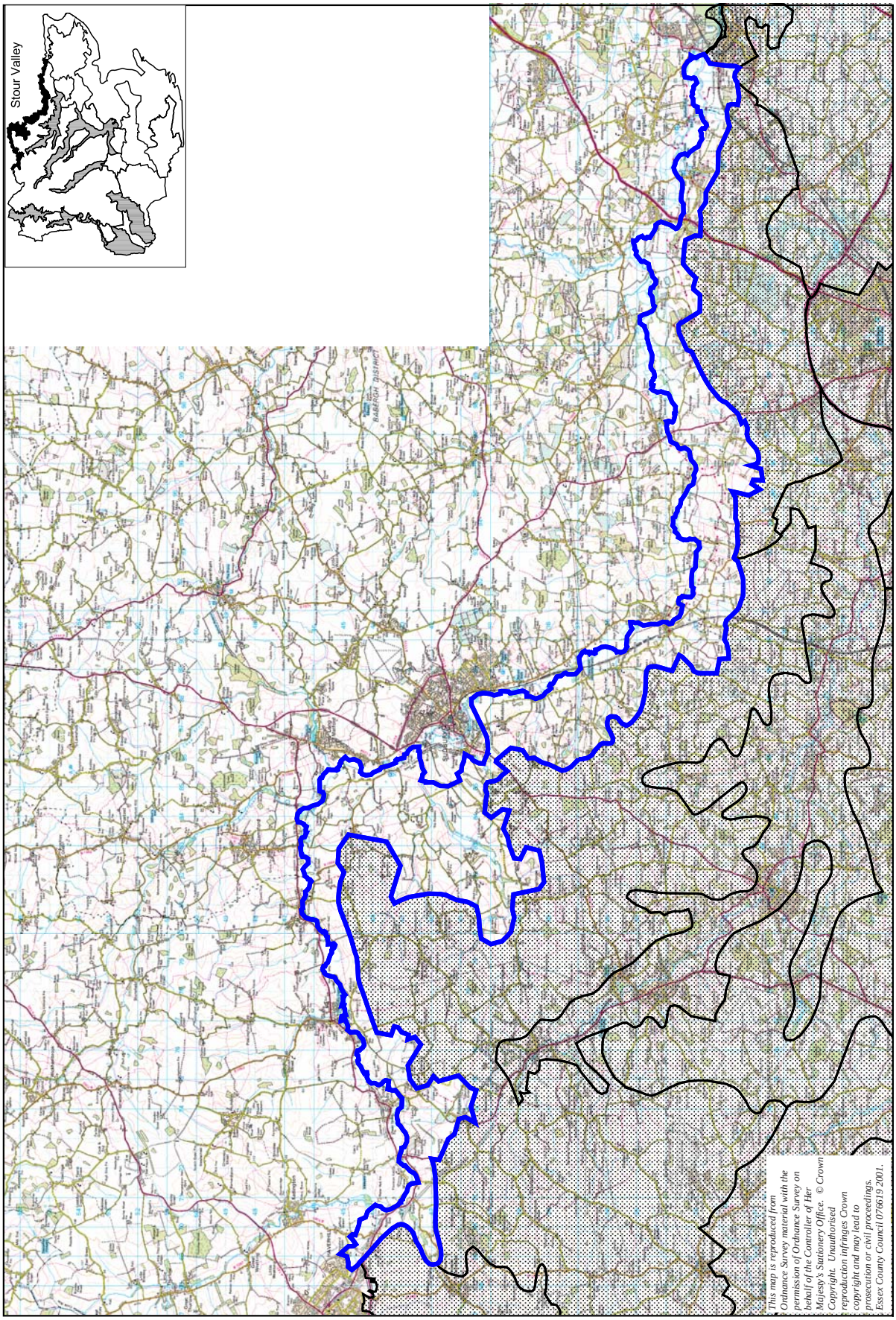
4.4.12 *Stour Valley (C8)*

Key Characteristics

- Typically wide flat valley floor with floodplain meadows, riverbank willow trees and small wet woodlands.
- Rolling rounded valleysides with a complex mosaic of small woods, pasture and arable fields in the east, gentler arable valleysides in the north and west.
- Church towers, traditional villages, farmsteads, barns and mills are distinctive features.
- Sinuous pattern of lanes and roads.
- Mostly tranquil, secluded character.

Overall Character

The Stour Valley is a wide valley with a broad flat valley floor for much of its length. In the north and west arable farmland tends to dominate the valley, but it becomes much more pastoral in character further east. Here there is a patchwork of pasture and arable farmland and woodland on the valleysides and mainly meadows divided by hedgerows and/or wet ditches on the valley floor. Plantations of cricket bat willows and hybrid poplars are also common on the floodplain. Traditional small settlements and isolated farmsteads with limited modern development occur throughout the area, linked by narrow, sometimes sunken, valleyside lanes. Where the landscape is more open, there are panoramic views of the valley. In more enclosed parts, views are framed and focused. With the exception of the main A12(T) crossing the valley near Dedham, the area has an undeveloped character.


Stour Valley
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Character Profile

Geology

- Glacial Till (Chalky Boulder Clay), Sands and Gravels, London Clay, Alluvial Deposits

Soils

- Slowly permeable clay soils. Deep permeable fine and coarse loamy soils. Deep stoneless seasonally waterlogged alluvial soils.

Landform

- Shallow valley, with undulating rounded valleysides, some more gentle slopes in the upper parts of the valley.
- Flat valley floor along the entire length of the river, but generally wider east of Bures.
- Numerous narrow moderate to steep sided tributary valleys.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Estuarine grazing marsh.
- Ancient oak-ash-hazel woodland.
- Alder carr woodland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Variable field pattern.
- Medium-large size irregular hedged fields on valleysides to the north/northwest of Carnash.
- Small regular hedged fields on valleysides south/south east of Carnash.
- Small to medium size irregular fields divided by both hedges and ditches on valley floor west of Nayland.
- Small to medium size semi-regular fields divided mainly by ditches on valley floor east of Nayland.

Farming pattern

- Mix of pasture and arable farmland on valleysides.
- Mainly pasture, meadows on the valley floor, but with localised areas of arable.

Woodland/tree cover

- Many small deciduous and mixed woodlands and hedgerowed trees on valleysides, becoming less frequent in north west. However, there has been loss of characteristic elms from the valley.
- Occasional linear woods on valley floor including poplar/willow plantations.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Widely separated small villages and hamlets on higher valleysides, a few on lower valleysides associated with bridging points.
- Scattered farmsteads and cottages on upper parts of the valleysides, becoming less frequent in the north west.
- General absence of settlement on the valley floor.
- Traditional local vernacular of colour wash plaster, half timber.

Communications

- Network of valleyside lanes and roads running approximately at right angles to the contours or parallel with them on lower valleysides.
- Few roads on the valley floor.
- A12(T) is the only major road crossing the area.

Other landscape features

- Church towers are important landmarks.
- Small historic parklands, e.g. Langham, Lawford.
- Wet sand and gravel pits in the north west.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the valleyside hedgerows is mixed, mostly good in the east, somewhat fragmented in the north west.

- The condition of the small settlements is mostly good, despite some insensitive 1970's infill.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Past influences on the landscape have been mainly agricultural, with fluctuations in arable and pasture land on the valley floor.

- A current and likely increasing trends are the spread of horsiculture on some valley floor meadows with the introduction of pony paddocks. Many of the development pressures are small scale and incremental, such as conversion of farm buildings into residential use, gradual increase in 'suburbanisation' of rural properties, and concrete curbing to rural lanes which undermine rural character. There are also likely to be ongoing pressures from recreation and tourism.

STOUR VALLEY (C8)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Intimate scale of the landscape. • Integrity of valley floor. • Parts of the valley have an AONB designation. • Visual exposure of some valleysides.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Intimate scale of the landscape. • Integrity of valley floor. • Parts of the valley have an AONB designation. • Visual exposure of some valleysides.	H
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Intimate scale of the landscape. • Landform character. • Uncommon intrusive influences. • Parts of the valley have an AONB designation.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Intimate scale of the landscape. • Visual exposure of some valleysides. • Parts of the valley have an AONB designation.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Intimate scale of the landscape. • Visual exposure of some valleysides. • Parts of the valley have an AONB designation.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Woodland/hedgerow pattern. • Integrity of valley floor. • Visual exposure of some valleysides. • Parts of the valley have an AONB designation.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of valley floor. • Visual exposure of some valleysides. • Woodland/hedgerow pattern.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Parts of the valley have an AONB designation.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Intimate scale of the landscape. • Integrity of the valley bottom.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow/woodland pattern.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.5 Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes (D)

4.5.1 The Wooded Hills and Ridges are a distinctive landscape type within the south and west of the study area. Their relief and strongly wooded character are a marked contrast to surrounding areas of more open arable farmland and river valleys.

4.5.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- Woodland dominated hills and ridges on a belt of Bagshot/Claygate Beds and other sand and gravel formations, stretching through Essex from Epping Forest to Tiptree.
- Wooded commons with ancient and secondary woodland defined by peripheral medieval wood banks.
- A concentration of small estates/areas of historic parkland.
- Well hedged landscape, with large areas of ancient, semi-natural woodland.
- Historically scattered and fairly sparse settlement pattern, overlain in parts by expanding modern suburban development of historic market towns.

4.5.3 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn and Oak with occasional Gorse, Holly, Blackthorn, Dog rose, Hazel, Elm, Ash, Birch, Beech, Sweet Chestnut, Elderberry.

4.5.4 The Wooded Hills and Ridges comprises four Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- Epping Forest & Ridges (D1)
- Brentwood Hills (D2)
- Danbury Hills (D3)
- Tiptree Ridge (D4)

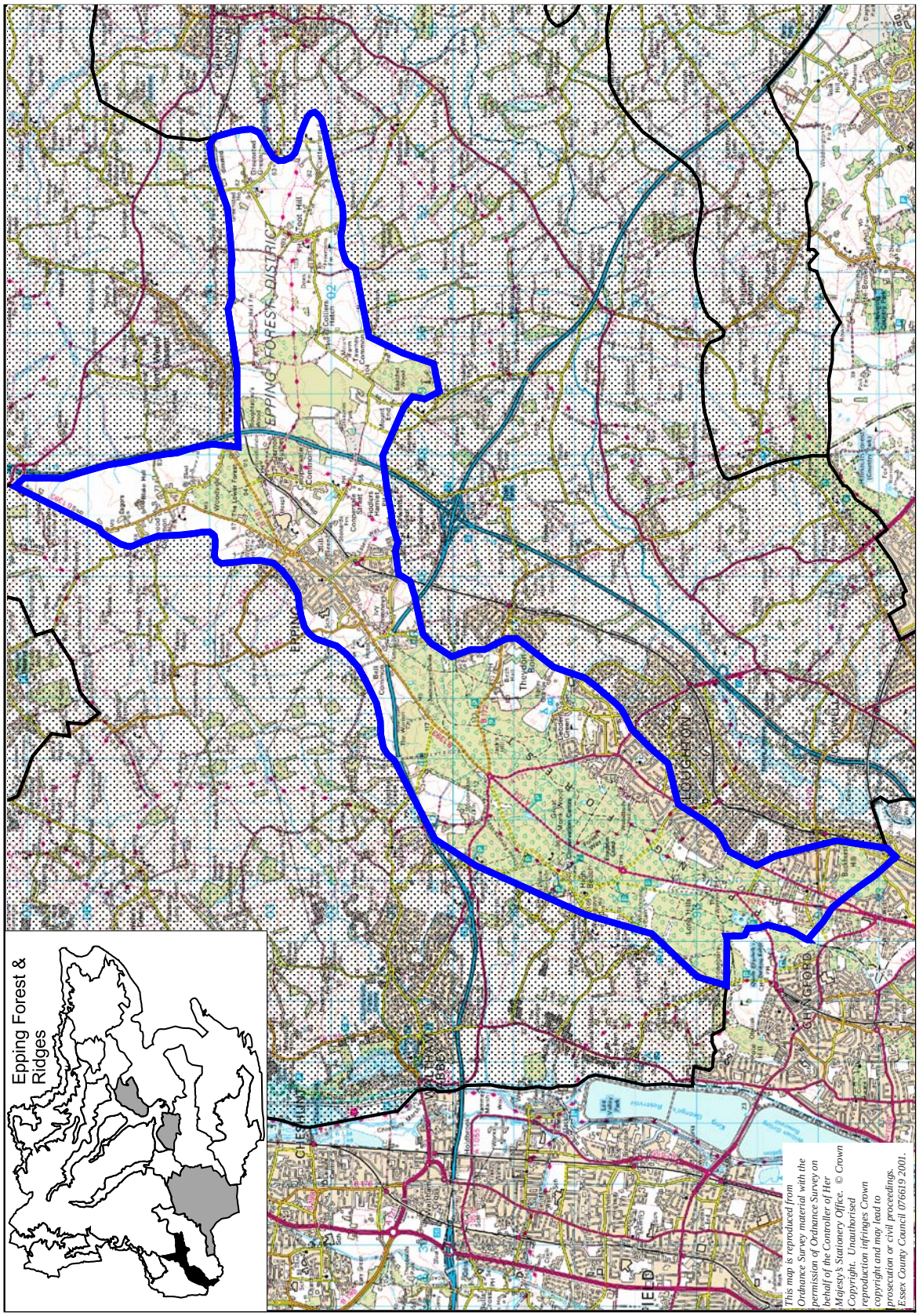
4.5.5 *Epping Forest and Ridges (D1)*

Key Characteristics

- Elevated moderate to steep sided ridges, crowned by woodland.
- Very large crescent shaped block of ancient deciduous woodland to the west.
- Wooded skylines.
- Distinctive grassy plains and large ponds within Epping Forest, greens and commons associated with settlements.
- Small to medium scale pattern of hedged pasture and arable fields with frequent hedgerow trees.

Overall Character

Epping Forest and Ridges is a landscape of heavily wooded ridgelines, fringed by predominantly small and medium size thick hedgerow fields which are often indented into the woodland edges. Within extensive areas of beech and oak-hornbeam woodland scattered small grassy plains and large ponds as well as many ancient formerly pollarded trees are a feature. The main settlements of Epping, Loughton and Theydon Bois have a historically linear form of development, including associated large commons. Although they have been much expanded by modern suburban development this is not widely apparent in the surrounding landscape due to enclosing woodland and/or their own high tree cover. The western and southern parts of the area are partly visually interrupted by a complex network of major transportation routes, including the M11 and M25. However, to the north east urban influences on character are uncommon with a network of narrow lanes, small villages, hamlets and farmsteads.


Epping Forest &
Ridges
EPPING FOREST DISTRICT
LOUGHTON
CHIGWELD
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Character Profile

Geology

- Claygate and Bagshot sand and gravel/pebble beds and London Clay.

Soils

- Coarse/fine loamy, silty and sandy soils on ridgetops. Some slowly permeable clayey soils on ridgesides.

Landform

- Major SW-NE aligned broad ridge with a gently undulating ridgetop and moderate to steep sides. Smaller connected N-S aligned ridge.
- Small narrow steep stream valleys in the ridgesides.
- Undulating landform in the north east of the area.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Epping Forest has large areas of ancient beech and oak-hornbeam woodland (traditional wood-pasture and pollards now mostly unmanaged), together with pockets of acid grassland/heath and bog/marsh adjoining ponds.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Mix of small and medium size hedged fields with both curved and straight boundaries.

Farming pattern

- Limited extent of farmland in comparison to wooded area, characterised by both pasture and arable fields.

Woodland/tree cover

- Extensive coherent blocks of woodland that have a major influence on character. Epping Forest is predominantly deciduous. Woodlands in the east of the area, e.g. Mount Wood includ conifer plantations.
- High tree cover in Epping and Loughton.

Settlement pattern and built form

- The town of Epping and the large village of Theydon Bois retain strong historic cores with large commons. Epping and Loughton have much suburban development.
- Small hamlets and farmsteads are dispersed around the fringes of the area.
- Local vernacular of brick, weatherboarding and coloured washed plaster.

Communications

- Winding lanes.
- M25 and M11 cross the area in cutting and tunnel.
- The main A104, A121, B1393 form very straight roads through the centre of Epping Forest.

Other landscape features

- Large ponds/commons and greens.
- Iron age hillforts of Amesbury Banks and Loughton Camp within Epping Forest.
- Historic parklands, e.g. Hill Hall, Gaynes Park.
- Radio mast at Beacher Wood.
- A number of golf courses within area.

Landscape Condition

- The landscape condition of the major woodlands is moderate to good. The decline of traditional pollard management and invasion of grass plains by birch and scrub species slightly erode character.

- The condition of hedgerows/hedgerow trees is mostly good.

- A radio mast and a number of mobile phone masts on high ground and golf courses out of keeping with character have introduced some incongruous features into the area.

- The condition of the farmland is moderate. There is some evidence of overgrazing from horses near the main settlements.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- In the last century the principal trend for change was the suburban expansion of Epping and Loughton.

- Current trends include some decline in traditional woodland management, increasing traffic and visitor numbers associated with recreational use of Epping Forest, and siting of mobile phone masts close to the M11/M25.

- There is likely to be continuing pressure for urban development especially housing development given the proximity of London, and recreational pressure both from visitors to Epping Forest, and use of urban fringe farmland for golf courses and horsiculture.

EPPING FOREST AND RIDGES (D1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Strong character of landscape, mostly in good condition.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Landscape setting of settlements.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Low capacity for further change. • Some visually exposed ridgesides.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Landform character. • Some visually exposed ridgesides.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Low capacity for further change.	H
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerowed field pattern. • Some visually exposed ridgesides.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character of the lanes. • Settlement form and character.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Visual exposure of some ridgesides. • Low capacity for further change.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Woodland/hedgerow condition are essential to character.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

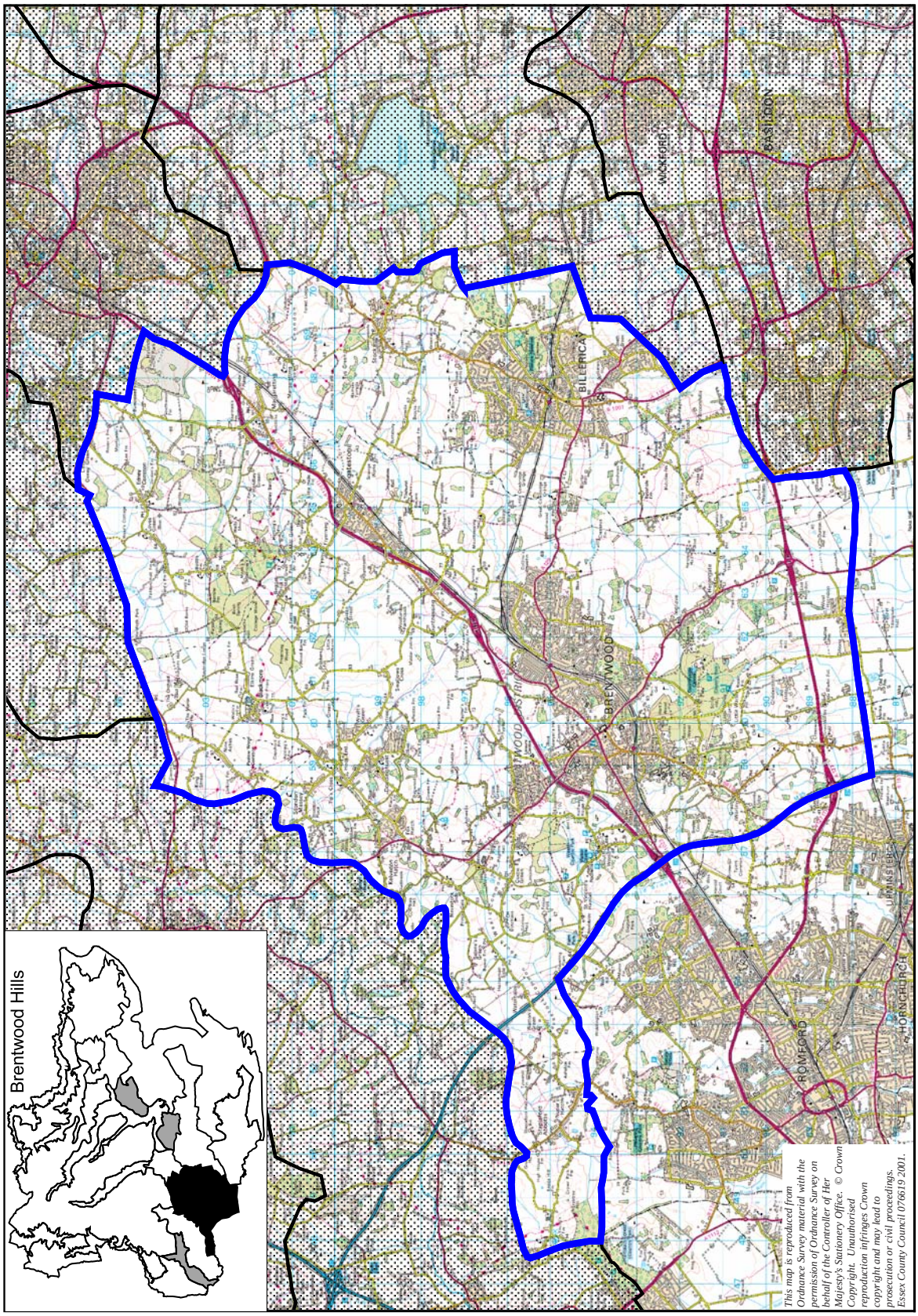
4.5.6 *Brentwood Hills (D2)*

Key Characteristics

- Gently to strongly undulating hills/ridges.
- Semi enclosed character due to presence of numerous small woods, large interlocking blocks of woodland and frequent hedgerow trees.
- Patchwork of small irregular pasture and arable fields, opening out to medium to large regular arable fields in the centre of the area.
- Dense linear settlement pattern along major south west to north east road/rail routes.

Overall Character

The Brentwood Hills have a varied topography comprising a series of ridges and rounded hills. The landform is strongly rolling towards the edges of the character area, flattening out towards the centre on high ground. To the south a slight escarpment occurs between Childerditch and Little Burstead. It is a wooded landscape with many small scattered woods, some large blocks of woodland, tree belts of historic parkland and hedgerow trees. As a result, views are often quite confined, but in parts long views are possible over more open farmland and from high ground. Small unenclosed greens, commons and scattered ponds add interest and variety of the area. A number of isolated churches on hilltops are also a distinctive feature. Villages, hamlets, cottages and farmsteads are typically strung out along the narrow lanes, with a dense urban settlement concentrated along the main road and rail routes running through the centre of the area.


Brentwood Hills
BILLERICAY
BRENTWOOD
ROMFORD
HORNCHURCH
UPMINSTER
WICKFORD
BASILDON
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Character Profile

Geology

- Claygate and Bagshot Beds, London Clay, and a small area of Glacial Till.

Soils

- Complex mosaic of soils including well drained fine loamy soils, seasonally waterlogged slowly permeable clayey, fine and coarse loamy soils.

Landform

- Gently to strongly undulating low hills/ridges.
- South facing escarpment between Gt Warley and Gt Burshead incised by small narrow valleys.
- Gentle, very shallow valley of the River Wid.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient oak-hornbeam and mixed deciduous woodland, e.g. Hordon, Norsey, Thorndon Woods. Sweet chestnut coppice. Springline alder woodland.
- Unimproved neutral/acid grassland and relict pockets of heathland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Predominantly small scale irregular hedged field pattern.
- Some parts in the centre of the area have medium to large scale field pattern with straight boundaries, defined by tree belts or fragmented hedgelines.

Farming pattern

- Mix of arable and pasture farmland.

Woodland/tree cover

- Relatively high tree/woodland cover.
- Very large blocks of woodland south of Brentwood, east of Billericay and north of Ingatestone.
- Many small woodlands and copses scattered throughout the area.
- Frequent hedgerow trees, shaws.
- Mixed or conifer shelterbelts around some farms, fields.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Many small linear hamlets along lanes interspersed with farmsteads and cottages.
- Some medium-large villages along major road routes.
- Brentwood and Billericay are historic market towns, much expanded by modern commuter development.
- Mixed vernacular including red brick, colour washed plaster and weatherboarding.

Communications

- Complex pattern of narrow sinuous lanes.
- M25 forms the eastern boundary of the character area.
- A12(T) cuts through the centre.
- A pylon route runs close to the M25, and another cuts across farmland between Brentwood and Billericay.

Other landscape features

- Some greens associated with settlement, and a few surviving commons, e.g. Galleywood Common.
- High frequency of ponds.
- Large historic park at Hylands and a number of small estates.
- Country Parks of Weald/Thorndon include remnant wood pasture and historic parkland.
- Local landmarks include isolated churches, e.g. Little Burstead, and windmills at Mountnessing and Stock.
- Golf courses are a fairly common feature.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of woodlands and hedgerows is moderate to good. However, parts of the arable farmland have a fragmented hedgerow pattern in poor condition.

- Major roads, some industrial development and large farm buildings are visually intrusive/detract from character in localised areas.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The character of much of the landscape has not changed significantly for long periods of time apart from enclosure of large commons in the 19th Century, and erosion of typical small irregular field patterns due to expansion of arable farming since the Second World War.

- The development of major road/rail routes through the area and pressure from the expansion of London has led to considerable expansion of the market towns of Brentwood and Billericay, and partial urbanisation of some of the larger villages.

- As well as urban development pressure, there are likely to be continuing pressures for major road improvements which, if not sensitively aligned and designed, could be damaging to character. Also, the character of narrow hedged/banked lanes are vulnerable both to erosion and to minor highway improvements to accommodate increasing levels of commuter traffic.

BRENTWOOD HILLS (D2)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Some ridges, hillsides are more visually exposed. • Integrity of woodland, hedgerow field pattern. • Coalescence. • Islands of tranquillity in the north. *Any new development should include strong new woodland/hedgerow framework planting particularly where arable farmland is in poor condition.*	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Some ridges, hillsides are visually exposed.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Irregular grain of the landscape. • Landform character. • Islands of tranquillity. *Route alignment and appropriate mitigation is critical.*	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Some ridges, hillsides are visually exposed. • Landform character. • Islands of tranquillity. *Siting, massing, form and colour and landscape framework that respond to character are critical.*	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Low to moderate intervisibility but some ridges, hilltops are visually exposed. • Landform character. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of woodland, hedgerow field pattern.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Some ridges, hillsides are visually exposed. • Integrity of woodland, hedgerow field pattern. • Islands of tranquillity.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character of the narrow lanes. • Distinctive character/form of some settlements. • Integrity of hedgerow field pattern.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Some ridges, hillsides are visually exposed. • Islands of tranquillity.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Woodland condition. • Integrity of small scale hedgerowed field pattern.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

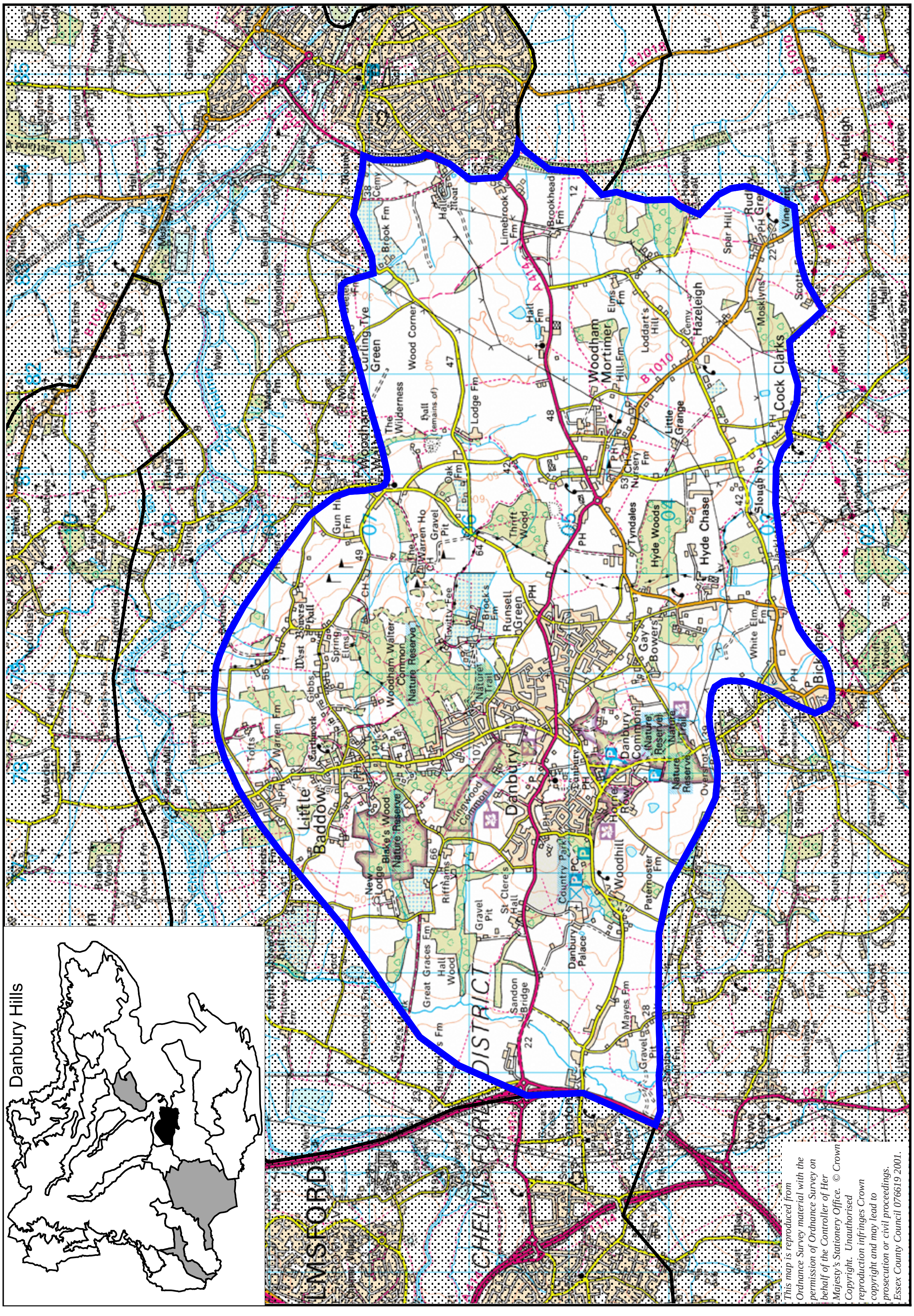
4.5.7 ***Danbury Hills (D3)***

Key Characteristics

- Distinctive landform of a very large gently domed hill, and a broad connecting ridge eroded into small rounded hills in the south east.
- Dense woodland on Danbury Hill, fairly open arable farmland to the east.
- Historic parklands, grassy commons, pockets of heathland and orchards diversify character.
- Long views across the Chelmer Valley from high ground.

Overall Character

The Danbury Hills are a small area of moderate to steep sided hills markedly elevated above the Chelmer/Blackwater valley to the north and the South Essex farmlands to the east. Extensive deciduous and mixed woodland clothes Danbury Hill and largely surrounds the hilltop settlements of Little Baddow and Danbury. The church spire of Danbury is a distinctive feature rising above the wooded skyline. Small fields of pasture and commons are interspersed amongst the woodland in the west, giving way to more open arable farmland in the east with a medium to large scale field pattern. The main A414, as well as the narrow lanes, follow winding routes through the area. In the east some visual interruption is caused by overhead lines.


Danbury Hills
Little Baddow
Danbury
Woodham Mortimer
Hazeleigh
Cock Clarks
Bicknacre
CHELMSFORD DISTRICT
LMSFORD
Danbury Common
Blake's Wood Nature Reserve
Woodham Walter Common Nature Reserve
Hyde Woods
Hyde Chase
Country Park
Danbury Palace
Sandon Bridge
Great Graces
Curling Tye Green
Runsell Green
Woodhill
Purleigh
B1010
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Character Profile

Geology

- Sands and Gravels and London Clay

Soils

- Well drained fine loamy soils, often over gravel.

Landform

- Visually prominent dome shaped hill, elevated approximately 90 m above the Chelmer Valley. Moderate to steep western and northern hillsides.
- Broader, connected approximately east-west aligned ridge of lower elevation. Around Hazeleigh the ridge has been eroded into some distinctive rounded small hills.
- Small narrow, steep sided valleys are a feature around Danbury and Little Baddow.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient sessile oak-hornbeam woodland.
- Heathland, valley bogs and unimproved meadows.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Small-medium scale irregular hedged field pattern in the west and south east of the area. Medium to large scale field pattern in the north east.

Farming pattern

- Pasture interspersed between the woodland in the west and south east of the area. Arable farmland in the north east.
- Strong concentration of orchards in the area.

Woodland/tree cover

- Large complex of deciduous and mixed woodland around Danbury and Little Baddow with indented boundaries to surrounding farmland.
- Isolated woodland blocks, small copses and some tree belts in the east of the area.
- Many hedgerow oak trees.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Historically linear villages of Danbury and Little Baddow, much expanded by modern housing development, but surrounded by woodland.
- Small hamlets and individual farmsteads along lanes.

Communications

- The main A414 follows a sinuous route over Danbury Hill and across the farmland in the east to Maldon.
- Small winding lanes.

Other landscape features

- Historic parklands of Danbury Park and Riffhams.
- A number of small disused and active sand and gravel pits, enclosed by woodland.
- Scattered small reservoirs.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the woodlands is good with many actively managed.
- Some hedgerows are broken within the arable farmland.
- Danbury and Little Baddow retain strong historic cores, but extensive modern development is out of keeping with their character.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- A strongly wooded character remains in the west of the area, but there has been loss of woodland, erosion of hedgerows associated with intensive arable farmland in the east. This trend may have reached its peak and there may be opportunities for restoration of woodlands, hedgerows and grasslands in the future.

- Small sand and gravel pits in the area have so far had only very localised impacts and not significantly eroded character.

- Pressure for additional small scale housing development around Danbury and Little Baddow is possible.

DANBURY HILLS (D3)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of woodlands, commons and small scale hedgerowed field pattern. • Visual exposure of some ridgesides/hillsides.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Low intervisibility of some existing urban edges.	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of woodlands, commons, small scale hedgerowed field pattern. • Landform character. • Character of roads and lanes.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of woodlands, commons, small scale hedgerowed field pattern. • Visual exposure of some ridgesides/hillsides. • Landform character.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Visual exposure of some ridgesides/hillsides. • Landform character.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of woodlands, commons, small scale hedgerowed field pattern. *Opportunities for landscape enhancement/restoration in the north east of the area.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of woodlands, commons, small scale hedgerowed field pattern. • Low to moderate intervisibility.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character of the small settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Visual exposure of some ridges/hillsides.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of woodlands and hedgerows that are an essential part of character.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

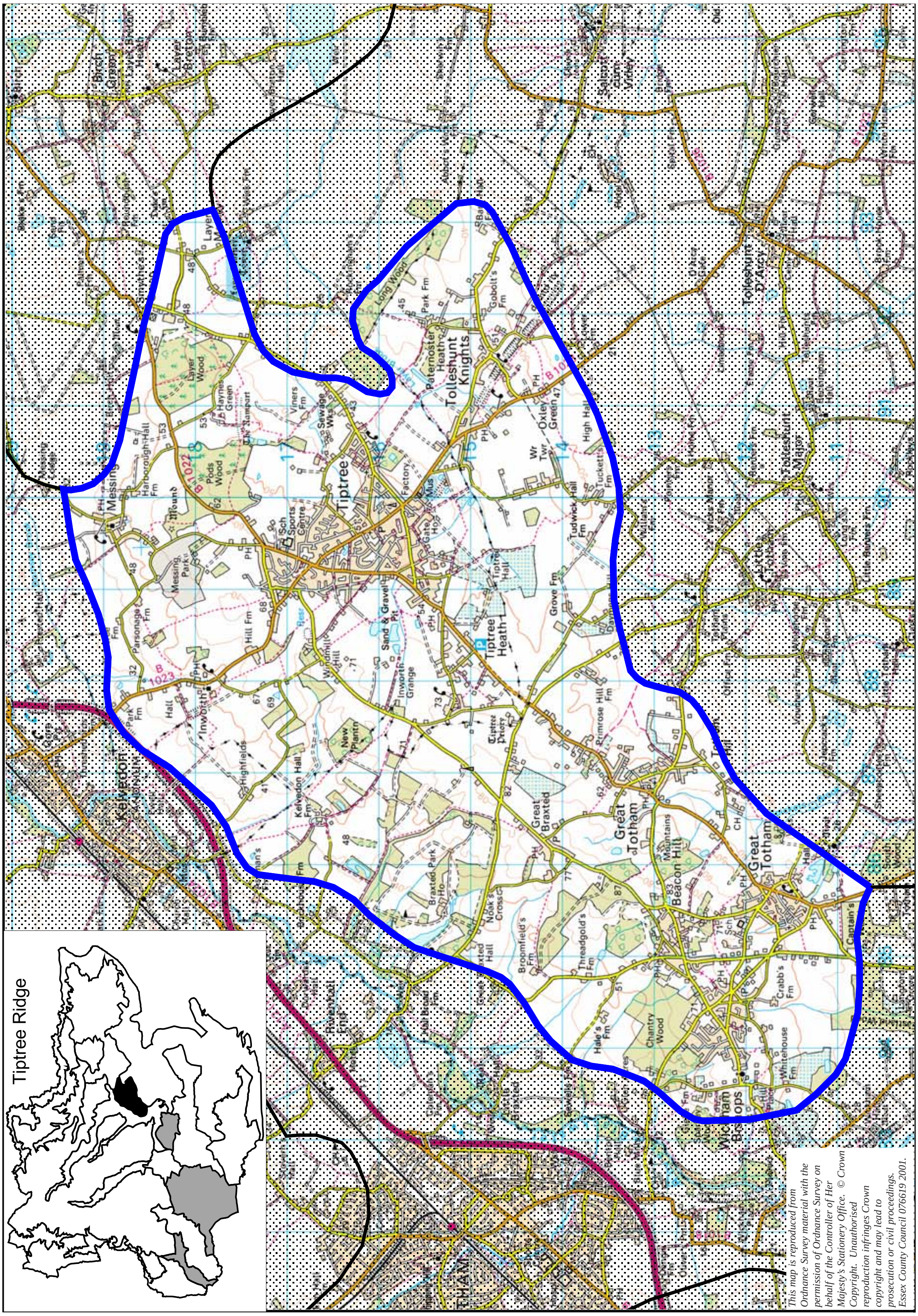
4.5.8 *Tiptree Ridge (D4)*

Key Characteristics

- Elevated, broad ridge.
- Strongly wooded western ridgeside.
- Small - medium scale field pattern.
- Enclosed character provided by many tall, thick hedgerows and woodland.
- Framed views over the Blackwater Valley and the Blackwater coastal farmlands.

Overall Character

The Tiptree Ridge landscape is formed by a broad and relatively high ridge, which is clothed by large areas of woodland on its western side. Small to medium size fields are set within a strong structure of numerous woodland blocks, copses and tall thick hedgerows, but much of the area's former heathland and wood pasture character has been lost. Where gaps in hedgerows permit, framed views over the Blackwater Valley to the west and the coastal farmlands to the south east are possible. The settlement pattern is dispersed, principally isolated farmsteads in the west, and a mix of small/large villages, hamlets, small farmsteads, cottages and modern houses along lanes in the east of the area.



Character Profile

Geology

- Glacio-Fluvial Sands and Gravels, London Clay

Soils

- Well drained fine loamy over clayey soils, slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged soils.

Landform

- Broad and relatively high SW-NE aligned ridge, elevated approx. 55 m above the surrounding countryside. Mainly moderate slopes, some more gentle slopes on the north west side. The ridge is slightly indented by small valleys, and the ridgetop gently undulates.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Heathland (Tiptree heath is the largest remaining fragment in Essex, historically part of a much more extensive area extending the length of the ridge).
- Oak woodland, sweet chestnut coppice, holly and birch scrub.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Small and medium size fields of both regular and irregular shape bounded typically by tall wooded hedgerows with large number of hedgerow trees. Many very small paddocks around settlements.

Farming pattern

- A mix of pasture and arable farmland.

Woodland/tree cover

- Extensive deciduous woodland cover of large and small woods/copses, some interlocking.
- A few straight bounded conifer plantations, and treebelts.
- Many hedgerow trees including oak, sweet chestnut, holly, field maple.

Settlement pattern and built form

- The western side of the area has a relatively sparse settlement pattern of isolated farmsteads and cottages along lanes or houses of large estates.
- The eastern side of the area from Gt Totham to Tiptree has a higher density of settlement including small and large villages, hamlets and many farmsteads, houses along lanes. Tiptree has extensive modern estates.
- Local vernacular of the area includes weatherboarding, plaster and pantile.

Communications

- Small narrow winding and straight lanes, often with thick hedgerow boundaries.
- No major roads cross the area.

Other landscape features

- Historic parks at Braxted and Messing.
- Small sand and gravel pit at Tiptree.
- Tiptree Jam Factory with a number of orchards in surrounding area.
- Tiptree windmill.
- Radio mast on high ground above Braxted Park.
- Scattered small reservoirs.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the hedgerows is moderate to good, in localised areas they are fragmented.

- Some poor quality development out of character is found around Tiptree and in the small settlements to the south west.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Much of the area's former heathland was lost during the course of late enclosure.

- Many settlements have been subject to modern infill and expansion.

- Future possible trends for change may include pressure for further housing development around Tiptree, use of high ground for masts, alternative recreational uses of less viable agricultural land.

TIPTREE RIDGE (D4)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Visual exposure of some ridgesides. • Small areas of tranquillity in the west.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Low to moderate intervisibility. *Opportunities to improve some existing urban edges.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of woodland, hedgerowed field pattern. • Landform character. • Character of the lanes.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of woodland, hedgerow field pattern. • Small areas of tranquillity in the west.	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Visual exposure of some ridgesides. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of woodland, hedgerow field pattern. *Possible opportunities for restoration of heathland character.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of woodland hedgerow field pattern. • Small areas of tranquillity in the west.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character of settlements and lanes.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of woodlands, hedgerows that are an essential part of character.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.6 London Clay Landscapes (E)

4.6.1 The London Clay landscapes are found in south Essex and around Colchester and the Tendring Plain.

4.6.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- Mainly gently undulating or flat landform.
- Heavy clay soils and lighter sandy/loamy soils where sand and gravel deposits overly clay.
- Regular and straight hedged field boundaries the result of both ancient planned landscapes, and late enclosure of former heathlands.
- Pasture and arable farmland.
- Mostly enclosed nature of the landscape.

4.6.3 The main hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Elm with occasional Ash, Blackthorn, Field Maple.

4.6.4 The London Clay Plateau landscapes comprise four Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- South Essex Farmlands (E1)
- South Colchester Farmlands (E2)
- Tendring Plain (E3)
- North Colchester Farmlands (E4)

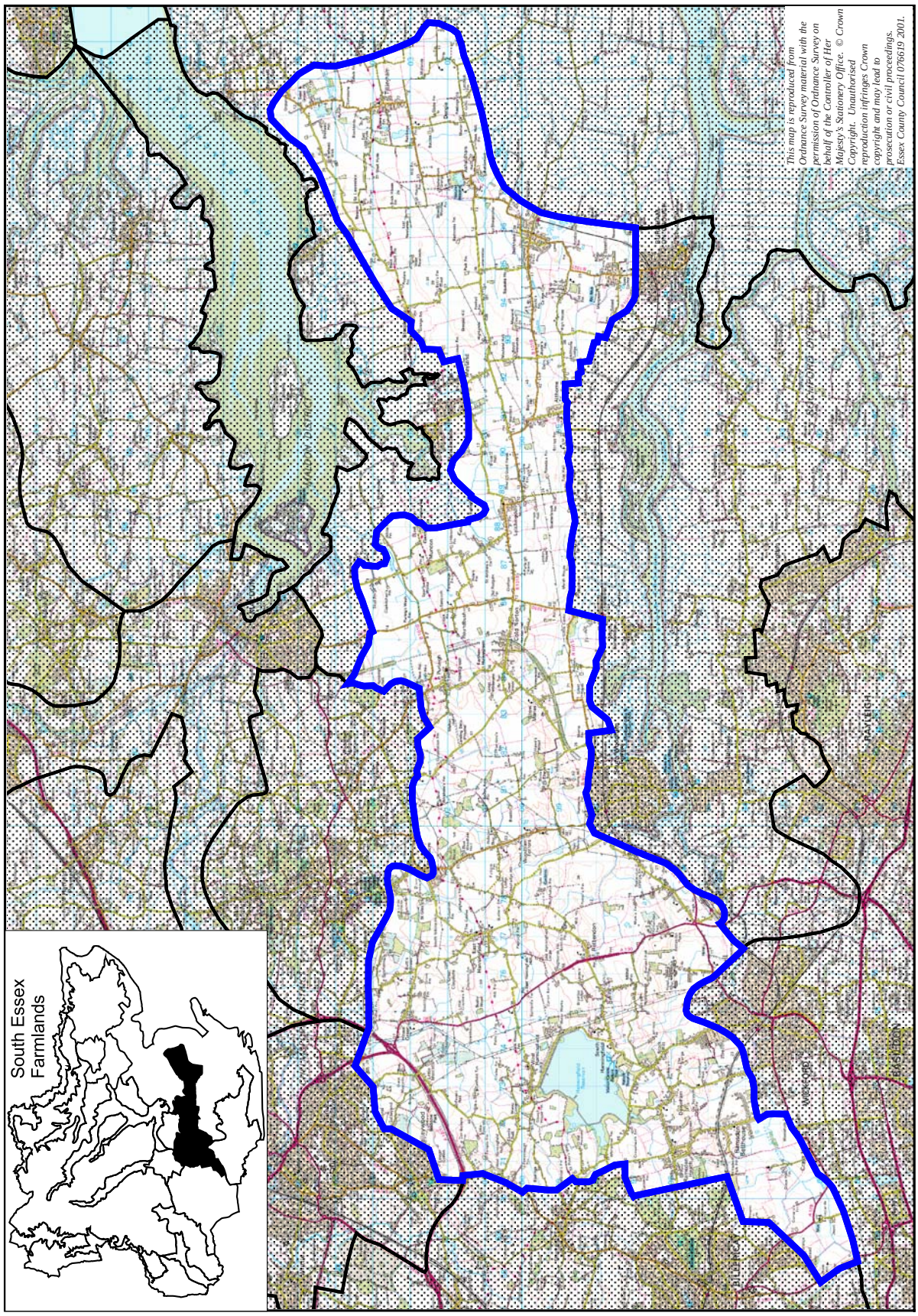
4.6.5 *South Essex Farmlands (E1)*

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform, locally strongly rolling.
- Rectilinear field pattern with tall thick hedgerow boundaries.
- Occasional small woods and copses.
- Sense of enclosure
- Striking large open water expanse of Hanningfield Reservoir surrounded by dense tree belts is a distinctive feature in the west.
- Pylons are a frequent presence.

Overall Character

The South Essex Farmlands have a simple pattern of small to medium size rectangular arable and pasture fields. Distinctive long hedgerow boundaries running on parallel axes are a common feature, thought to be the result of ancient planned enclosure and extend over gently to strongly undulating landform. Despite the large scale loss of elm in the area, the tall thick hedges contribute an enclosed character to the landscape. In the west the large Hanningfield Reservoir and its surrounding mixed treebelts are a dramatic contrast to the surrounding farmland. Overhead pylons and some major roads visually interrupt the landscape.


South Essex Farmlands
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Character Profile

Geology

- Mainly London Clay, some Claygate and Bagshot Beds and Sands and Gravels

Soils

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, small areas of fine or coarse loamy and silty soils.

Landform

- Varied landform.
- Large parts are gently undulating.
- More strongly rolling topography associated with rounded, moderate to steep sided hills/small escarpments between Ramsheath and Woodham Ferrers, extending north to Cold Norton and Purleigh.
- Low broad ridge extends on the Dengie Peninsula.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Oak-hornbeam woodland.
- Neutral meadows.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Predominantly small and medium rectilinear fields, often with long co-axial field boundaries (ancient planned field system).
- A few areas with large fields where field pattern has been lost, e.g. east of Rettendon.
- Predominantly thick hedgerow boundaries.

Farming pattern

- Mix of arable and pasture farmland, arable more dominant in the east.
- Occasional orchards, e.g. near Chelmsford.

Woodland/tree cover

- Scattered small woods and copses in the west, more widely dispersed in the east towards the Dengie Peninsula.
- Mixed tree belts around Hanningfield Reservoir.
- Scattered hedgerow oak trees. Elm was previously the dominant hedgerow tree.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Dispersed settlement pattern.
- Small villages and hamlets generally of strong linear form.
- Farmsteads, cottages and more recent suburban houses along lanes.
- Isolated farmsteads and barns within the farmland.
- Local vernacular of weatherboarding (painted black or white) and brick.

Communications

- Minor roads are quite straight and follow strong north to south, east to west patterns, sometimes with distinctive right angled bends. Narrow grass verges.
- Main A130 runs through the centre of the area and the A12(T) bisects the north west corner.

Other landscape features

- Hanningfield Reservoir - very large expanse of open water.
- Pylon routes running north to south and east to west, interrupt the landscape.
- Masts at Bushy Hill.
- A few sand and gravel pits on the Dengie Peninsula.

Landscape Condition

- In parts, especially in the east of the area, there has been loss of hedgerows due to field rationalisation, or fragmentation due to lack of management.

- The condition of some settlements is poor due to out of character 1960's and 1970's development.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Traditionally the landscape was dominated by pasture but extensive areas have been converted to arable.

- Future trends for change may include pressure for urban development, masts on high ground and recreational uses given the proximity to urban areas in the east.

SOUTH ESSEX FARMLAND (E1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern • Low to moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides.	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Low to moderate intervisibility. *Possible opportunities to improve existing urban edges.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern. • Low to moderate intervisibility.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides. • Landform character. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides. • Landform character. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides. *Possible opportunities for landscape enhancement ion some parts.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Condition of hedgerows. • Character of settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Limited capacity for further change.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerow field pattern.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

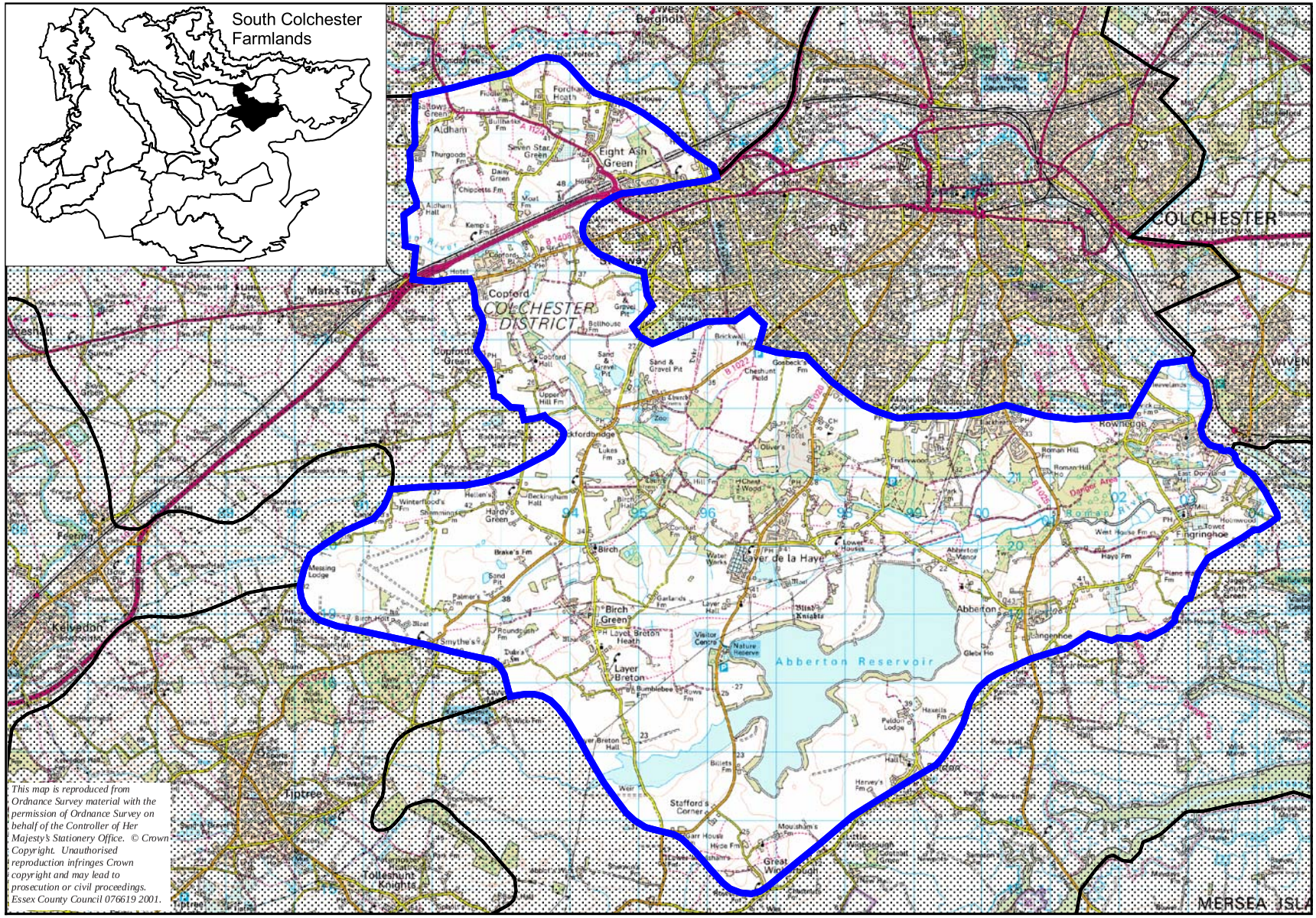
4.6.6 *South Colchester Farmlands (E2)*

Key Characteristics

- Mix of small regular pasture and large arable fields.
- Dense woodland in the Roman River valley.
- Enclosed, intimate character in the north, more open in the south.
- Complex settlement pattern of nucleated and linear villages/hamlets, and farmsteads along dispersed lanes.
- Distinctive elongated large waterbody of Abberton Reservoir within a shallow valley.

Overall Character

The South Colchester Farmlands is a gently undulating landscape of hedgerowed pasture and arable fields, bisected to the north by the narrow valley of the River Roman which has strongly wooded valleysides and small meadows and marshes in the valley bottom. In the south the large open waterbody of Abberton Reservoir is a surprising contrast to the surrounding farmland landscape. Heathlands were formerly extensive in the area, but now much of this character has been lost. Away from the edge of Colchester the area has a tranquil character.


South Colchester Farmlands
COLCHESTER DISTRICT
COLCHESTER
Marks Tey
Copford
Eight Ash Green
Layer de la Haye
Abberton Reservoir
Abberton
Birch
Birch Green
Layer Breton
Tiptree
Kelvedon
Feering
Rowhedge
MERSEA ISLA
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Character Profile

Geology

- Sands and Gravels and London Clay

Soils

- Deep permeable coarse loamy soils and slowly permeable clayey soils.

Landform

- Predominantly gently undulating.
- Narrow valley of the River Roman cuts across the area with moderate to steep valleysides.
- Valleyside slopes of the River Colne on the eastern boundary.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Unimproved acid grasslands, heath, fen, mixed ancient woodland, mainly concentrated now in Roman river valley. Heath at Layer Breton.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Regular or semi regular fields small, medium and large hedgerow fields.

Farming pattern

- Mainly pasture.
- More arable south of Abberton Reservoir and around edge Colchester.
- Occasional orchards.

Woodland/tree cover

- Interlocking large blocks of woodland and linear woods concentrated in and around the Roman river valley.
- A few isolated small woods and copses elsewhere.
- Mixed tree belts adjacent to Abberton Reservoir.
- Hedgerow oaks.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Complex settlement pattern.
- Medium size villages such as Rowhedge and Layer de la Haye which have been much expanded by modern development.
- Both small nucleated and linear hamlets.
- Farms mainly along the lanes.
- Typical historic local vernacular of weatherboading and brick.

Communications

- Straight or slightly winding narrow lanes.
- A12(T) bisects a small section of the area in the north.

Other landscape features

- Large open water expanse of Abberton Reservoir, which has distinctive rounded small peninsulas, and is partly surrounded by tree belts.
- Layer Marney Towers is a local landmark.
- Active and disused sand and gravel pits near Rowhedge, Stanway and Birch.
- Two overhead line routes locally visually interrupt the landscape south of Layer de la Haye.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the woodlands is moderate to good.

- Some hedgerows in the south of the area are very degraded.

- The condition of the settlements is moderate. Some show signs of out of character modern development.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Around Colchester, Stanway and Eight Ash Green there was formerly extensive heathland which has now mostly been enclosed.

- In the south of the area there has been loss of hedgerows associated with field rationalisation.

SOUTH COLCHESTER FARMLANDS (E2)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Moderate intervisibility. • Tranquil character away from edge of Colchester. • Strength of character of the Roman river valley. *Possible opportunities for new landscape frameworks based upon woodland and former heathland character.*	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate intervisibility. *Possible opportunities to improve some existing urban edges.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Moderate intervisibility. • Tranquil character away from edge of Colchester. • Strength of character of the Roman river valley.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of woodland, hedgerow field pattern. • Tranquil character away from edge of Colchester. • Strength of character of the Roman river valley.	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate intervisibility. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Moderate intervisibility. • Woodland, hedgerow field pattern. • Strength of character of Roman river valley.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate intervisibility. • Tranquil character away from edge of Colchester. • Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • Strength of character of the Roman river valley.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character of settlements and lanes.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate intervisibility. • Limited capacity for further change. • Tranquil character away from edge of Colchester.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of farmland hedgerows.	M

Note:

(a) *The Roman River Valley/Colne Valleysides are highly sensitive to most forms of large scale development due to its intrinsic strength of character and good condition.*

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

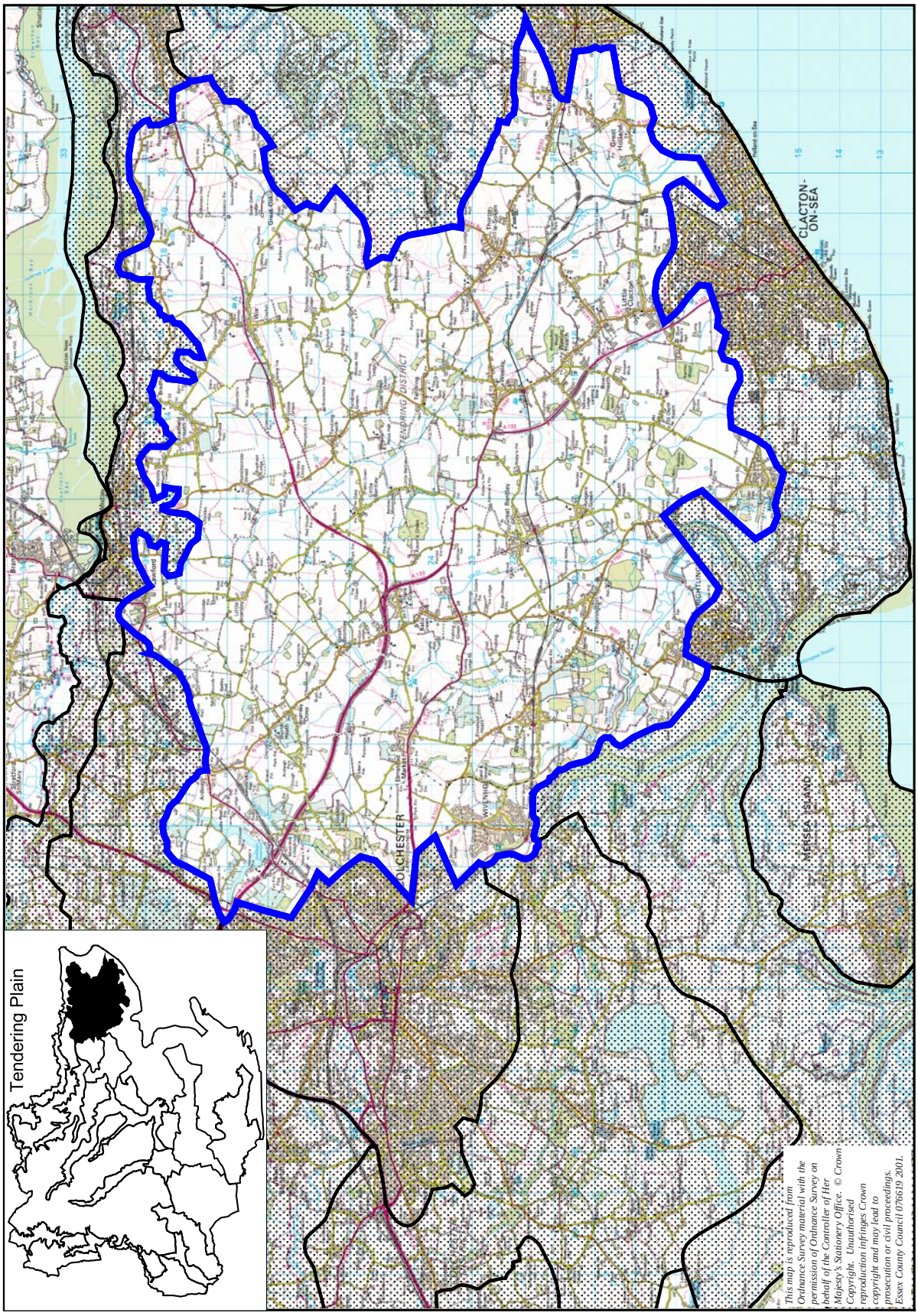
4.6.7 *Tendring Plain (E3)*

Key Characteristics

- Large flat farmland plateau, dissected by occasional small narrow valleys.
- Arable land use dominates, but with some pasture and orchards.
- Straight and regular field patterns with mainly low trimmed hedgerows.
- Widely dispersed blocks of woodland/small copses, sparse tree cover in the north.
- Former heathland character near Colchester.

Overall Character

The Tendring Plain is a low, relatively flat plateau with extensive arable land use on loamy, sandy and clay soils. Typically the fields are large and regular. Apart from a few localised clusters of woodlands/copses they are very widely dispersed. As a result the area has a generally open character and there are frequent wide views in which the small settlements, scattered hedgerow trees, occasional lines of poplars punctuate the low horizons. Small river/stream valleys cutting through the broad plateau have a contrasting enclosed character and more intimate scale. Pylons, high masts and major roads visually interrupt the landscape in parts.


Tendering Plain
CLACTON-ON-SEA
COLCHESTER
MERSEA ISLAND
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Character Profile

Geology

- Brickearths and Loams, Sands and Gravels and London Clay.

Soils

- Deep stoneless coarse loamy soils and slowly permeable clayey soils.

Landform

- Extensive flat to slightly undulating plateau.
- This is dissected by a number of narrow valleys with moderate sloping valleysides.
- Valleysides of the Colne on the western boundary.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient mixed coppice woods, spring line alder woodland.
- Relief areas of heath in road verges. (Former extensive presence of heathland indicated by settlement names such as St Osyth and Weeley Heaths).

Pattern of field enclosure

- Medium to large regular and semi-regular fields with low trimmed and tall hedgerow boundaries, some fragmented.

Farming pattern

- Predominantly arable.
- Improved pasture occurs within the valleys.
- Large orchards around Alresford, Elmstead Market and Ardleigh.

Woodland/tree cover

- Widely dispersed small woods/copses on the plateau.
- Some larger blocks of deciduous woodland in the west around Colchester, near Alresford, and north of St Osyth.
- Small valleys tend to have linear woods along streams.
- Scattered hedgerow oak trees.
- Occasional poplar tree belts.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Relatively sparse settlement pattern of small villages and hamlets with a mainly linear form. Farmsteads and cottages tend to occur along lanes.
- Small town of Wivenhoe in the south west of the area.
- Typical historic local vernacular includes colour wash plaster, weatherboarding and brick.

Communications

- Simple network of narrow, straight and some slightly more sinuous lanes.
- Major A120, A133 cross the area with sweeping alignments.

Other landscape features

- St Osyth Priory/park.
- Some widely visible high masts in the north of the area.
- Northwest to southeast aligned pylon route.
- Sand and gravel pits including areas of open water south of Alresford and near Brightlingsea.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows are in moderate condition. Some are very fragmented.

- Settlements are in moderate condition. Out of character suburban infill particularly from the 1960's and 1970's occurs in some.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Former heathland on sandy soils around Colchester were lost as a result of late enclosure.

- Significant loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees has occurred in parts associated with arable intensification since the Second World War.

- Current and likely ongoing trends for change include pressures for major transportation developments, urban development pressure on the edge of Colchester, and use of the area for large telecommunication masts. Changes in agricultural subsidy regimes may bring possible opportunities for restoration of hedgerows, small woodlands and heathland.

TENDRING PLAIN (E3)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area. *Possible opportunities to absorb change with new landscape frameworks of woodland, hedgerows appropriate to character and restoration of heathland.*	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Simple large scale field pattern. *Possible opportunities to absorb change with restoration of woodland, hedgerows, heathland.*	L
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerows and woodlands.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

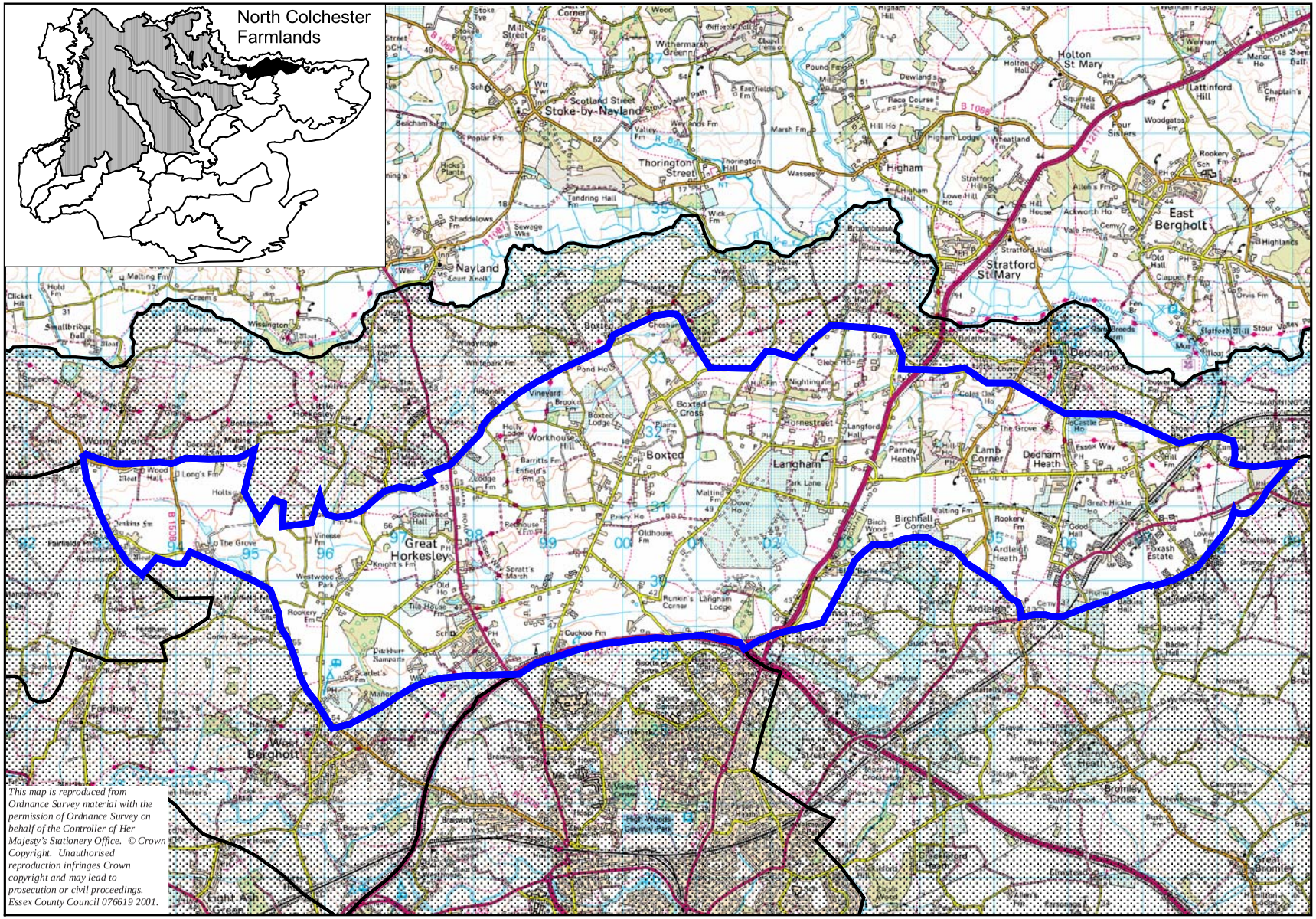
4.6.8 *North Colchester Farmlands (E4)*

Key Characteristics

- Flat arable farmland, with regular fields and low trimmed hedgerows.
- Isolated linear woods.
- Generally wide views.
- Large apple orchards introduce interest and variety.
- Many smallholdings and glasshouses.

Overall Character

The North Colchester Farmlands have a strong pattern of regular arable fields and straight lanes, occasionally reinforced by lines of poplar trees. Wide views are often possible across the farmland due to the general lack of substantial hedgerows/hedgerow trees. However, localised enclosure is created by extensive orchards such as those near Langham and Gt Horkesley. The area's dispersed settlement is characterised by small villages, hamlets and farmsteads along lanes, and in places by more recent 20th century ribbon development.


North Colchester Farmlands
Nayland
Stoke-by-Nayland
Scotland Street
Thorington Street
Higham
Holton St Mary
East Bergholt
Stratford St Mary
Dedham
Boxted
Boxted Cross
Langham
Dedham Heath
Great Horkesley
West Bergholt
Wormingford
Lamb Corner
Birchall Corner
Ardleigh Heath
Foxash Estate
Bromley Cross
Eight Ash
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Character Profile

Geology

- Brickearths and Loams, Sands and Gravels, London Clay

Soils

- Deep fine and coarse loamy soils.

Landform

- Flat or very gently undulating.
- Locally more rolling associated with small stream valleys.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Relict heath in a few road verges. (Place names also indicate former presence).

Pattern of field enclosure

- Mainly small regular fields, a few medium and large size. Low trimmed hedgerow or grass bank boundaries.

Farming pattern

- Mostly arable farmland.
- Large orchards at Laugham and Great Horkesley.
- Glasshouse horticulture, e.g. at Foxash Estate.
- Smallholdings.

Woodland/tree cover

- A few isolated linear woods and copses.
- Local concentration of wood in stream valleys.
- In places lines of poplar trees along roads.
- Scattered hedgerow trees.

S*ettlement pattern and built form*

- Largely dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and farmsteads along lanes.
- A few nucleated villages.
- Modern ribbon development along lanes is common.
- Local vernacular of weatherboarding and brick.

Communications

- Straight lanes.
- Main A12(T) crosses through the centre of the area.

Other landscape features

- Ardleigh Reservoir.
- Pitchbury ramparts Iron Age hillfort.
- Small parkland estate of Hillhouse.

Landscape Condition

- Abandoned smallholdings, derelict glasshouses are in poor condition.

- The condition of the hedgerows is mixed, some are poorly managed.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Significant change took place in the landscape with the late enclosure of former heathlands in the area. Establishment of smallholdings in the 1920's/30's also strongly influenced character.

- Recent trends for change include the decline of smallholdings, often no longer farmed, and expansion of vegetable crops under plastic.

- Principal possible future trends for change include pressure for urban development, and a variety of alternative uses being sought for smallholdings and glasshouse land.

NORTH COLCHESTER FARMLANDS (E4)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Hedgerow field pattern. • Islands of tranquillity. • Northern part of the area is within the AONB.	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Hedgerow field pattern. • Islands of tranquillity. • Northern part of the area is within the AONB.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Islands of tranquillity. • Northern part of the area is within the AONB.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Islands of tranquillity. • Northern part of the area is within AONB.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate to high intervisibility. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerowed field pattern. • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Northern part of the area is within the AONB.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Integrity of hedgerow field pattern. • Islands of tranquillity. • Northern part of the area is within the AONB.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Character of settlements and lanes. • Northern part of the area is within the AONB.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerow field pattern.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.7 Coastal Landscapes (F)

4.7.1 The Coastal landscapes in Essex are extensive areas of open, and largely undeveloped low-lying land adjacent to the coast, much of which is of significant nature conservation value. The very long coastline is deeply indented by major river estuaries including the Stour, Colne, Blackwater, Crouch, and the Thames, and includes distinctive island and peninsula features. Much of the coastal land behind the sea wall has been reclaimed to form wet grazing marshes and, where drained and improved, arable fields. Inland, the land rises and is dominated by arable farmland.

4.7.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- Expansive, sky-dominated, flat, low lying landscapes with water often a feature in views. The estuaries bring the maritime character inland.
- Deeply indent coastline.
- Traditional grazing marshes and drained arable land protected from flooding by sea walls.
- Few hedgerows or fences; numerous creeks, drainage ditches and dykes.
- Tree cover limited to farmsteads and villages on higher ground.
- Extensive evidence of 20th century military activity.
- Many settlements related to fishing or boating industry.

4.7.3 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Elm, with occasional Elderberry, Blackthorn, Dog rose.

4.7.4 The Coastal landscapes comprise ten Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- Thames Estuary (F1)
- Crouch & Roach Farmland (F2)
- Dengie & Foulness Coast (F3)
- Blackwater Estuary (F4)
- North Blackwater Coastal Farmlands (F5)
- Mersea Island (F6)
- Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast (F7)
- Hamford Water (F8)
- Stour Estuary Slopes (F9)
- Stour Estuary (F10)

4.7.5 ***Thames Estuary (F1)***

Key Characteristics

- Very wide estuary mouth, extending out to open sea.
- Extensive tidal mudflats/sands, together with some fringing saltmarsh.
- Large scale landscape with a strong sense of exposure.
- Expansive views in which water and sky dominate, with the outline of the Kent coast sometimes visible in the distance.
- Man-made development restricted to the northern boundary, except for the distinctive landmark of the exceptionally long Southend Pier.

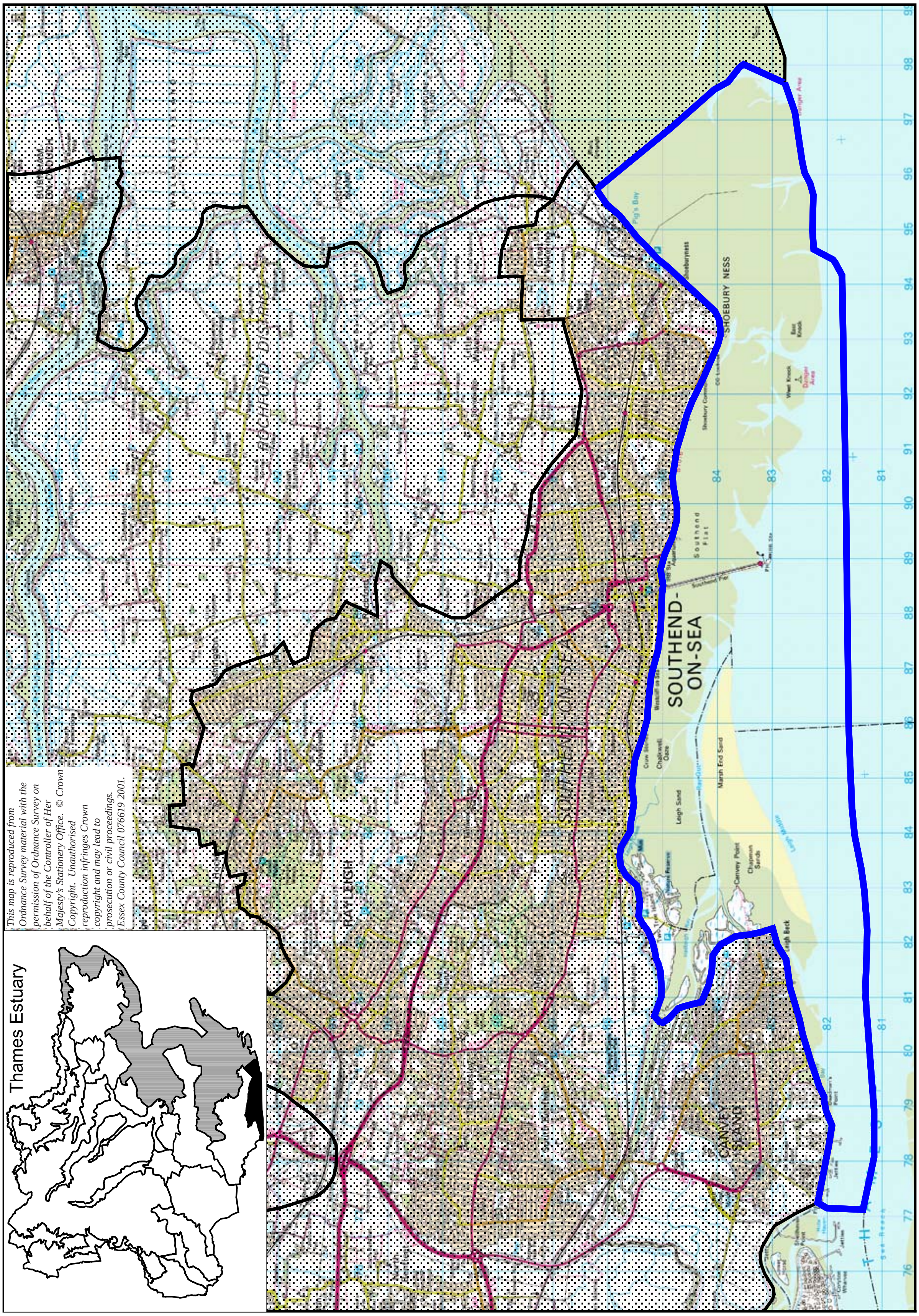
Overall Character

The Thames Estuary is primarily a seascape. Large expanses of open water, and broad tidal mudflats and sands are the main influence on character. The daily rhythms of tide and changes in weather and lighting conditions mean this is also a constantly changing dynamic landscape. In the east a broad band of rough low grazing saltmarsh with an intricate pattern of narrow creeks and runnels, extends around the Hadleigh/Ray Channels, adding variety and seasonal colour to the area. The area's rich wildlife, with thousands of wading birds overwintering on the saltmarshes and mudflats, also provides interest. The towns of Southend on Sea and Canvey Island lie on the northern boundary and are prominent in views northwards from the foreshore. Despite this, overall character is undeveloped, with no buildings and very few man-made structures within the area.

Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Alluvium


Thames Estuary
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
RAYLEIGH
CANVEY ISLAND
SHOEBURY NESS
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Soils

- Deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform/coastal form

- Very wide mouth of the Thames Estuary/open sea.
- Extensive tidal mudflats, sands dissected by a simple pattern of large and small channels narrowing in front of Canvey Island.
- Indented saltmarsh edge adjacent to Two Tree Island and Canvey Island with an intricate pattern of tiny channels/runnels.
- Low cliffs on the boundary of the character area at Southend/Leigh on Sea.
- Shingle bank promontory at Shoeburyness.

Semi natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh.

Other landscape features

- Southend Pier 2 km length is a major landmark.
- River traffic of oil tankers and large container ships, as well as small fishing boats and sailing boats using the estuary.
- Concrete seawalls/promenades and grassed seawalls on the boundary.
- Jetties and groynes.

Landscape Condition

- Some erosion of saltmarsh is occurring.

- Some poor quality urban development just outside the character area is visually intrusive, e.g. tower blocks in Southend.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The main past influences on the landscape have been natural coastal processes. Coastal squeeze is a current trend which is a threat to the important remaining saltmarshes in the area. There are limited opportunities for coastal retreat due to extensive urban areas adjoining which require flood protection.

- Demand for marinas, port development are possible pressures in the future which would be very difficult to absorb.

THAMES ESTUARY (F1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• High intervisibility. • Inappropriate.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• High intervisibility. • Inappropriate.	H
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• High intervisibility. • Distinctive character and integrity of the saltmarsh/mudflats.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• High intervisibility. • Distinctive character and integrity of the saltmarsh/mudflats. • Undeveloped character.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• High intervisibility. • Inappropriate.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• High intervisibility. • Inappropriate.	H
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• High intervisibility. • Distinctive character and integrity of the saltmarsh/mudflats. • Flat character.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• High intervisibility.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• High intervisibility.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Saltmarsh grazing/water level management.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

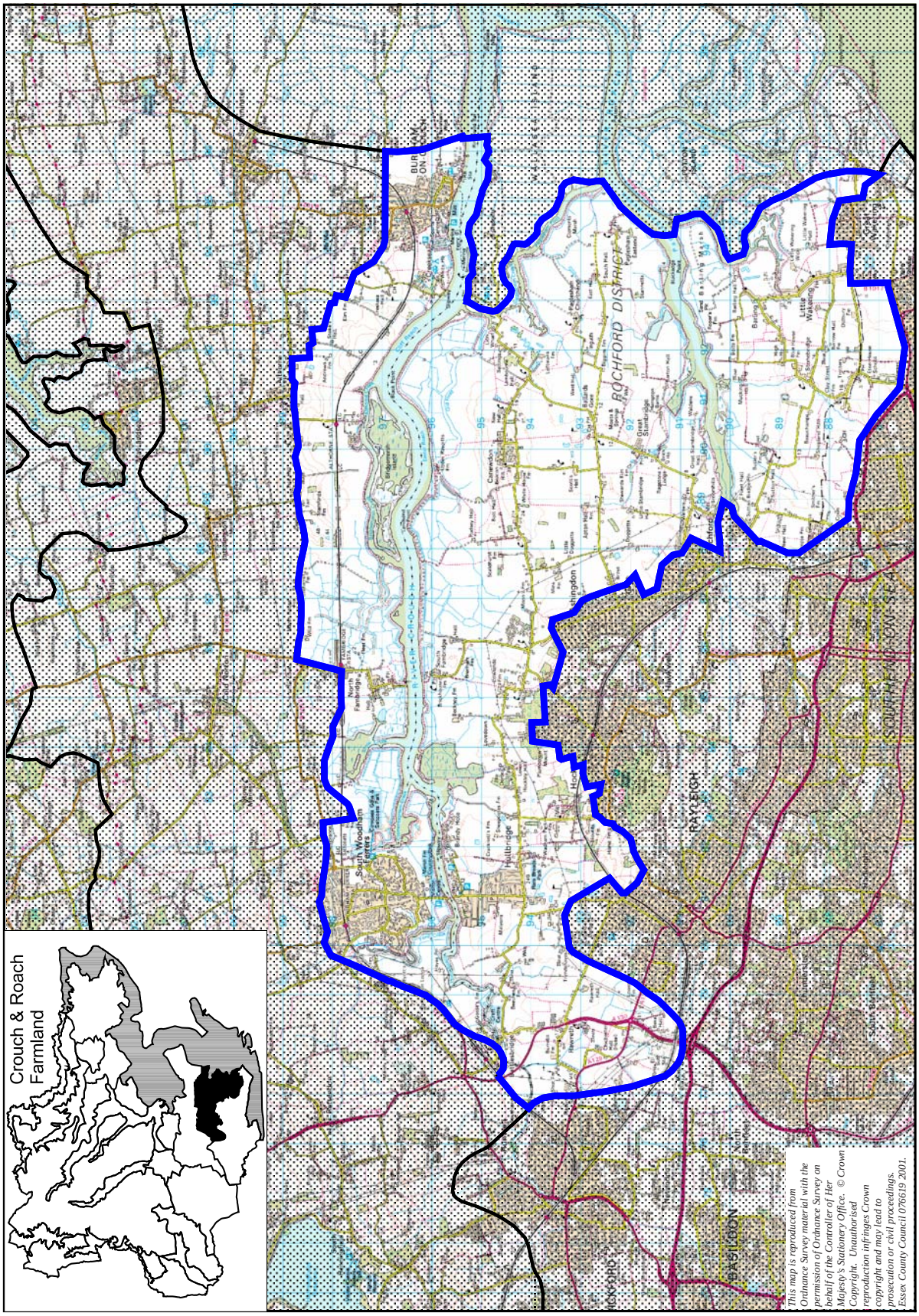
4.7.6 *Crouch & Roach Farmland (F2)*

Key Characteristics

- Long narrow Crouch and Roach river estuaries with bands of flat low lying marshlands.
- Rolling or gently undulating arable farmland between the estuaries. Regular fields of variable size and thick or intermittent hedgerow boundaries.
- Frequent long views across the farmland to the estuaries from higher ground.
- Strongly right angled pattern of lanes.
- Small villages, a scattering of hamlets, farmsteads, and newer suburban properties are concentrated along the lanes on higher ground.

Overall Character

The coastal character of the area is defined by the narrow estuaries which penetrate far inland, with associated mudflats, saltmarsh and reclaimed marshlands, sometimes including grazing marsh. The land between the estuaries and their immediate margins is gently or strongly undulating arable farmland. Moderate to steep sided estuary valleysides are a distinctive backdrop either side of the Crouch. Typically, thick hedgerows dominated by scrub elm follow the rectilinear field boundaries. However, there has been significant loss of hedgerows especially in the south of the area, as well as the general loss of elm the formerly characteristic hedgerow tree, resulting in a fairly open character. The settlement pattern is sparse along the edge of the estuaries, and mostly small settlement tend to hug the slightly higher drier land. Large parts of the area have a tranquil character.


Crouch & Roach Farmland
ROCHFORD DISTRICT
RAYLEIGH
BASILDON
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
South Woodham Ferrers
Holtbridge
Little Wakering
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Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Sands and Gravels, Brickearths and Loams, Claygate and Bagshot Beds, Sands and Gravels

Soils

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, deep stoneless alluvial and well drained silty/loamy soils.

Landform/coastal form

- Mostly very gently undulating landform.
- Low moderate to steep to estuary/valleysides around Canewdon/near Hockley and to the north of the Crouch estuary between South Woodham Ferrers and Burnham on Crouch.
- Incised narrow estuaries of the Rivers Crouch and Roach.
- Narrow margins of flat low lying marshland and saltmarshes next to the Roach, broader areas adjacent to the Crouch.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, grazing marsh, ancient woodland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Regular, mainly small to medium size fields, some large. Distinctive ancient planned coaxial hedgerow boundaries in many parts.
- Regular and irregular fields on the marshlands with straight and sinuous ditch boundaries.

Farming pattern

- Largely arable, but with some significant areas of coastal grazing marsh, e.g. around North Fambridge.

Woodland/tree cover

- Very widely dispersed small copses. Some small woodlands on the ridge near Hockley.
- Scattered hedgerow oak and ash trees. Occasional elms, but these have largely been lost.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Absence of settlement within the marshlands apart from a very small number of isolated farmsteads.
- Small hamlets, farmsteads and early 20th century houses along roads on the higher ground.
- A few small villages, some with a suburban character at the edges.

- Local vernacular of black and white weatherboarding, colour washing and red brick. Occasional examples of dutch gables as an architectural detail on brick houses
- Small town of Burnham on Crouch, historically a fishing settlement now an important yachting centre.
- Larger town of Woodham Ferrers with extensive modern estates.

Communications

- Narrow lanes with right angled bands following the field boundaries.
- Lack of roads within the marshlands other than farm tracks.
- Main A130 crosses the landscape in the west. Otherwise few major roads cross the area.

Other landscape features

- Church towers and spires are often visually prominent in the landscape.
- Some wet gravel pits.
- Scattered ponds and small reservoirs.
- Small caravan/mobile home parks.
- Quays and a marina at Burnham on Crouch.
- Occasional marinas, pontoons and river moorings elsewhere.

Landscape Condition

- Many hedgerows are fragmented.

- The condition of the small settlements is very mixed, often including out of character modern infill.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- There has been significant loss of grazing marsh as a result of agricultural intensification since the Second World War.

- Loss of elm trees from the farmland in the 1960's and 1970's made the character of the area more open.

- Present and likely ongoing trends for change include pressure for urban development around South Woodham Ferrers, transportation developments near Southend, and demand for additional boat moorings, marina facilities along the estuaries. Flood protection measures may also be a likely future issues. There may be some opportunities for managed realignment together with restoration of saltmarshes and grazing marshes, rather than use of visually intrusive higher hard sea walls.

CROUCH AND ROACH FARMLAND (F2)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some estuary valleysides. • Tranquil character.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Integrity of hedgerow pattern.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerow pattern. • Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of hedgerow pattern. • Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Mixed existing character of settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerows. • Condition of saltmarshes.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

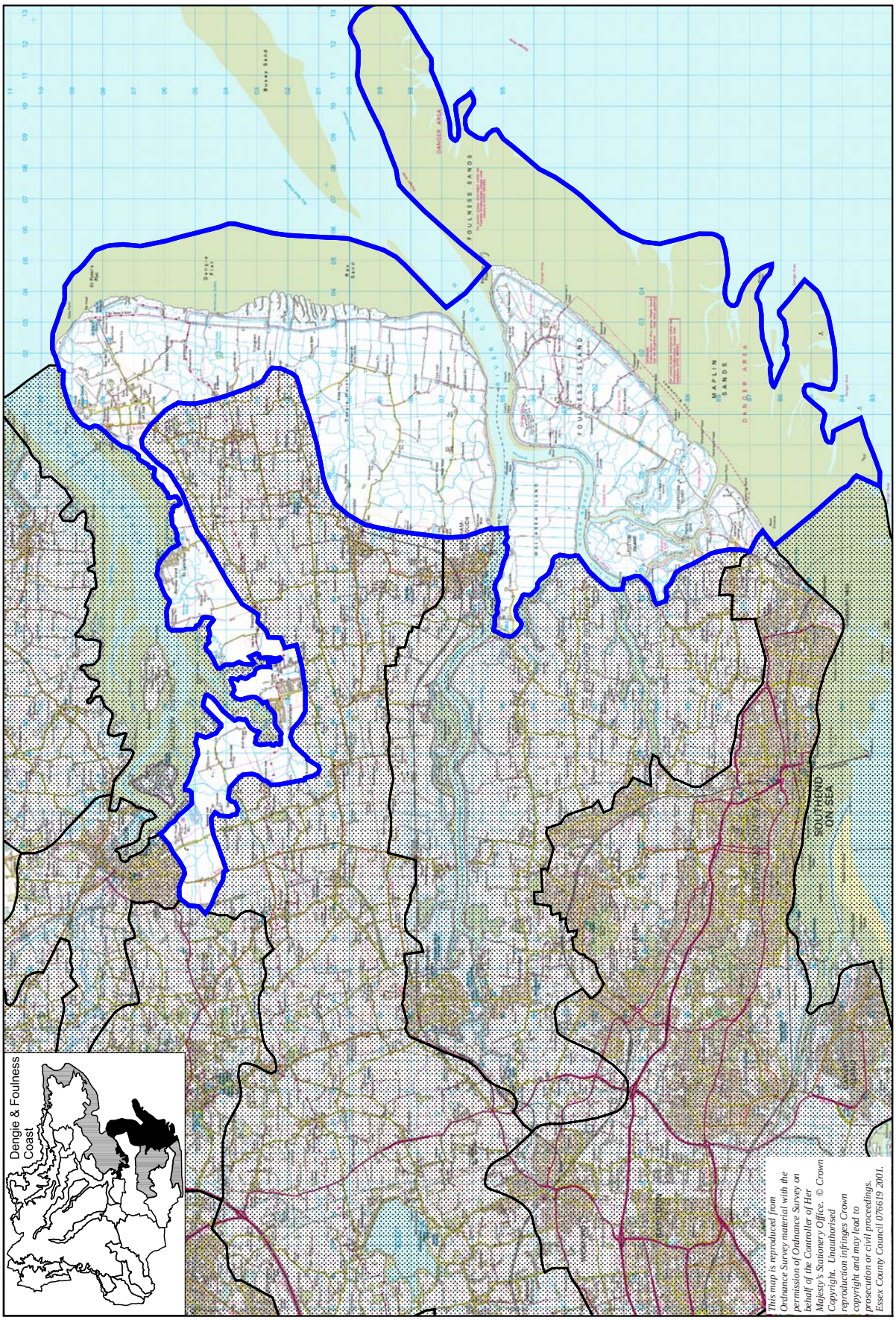
4.7.7 *Dengie and Foulness Coast (F3)*

Key Characteristics

- Large scale, flat landscape.
- Sense of openness/space. Wide views.
- Vast tidal mudflats and sands, and extensive fringing saltmarshes, rich in wildlife.
- Mainly arable farmland of the reclaimed marshlands, intersected by ditches and dykes.
- Absence of woodland, only a few hedgerows.
- Isolated farms and barns, with small villages restricted to the fringes.
- Bradwell Nuclear Power Station is a significant landmark.
- Remote tranquil character.

Overall Character

Dengie and Foulness coast is a distinctive extensive area of reclaimed marshlands, and of sweeping tidal mudflats and sands beyond the sea wall. It is a flat open and exposed landscape, dominated by the sky and/or the sea. A large scale pattern of arable fields on the marshlands is defined by straight or sinuous ditches, with very few trees. Settlement is very sparse. The older marshlands have occasional farmsteads and lanes, but on the more recent reclaimed areas, there are just a few isolated barns and farmsteads. No major roads cross the area so this increases its remote tranquil character.


Dengie & Foulness Coast
SOUTHEND ON SEA
FOULNESS SANDS
FOULNESS ISLAND
MAPLIN SANDS
DANGER AREA
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Character Profile

Geology

- Mainly alluvium, some London Clay and Sands & Gravels

Soils

- Deep stoneless fine/coarse silty and clayey soils.

Landform/coastal form

- Large areas of flat low lying land below 5 m elevation. To the south this is broken into a series of small and large islands by the lower Crouch and Roach estuaries and connecting creeks, e.g. Foulness, Wallasea, Potton Islands.
- Beyond the sea wall in the east both narrow fringes and large pockets of flat saltmarsh and vast tidal sand/mudflats such as Maplin sands.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, pockets of coastal grazing marsh, sea wall grassland, shoreline vegetation.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Predominantly regular, medium to large size fields bounded by straight ditches and dykes.
- Some significant pockets further inland of older, irregular shaped small and medium size fields bounded by sinuous ditches, including remnant fleets in the south.
- Wallasea Island has a geometric field pattern. Overall appearance of a large scale field pattern due to only a few hedgerows.

Farming pattern

- Intensive arable farmland, small areas of grazing marsh.

Woodland/tree cover

- Generally very sparse tree cover.
- A few isolated copses, and trees around farmsteads.
- Some isolated trees/scrub on the older reclaimed marshes.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Isolated farmsteads on the older reclaimed marshes, only occasional barns on the more recently reclaimed land from sea.
- Churchend on Foulness is the only traditional hamlet in the area.
- 1930s plotland developments at Maylandsea and St Lawrence Bay.

Communications

- Sparse road network of narrow straight or dog-legging lanes. Mainly farm tracks.

Other landscape features

- Bradwell Nuclear Power Station is an important landmark with an imposing presence.
- Isolated church at Bradwell on Sea.
- Military ranges, e.g. at Foulness with trackways and unfarmed strips and scattered buildings/debris.
- Traces of redhills.
- Decoy ponds.
- Shingle spit at Foulness Point.
- Caravan sites/leisure parks at St Lawrence Bay.

Landscape Condition

- Some intrusive farm buildings occur around historic farmsteads.

- Locally intrusive industrial/warehouse buildings occur at Creeksea.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Since the Second World War there has been significant loss of coastal grazing marsh and of features such as decoy ponds and old sea wall, as a result of agricultural intensification.

- The main future influences on changes are likely to be agricultural and flood protection. Changes in arable subsidy regimes may present opportunities for large scale managed realignment with creation of saltmarsh and restoration of coastal grazing marsh.

DENGIE & FOULNESS COAST (F3)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Sparse settlement pattern.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Sparse settlement pattern.	H
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• High intervisibility. • Sparse settlement pattern. • Tranquil character.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• High intervisibility. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• High intervisibility. • Absence of woodland/tree cover.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• High intervisibility. • Landform character.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• High intervisibility. • Character of historic farmsteads.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• High intervisibility.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of saltmarsh.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

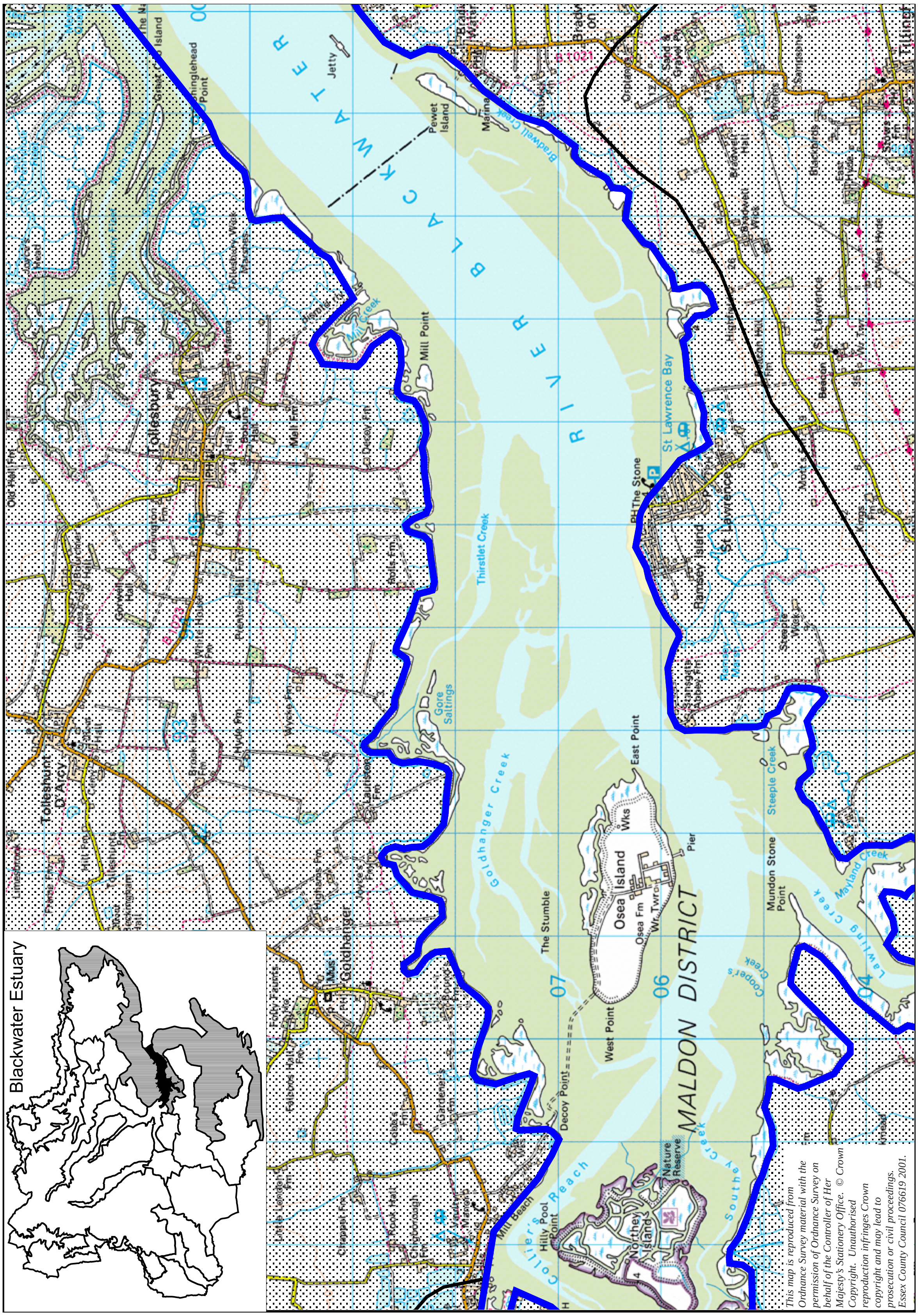
4.7.8 *Blackwater Estuary (F4)*

Key Characteristics

- Very broad estuary.
- Strongly indented shoreline and very extensive tidal mudflats in the west, wide low water channel in the east.
- Distinctive, gently sloped low alluvial and flat saltmarsh islands.
- Sense of openness and space, with wide views.
- Mostly undeveloped coastline.

Overall Character

The Blackwater Estuary is the largest in Essex and only narrows markedly in its upper reaches near to Maldon. It has a large scale character which is enhanced along much of its length by the adjacent flat marshlands. Mudflats, water and sky dominate in views from the edge, broken only by the occasional vertical elements of yacht masts. The estuary widens out to the open sea with sweeping curves. Narrow creeks with pockets of saltmarsh occur more frequently in the west, with a simpler pattern of mudflats and open water in the east.


Blackwater Estuary
RIVER BLACKWATER
MALDON DISTRICT
Tollesbury
Tolleshunt D'Arcy
Goldhanger
Osea Island
St Lawrence Bay
Mill Point
Pewet Island
Thirstlet Creek
Gore Saltings
Goldhanger Creek
The Stumble
East Point
West Point
Decoy Point
Steeple Creek
Mundon Stone Point
Lawling Creek
Mayland Creek
Northey Island
Collier's Reach
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Character Profile

Geology

- Alluvium

Soils

- Deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Coastal landform

- Very wide estuarine outlet up to 2.5 km width.
- West of Osea Island the estuary has a simple pattern of bands of intertidal mud and small pockets of saltmarsh.
- From Osea Island to Maldon the mudflats are much more extensive and the edge of the estuary more indented by creeks with larger pockets of saltmarsh.
- Northey Island is mostly saltmarsh and Osea Island is a low alluvial island, a maximum of 5 m elevation.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Regular small to medium size low trimmed hedged fields on Osea Island.

Farming pattern

- Farmland on Osea with a mix of arable and pasture fields.

Woodland/tree cover

- General absence of trees. Small copse on Osea Island.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Hythe Quay at Maldon lies on the boundary of the character area.
- Osea and Northey Islands have small farmsteads.

Other landscape features

- 19th Century barges at Maldon and hulks in mudflats/saltmarshes.
- Marinas at Maylandsea and Bradwell Creek.
- Yacht moorings of the Hythe, Colliers Reach, Mill Beach and Mayland Creek.
- Low causeway to Osea Island.

Landscape Condition

- The estuary has an undisturbed character and as such it is in good condition.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The estuary is mainly subject to natural processes.

- Saltmarsh erosion and wildlife disturbance, however, are current trends which are being exacerbated by inappropriate boating activity.

- Pressure for additional areas for noisy watersports and marinas are possible which will be very difficult to absorb into this landscape.

BLACKWATER ESTUARY (F4)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Inappropriate.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Inappropriate.	H
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Inappropriate.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Integrity of saltmarshes and mudflats.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Inappropriate.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Tranquil character. • Integrity of saltmarshes and mudflats. • High intervisibility.	H
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Landform/coastal farm.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• High intervisibility. • Integrity of saltmarshes and mudflats.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of saltmarsh.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

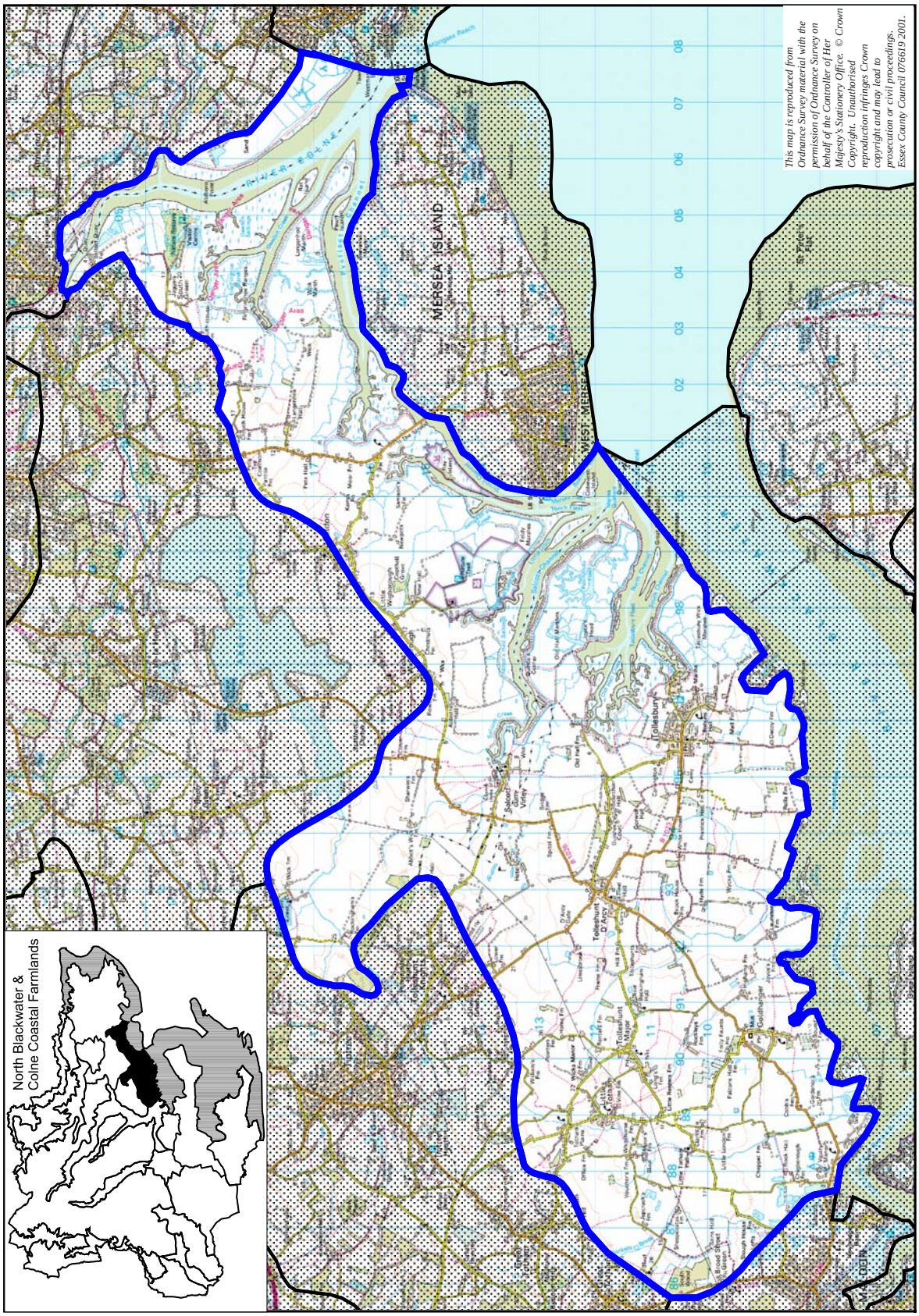
4.7.9 *North Blackwater/Colne Coastal Farmlands (F5)*

Key Characteristics

- Gently sloping arable farmland with intermittent tall elm hedgerows.
- Significant areas of grazing marsh and saltmarsh associated with narrow estuarine inlets and outlets, channels and creeks.
- Small villages/hamlets and isolated farmsteads mainly on higher land, with a few creekside villages.
- Tranquil character.

Overall Character

The North Blackwater coastal farmlands is a gently undulating arable landscape with an extensive fringe of coastal grazing marsh and saltmarsh associated with both small sheltered creeks and channels which indent the coastline, and the relatively narrow estuary of the Colne. The farmland has variable enclosure. Sometimes the tall hedgerows restrict views, in other parts where there has been large scale loss of hedgerows, long views to the estuaries and the sea are possible. On the marshlands and saltmarsh edges, there are open views across the estuaries and out to sea or inland to small settlements on high ground, in which churches can form distinctive landmarks.


North Blackwater &
Colne Coastal Farmlands
MERSEA ISLAND
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Character Profile

Geology

- Mainly London Clay, some areas of alluvium and sands and gravels

Soils

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, well drained fine loamy soils. Deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform

- Gently undulating landform.
- Some areas of flat marshes/saltmarsh adjacent to Tollesbury, Salcott fleets, Byfleet and Strood channels and the Colne estuary with a complex pattern of creeks and small saltmarsh islands.
- Narrow estuary of the River Colne.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, coastal grazing marsh.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Semi regular field pattern of small to medium size fields, but with some areas of larger fields, e.g. north east of Maldon.
- Tall elm hedgerows bounding the fields, but extensive loss in some areas gives the appearance of a large scale field pattern.

Farming pattern

- Mostly arable fields. Some significant areas of grazing marsh, e.g. Old Hall/Tollesbury Wick marshes.

Woodland/tree cover

- Widely dispersed small copses and shelterbelts.
- Absence of woodlands.
- Elm dominated hedgerows.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Overall sparse settlement pattern.
- A few isolated farmsteads.
- In the north east small villages and hamlets are located along lanes.
- Creekside villages of Tollesbury and Salcott.
- Local vernacular of weatherboarding, red brick.

Communications

- Sparse road network, mainly narrow lanes.
- Absence of major roads.

Other landscape features

- Large golf course at Tolleshunt Knights.
- Recreational boating in Lower Colne and sail lofts, lightships, sailing boats at Tollesbury.
- Decoy ponds, red hills and oyster pits on the saltmarshes.
- Pylon route cuts across the landscape in the north west.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerow pattern has been significantly eroded in parts.

- Some saltmarsh is subject to erosion.

- The condition of small settlements is mostly good. Although some out of character development has occurred, this is visually contained by tree'd settings.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Loss of many hedgerows from farmland has occurred due to agricultural intensification since the Second World War. Orchards were also previously a feature in the area that have been lost.

- There are likely to be continuing recreational pressures including for noisy watersports, marina development and recreational boat moorings.

NORTH BLACKWATER/COLNE COASTAL FARMLANDS (F5)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Integrity of estuarine saltmarsh and grazing marsh.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Character of small settlements.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Integrity of estuarine saltmarsh and grazing marsh.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Integrity of estuarine saltmarsh and grazing marsh.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate to high intervisibility. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Hedgerow pattern. • Absence of woodlands. *May be opportunities for hedgerow restoration.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Landform character. • Integrity of coastal grazing marsh/saltmarsh.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character of small settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow condition.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.7.10 *Mersea Island (F6)*

Key Characteristics

- Oval shaped island with a broad low central clay ridge.
- Fringing low lying grazing marshes, pockets of saltmarsh and broad mud/sandflats.
- Mainly agricultural landscape with a few large farmsteads and a scattering of suburban houses along lanes.
- Predominantly open character with frequent views of sea and the estuary.
- Narrow zig-zagging and sinuous hedgerowed lanes.
- Most of the area is tranquil.

Overall Character

Mersea Island is distinguished by its hump backed ridge of London Clay which forms the bulk of the island. This is slightly elevated above adjacent low lying coastal grazing marshes and saltmarsh. Despite only being separated from the mainland to the north by narrow tidal channels, there is a stronger sense of being on an island than the other large physical islands on the Essex Coast. Much of it is agricultural, sparsely settled, and tranquil. The large seaside village/yachting centre of West Mersea, with its surrounding caravan/mobile home parks is a distinct contrast to the rest of the island.


MERSEA ISLAND
WEST MERSEA
East Mersea
Mersea Flats
Mud & Sand
Mud & Sand
Cudmore Grove Country Park
Visitor Centre
Nature Reserve
Brightlingsea Reach
Reeveshall Marsh
Maydays Marsh
Broad Fleet
Reeves Hall
Bocking Hall
Rewsalls Fm
Waldegraves Fm
Weathercock
The Cross
Blue Row
Haycocks
Bower Hall
Barrow Hill
Wellhouse Fm
Maydays Fm
North Barn
Ivy Ho
Bromans Fm
Fen Fm
Moat
B 1025
The Strood
Ray Island
Cobmarsh Island
Mersea Fleet
Thorn Fleet
Pyefleet Channel
Langenhoe Marsh
Wick Marsh
Danger Area
Mersea Island
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Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Sands and Gravels, Alluvium

Soils

- Fine silty/loamy soils, slowly permeable clayey soils, deep stoneless alluvial clay soils.

Landform

- Gently sloping broad ridge max. 20 m elevation.
- Wide band of very flat low lying land in the north of the island.
- Extensive tidal sands and mudflats to the south.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, grazing marsh, sea wall grassland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- *Small-medium size regular fields* bounded by intermittent tall hedges on the ridge and marked by drainage ditches on the flat marshes.

Farming pattern

- Mix of pasture and arable farmland.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Lack of settlement on the grazing marshes.
- A few large isolated farmsteads and small groups of cottages and houses on the ridge. Hamlet of East Mersea.
- Large seaside village of West Mersea at the south west end of the island, traditionally associated with boat building, oyster fishing and now a yachting port.
- Local vernacular of weatherboard, thatch and tile and brick.

Communications

- Causeway bridge is the only road access to the island.
- A few narrow sinuous and zig-zagging lanes on the central island ridge.
- Single larger B road from the bridge to West Mersea. Small lanes in the historic core of West Mersea.

Other landscape features

- Low sandy cliffs at Cudmore Grove Country Park.
- Old Oyster Pits on the saltmarshes.
- Caravan Parks at West and East Mersea.
- Brightly coloured beach hunts at West Mersea.
- Scattered Second World War pillboxes.
- Old barges and yachts in the muddy creeks south east of the causeway, smacks and lighters at West Mersea.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the farmland hedgerows is moderate.

- The condition of the small settlements is mixed with some out of character modern houses.

- There is evidence of expanding pony paddocks and overgrazed pasture around the edge of West Mersea.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The character of much of the agricultural landscape has remained relatively stable.

- The expansion of West Mersea from a small fishing village into a seaside town has been a significant change this century.

- Current and likely ongoing trends for change are the expansion of horsiculture and demands for development of additional marinas and boat moorings.

MERSEA ISLAND (F6)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetops/ridgesides. • Tranquil character.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility. *Possible opportunity to improve existing poor urban edge.*	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• High intervisibility. • Visual exposure of ridgetop/ridgesides. • Landform character.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Absence of woodland. • Landform character. • Integrity of saltmarshes, mudflats.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character. • Integrity of saltmarshes, coastal.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Character of small settlements and lanes. • Integrity of hedgerow field pattern.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• High intervisibility.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow condition.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

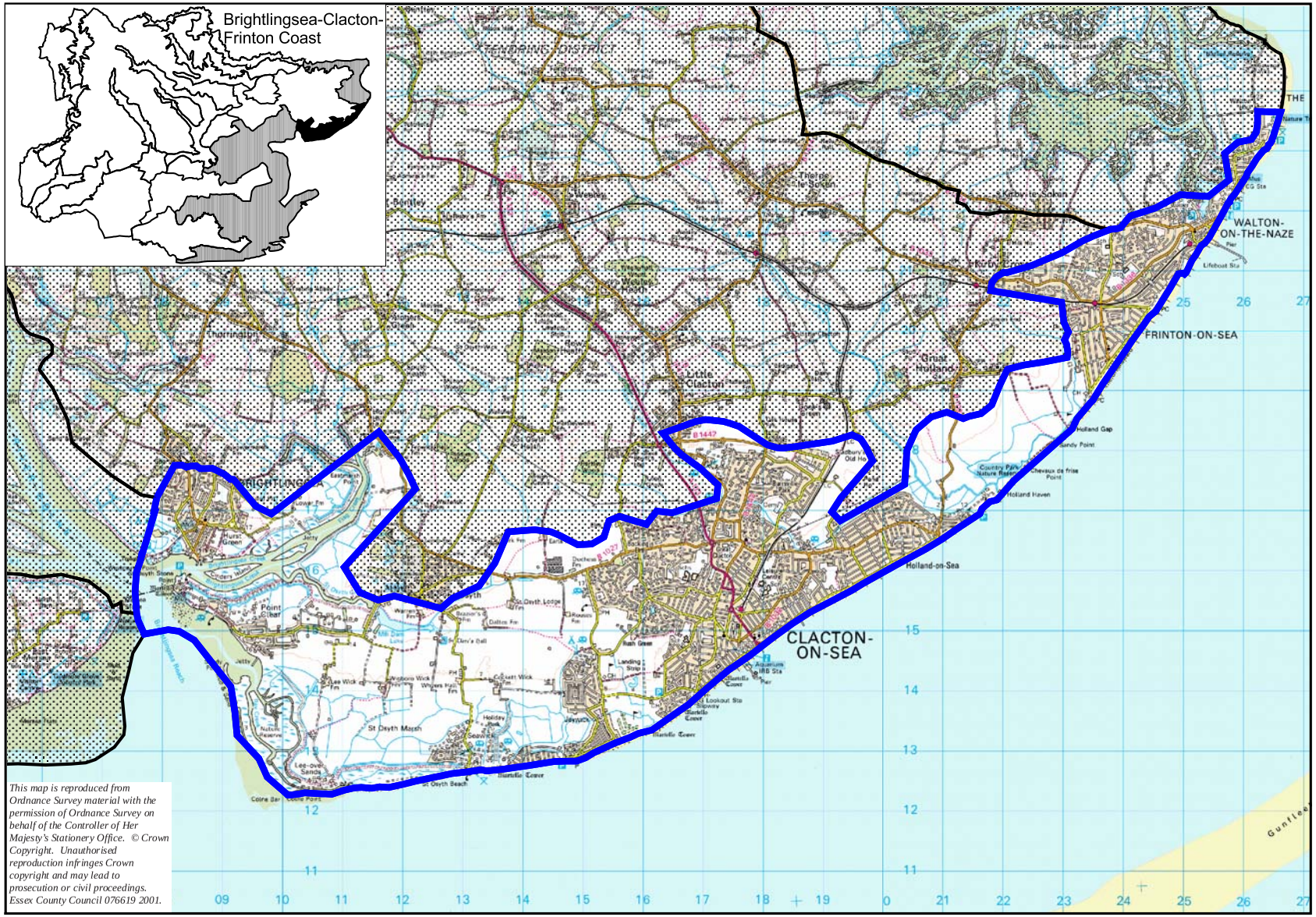
4.7.11 *Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast (F7)*

Key Characteristics

- Medium to large coastal towns interspersed by open farmland and other land in mixed recreational use.
- Gently sloping or flat arable fields, with very few hedgerows and an absence of trees.
- Sand and shingle beaches along the southern and eastern coast, significant areas of saltmarsh and mudflats along the estuary and its connecting creeks in the west.
- Distinctive plotlands developments.
- Napoleonic Martello towers are distinctive landmarks on the coast.

Overall Character

The Brightinlingsea-Frinton-Coast has a varied character. The seaside towns dominated by suburban development cover a significant length of the coast, occupying slightly elevated land, but also spreading onto the flat marshlands. To the west and north east of Clacton there are broad bands of open arable farmland with only a few isolated large farmsteads. Along the coastal edge the plotland developments of Jaywick and Point Clear, various caravan/mobile home parks, golf courses and a country park create a disjointed character. By way of contrast, in the south west there are extensive areas of saltmarsh, mudflats at the mouth of the Colne which are tranquil with a strong sense of isolation.



Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Sands and Gravels, Brickearths and Alluvium

Soils

- Deep permeable coarse loamy soils, deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform/coastal form

- Gently undulating south and south west facing slopes, 5 - 25 m elevation enclosing a narrow band of low lying flat marshlands.
- At Frinton and Walton the low lying land peters out and steep sand and gravel cliffs occur.
- Pebble and sandy beaches along the coast.
- Wide estuary mouth of the Colne (Brightlingsea Reach) with adjacent saltmarsh, and inter tidal muds. Connected creeks loop around to the south and east of Brightlingsea with saltmarsh fringes and islands.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, seawall grassland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Regular and irregular fields of the coastal marshes bounded by curving ditches and straight dykes.
- Wide borrow dykes next to the sea wall.
- Mainly medium size semi-regular fields on the coastal slopes with a very fragmented hedgerow pattern.

Farming pattern

- Predominantly arable. Most of the former coastal grazing marsh has been lost.

Woodland/tree cover

- Absence of woodlands.
- Remnant scrubby elm hedgerows in the farmland.

Settlement pattern and built form

- A few scattered farmsteads on the coastal slopes or at the break of slope with the marshes.
- Large seaside resorts of Clacton, Frinton, Walton upon the Naze, mid Victorian in origin, but each with their own individual identity.
- Brightlingsea, historic boat building centre but now principally a centre for yachting and other watersports.

- All these towns have been much expanded by suburban development.
- Plotland developments of Jaywick and Point Clear and holiday village of Seawick west of Clacton.
- Local vernacular of weatherboarding, brick.

Communications

- Small lanes with distinctive right angled bends following the field pattern.

Other landscape features

- Colne Point sandbars/shingle spit.
- Napoleonic Martello Towers.
- Old Oyster pits on some of the saltmarshes.
- Old counter walls on the marshlands.
- A number of large caravan parks.
- Golf courses.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows are in poor condition.

- The condition of the settlements is mixed.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Past significant change took place with the major expansion of the seaside towns this century.

- Post the Second World War there has been loss of grazing marsh to arable farmland.

- Current trends include pressure for further urban development, and intensification within the plotland settlements of Jaywick and Point Clear.

- Flood defence is likely to be a future issue. Given the length of developed coastline opportunities for managed realignment, are likely to be limited in this area.

BRIGHTLINGSEA - CLACTON - FRINTON COAST (F7)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• High intervisibility. • Some visually exposed hillslopes. • Coalescence. • Tranquil character in the south west.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• High intervisibility. • Some visually exposed hillslopes. *Opportunity to improve existing urban edges.*	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• High intervisibility. • Tranquil character in the south west.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• High intervisibility. • Integrity of estuarine mudflats/saltmarsh. • Tranquil character in the south west. *Silty, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Some visually exposed hillslopes. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Absence of trees on the coastal marshlands. • Tranquil character in south west. *Some uses might offer opportunities for restoration of hedgerows, coastal grazing marsh.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• High intervisibility. • Some visually exposed hillslopes. • Land form character. • Integrity of saltmarshes.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• High intervisibility. • Intrinsic character of farmsteads, small settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• High intervisibility. • Visually exposed slopes/ridgeline.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow condition.	L

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.7.12 *Hamford Water (F8)*

Key Characteristics

- Large rounded and indented estuarine inlet with many scattered islands.
- Generally undeveloped shoreline.
- Fringing arable farmland with a very sparse tree cover.
- Settlement is restricted to a few isolated farmsteads.
- Wide views across the inlet and out to sea.

Overall Character

Hamford Water is a small distinctive character area with a strong sense of place which derives from the unusual rounded shape of its large estuarine inlet, and its complex pattern of saltmarsh, creeks, mud and scattered reed fringed islands. It is enclosed to the east by the low sand and gravel peninsula of the Naze. The surrounding arable farmland to the north, west and south slopes very gently to the inlet, and has fragmented low hedgerows with trees largely absent. Occasional small quays/boatyards are dotted around the inlet, but the only settlements are isolated farmsteads on slightly higher ground.


Hamford Water
VEHICLE FERRY FROM HARWICH TO
Cuxhaven (Germany) 1 day
Turku (Finland) 2 days
both Fridays only
VEHICLE FERRY FROM HARWICH INTERNATIONAL PORT TO
Esbjerg 15 - 20 hours
Hamburg 18 - 21 hours
Gothenberg 24 hours
Hook of Holland (High Speed Superferry) 3 hours 40 mins
Little Oakley
Great Oakley
Crabknowe Spit
Pye Sand
Pennyhole Bay
Pewit Island
Horsey Island
Hamford Water
Walton Channel
THE NAZE
WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE
Kirby-le-Soken
Thorpe-le-Soken
Beaumont
Dovercourt
Harwich
Landguard Point
Nature Reserve
Nature Trail
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Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Sands and Gravels, Alluvium

Soils

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, deep stoneless alluvial soils, coarse loamy soils.

Landform

- Large, approx rounded, but very indented estuarine inlet.
- Complex pattern of mudflats, narrow channels/creeks and small islands.
- The low ridge of the Naze Peninsula of sands and gravels max. 20 m elevation, partly encloses the eastern side of the inlet.
- Fringe of flat low lying land around the inlet below 5 m elevation and this is itself surrounded by a gentle moderately sloped low ridge up to 20 m elevation.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, sea wall grassland, intertidal/littoral vegetation.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Medium size semi regular fields. Some small fields. Bounded by low fragmented hedges or occasional pockets of scrub on the higher ground, and by straight drainage ditches on the low lying land.

Farming pattern

- Predominantly arable. Some small areas of coastal grazing marsh.
- Small orchards on the edge of Little Oakley.

Woodland/tree cover

- Sparse tree cover.
- A few isolated tree belts and a small copse on Skippers Island.

Settlement pattern and built form

- General lack of settlement apart from a few isolated farmsteads.
- Three small villages lie on the north west and southern boundaries of the area.
- Harwich and Walton upon the Naze in adjacent character areas abut the northern and south eastern edges respectively.

Communications

- Winding lane follows the top of the ridge at the boundary of the character area. Otherwise only farm tracks access the area.

Other landscape features

- The Naze Tower - a tall brick polygonal tower is an important landmark.
- Small marina north of Walton upon Naze.
- Kirby and Beaumont Quays, Boatyards.
- Scattered small irrigation reservoirs.
- Caravan Park on the edge of Harwich.
- Small refuse tip at Kirby.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows are in poor or moderate condition.

- The condition of the small settlements is good.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Past significant change includes the loss of coastal grazing marsh associated with agricultural intensification since the Second World War.

- Current and likely ongoing trends include pressure for additional boat mooring/marina facilities and water sports.

- Erosion of saltmarsh may also be an issue due to coastal squeeze.

HAMFORD WATER (F8)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• High intervisibility. • Strength of character. • Integrity of the inlet • Parts of the area are tranquil.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• High intervisibility.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• High intervisibility. • Strength of character. • Integrity of the inlet. • Parts of the area are tranquil.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• High intervisibility. • Strength of character. • Integrity of the inlet.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• High intervisibility. • Strength of character.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• High intervisibility. • Sparse tree cover. • Strength of character.	H
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• High intervisibility. • Sparse tree cover. • Strength of character. • Integrity of the inlet. • Landform character.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• High intervisibility. • Character of farmsteads. • Landform character.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• High intervisibility. • Strength of character.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow condition.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

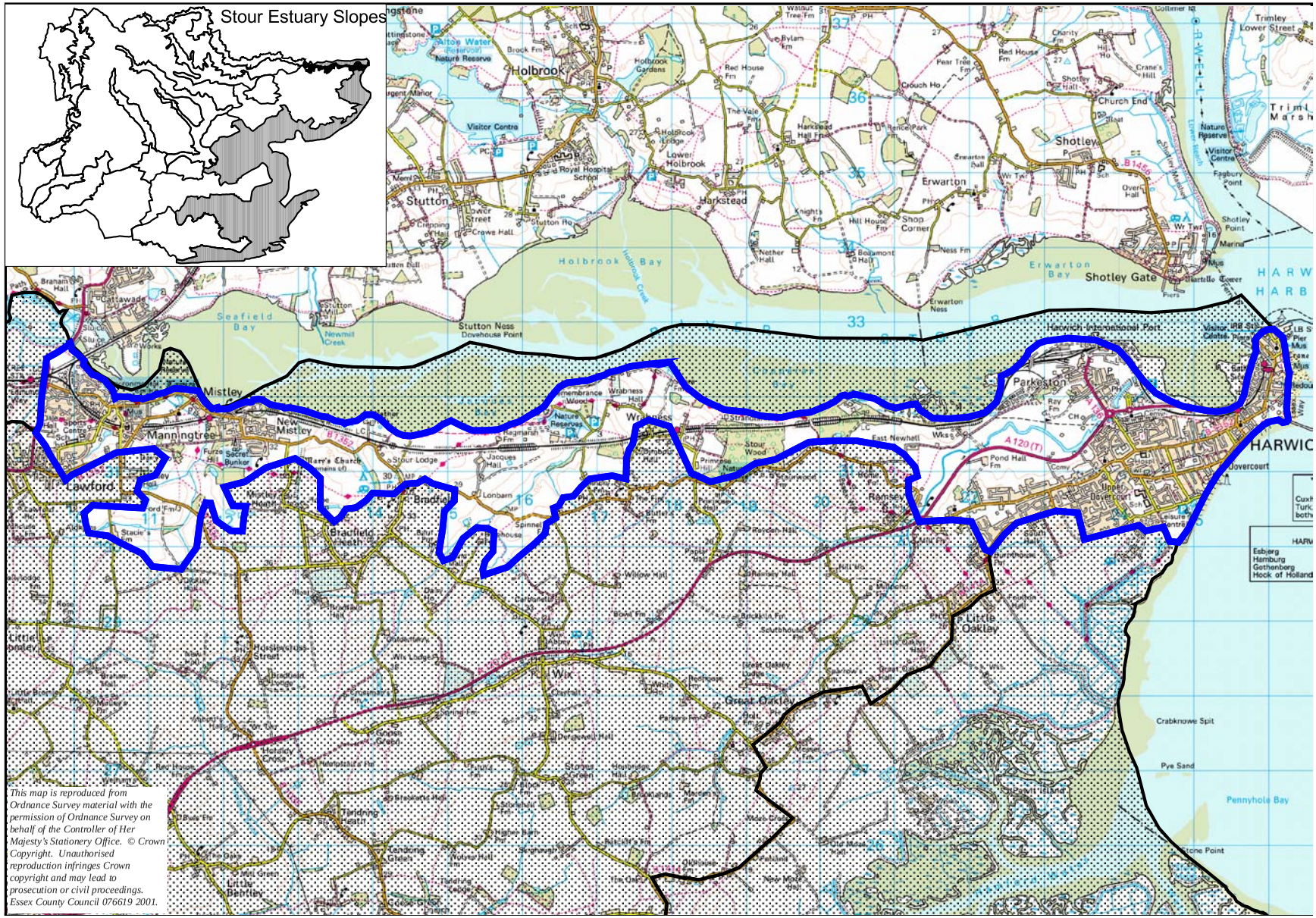
4.7.13 *Stour Estuary Slopes (F9)*

Key Characteristics

- Well hedged mixed farmland on undulating slopes.
- Small steep sided rounded peninsulas adjacent to the estuaries, sometimes wooded.
- Both open and framed views of the Stour estuary.
- Historic small and large ports occupy rising ground in the east and west, with a few small scattered settlements interspersed between them.

Overall Character

The Stour Estuary slopes are a relatively small area of undulating arable and pasture farmland adjacent to the Stour estuary. Blocks of woodland and thick hedgerows provide a semi-enclosed character and an intimate scale, but some parts are more open allowing sweeping views down to the estuary. Steep wooded slopes, associated with small peninsulas which project into the estuary, are a distinctive feature. The large port/industrial town of Harwich lies in the east, but has a limited impact on overall character which is mostly tranquil.


Stour Estuary Slopes
Holbrook
Stutton
Harkstead
Erwarton
Shotley
Shotley Gate
Church End
Holbrook Bay
Erwarton Bay
Stutton Ness
Seafield Bay
Mistley
New Mistley
Manningtree
Lawford
Bradfield
Parkeston
Harwich International Port
Dovercourt
Little Oakley
Great Oakley
Wix
Crabknowe Spit
Pye Sand
Pennyhole Bay
Stone Point
Esbjerg
Harnburg
Gothenberg
Hock of Holland
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Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Sands and Gravels, Alluvium

Soils

- Deep permeable coarse loamy soils, slowly permeable clayey soils, deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform

- Gently to moderately undulating slopes.
- Occasional steep slopes where rounded small peninsulas project into the estuary, e.g. at Copperas Wood and New Mistley.
- Narrow steep sided valleys of small streams flowing into estuary.
- Small areas of flat low lying land around Ramsay Creek and Parkeston Quay and Bathside.
- Relatively steep sided but low ridge/promontory, max of 20 m elevation at Harwich.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient coppice with standards woodlands. Lime and sweet chestnut coppice.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Regular small to medium size fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.

Farming pattern

- Mix of pasture and arable fields.

Woodland/tree cover

- A few medium to large blocks of woodland.
- Some dispersed copses and woodland belts.
- Woodlands on peninsulas, steep slopes adjacent to the estuary.
- Occasional hedgerow trees.

Settlement pattern and built form

- In the majority of the area there are just a few isolated farmsteads and hamlets scattered along the lanes.
- At the head of the estuary, Manningtree and Mistley are old ports with quays, malting warehouses and maltings fringing the river. Mistley was at one time developed as a port.

- The port of Harwich is a large town at the mouth of the estuary. It has narrow medieval streets with old wharves and quays. The adjacent seaside suburb of Dovercourt was mainly developed in the fifties.
- Local vernacular red brick, pantiles and colour washed plaster.
- Dutch gables are a local architectural detail.

Communications

- Railway in cutting and on embankment runs close to the estuary edge.
- Generally few roads. Very winding east-west B1352 on higher land, and a few approx. north-south running lanes.

Other landscape features

- St Nicholas Church tower and spire at Harwich, the cranes at Parkeston Quay and Mistley Towers are local landmarks.
- Small estates of Mistley Place, Wrabness and Jacques Hall.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows and woodlands are in moderate to good condition.
- Intrusive industrial warehouse development occurs at Parkeston.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Agricultural change post war has resulted in some field rationalisation and loss of hedgerows.

- Urban and industrial development is a current pressure at the edges of the area around Harwich and together with pressure for transportation developments, could be an ongoing issue.

STOUR ESTUARY SLOPES (F9)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of hedgerow/woodland pattern. • Strength of character of the area. • Visual exposure of some estuary/valleyside slopes.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some estuary/valleyside slopes. *There may be an opportunity to improve some existing urban edges.*	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some estuary/valleyside slopes. • Strength of character of the area. • Landform character.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of hedgerows/woodland pattern. • Strength of character of the area. • Visual exposure of some estuary/valleyside slopes.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Visual exposure of some estuary/valleyside slopes. • Moderate intervisibility. • Landform character. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerow/woodland pattern. • Strength of character of the area. • Visual exposure of some estuary/valleyside slopes.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of hedgerow/woodland pattern. • Strength of character of the area. • Visual exposure of some estuary/valleyside slopes. • Landform character.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Moderate intervisibility. • Intrinsic character of small settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate intervisibility. • Strength of character of the area.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerows/woodlands.	M

Note:

(a) *The area around Parkeston is of moderate sensitivity to category 4.*

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

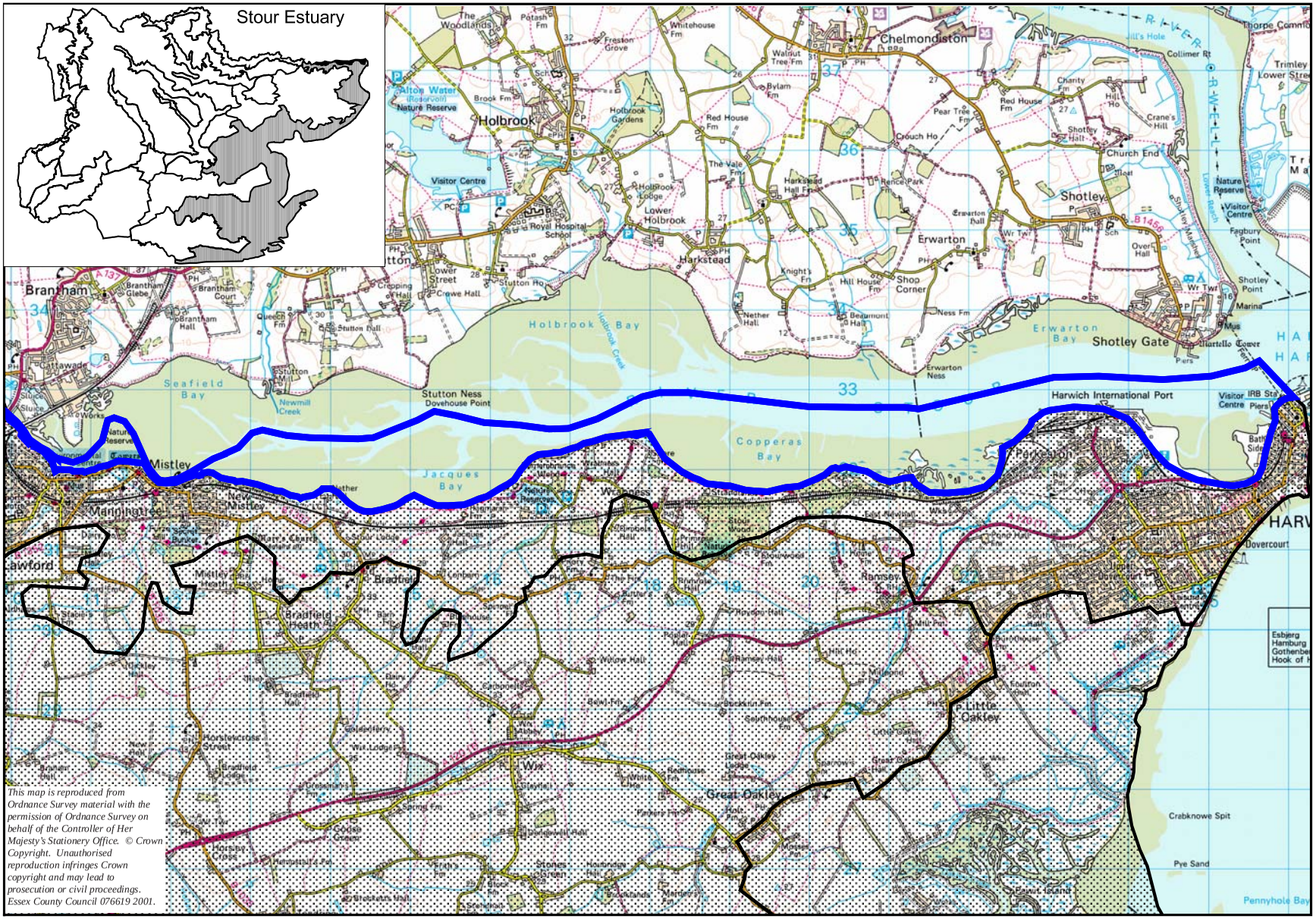
4.7.14 *Stour Estuary (F10)*

Key Characteristics

- Broad sheltered estuary.
- Straight low water channel, with large tidal mudflats and narrow fringes/pockets of saltmarsh.
- Gently curved estuary shoreline, with adjacent landform creating a series of bays.
- Open views across the estuary to Suffolk farmlands, or along the estuary in which steep wooded slopes are a feature.

Overall Character

The Stour estuary is a broad and compared with other estuaries in Essex, a relatively straight estuary. It is contained by the moderate to steep slopes of the adjacent Stour Estuary Slopes character area which provide a backdrop to it. It has a simple pattern of mudflats and channels, and pockets of saltmarsh without a complex pattern of indented creeks. The undeveloped character of the shoreline along most of its length is a distinct contrast to the busy shipping quays of Harwich, Parkeston in the east and Manningtree and Mistley in the west.


Stour Estuary
Holbrook
Chelmondiston
Harkstead
Erwarton
Shotley
Shotley Gate
Church End
Brantham
Mistley
Manningtree
Bradfield
Ramsey
Little Oakley
Great Oakley
Wix
Harwich International Port
Parkeston
Dovercourt
Holbrook Bay
Seafield Bay
Stutton Ness
Dovehouse Point
Jacques Bay
Copperas Bay
Erwarton Bay
Crabknowe Spit
Pye Sand
Pennyhole Bay
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Character Profile

Geology

- Alluvium/London Clay

Soils

- Deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Coastal form

- Broad estuary approx. 1.5-2 km wide, but smaller than the Blackwater.
- Relatively straight channel. However, the adjacent landform of the Stour estuary slopes create a series of gently curved bays exposed as mudflats at low tide.
- Simple pattern of channels and creeks.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Narrow fringe or small pockets of saltmarsh along much of the length of the estuary from Copperas Bay to Mistley. Larger area associated with Bramble Creek in the east.

Settlement pattern and built form Manningtree

- Harwich, Parkeston Mistley and Manningtree Quays on the boundary.

Communications

- Estuary is used for yachting and other recreational boating, and container ships dock at the eastern end.

Other landscape features

- Cranes at Harwich.

Landscape Condition

- Some erosion of saltmarsh is occurring.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Dredging and over deepening of channels for container ships at the eastern end of the estuary threatens the stability of the mudflats.

- Coastal squeeze as a result of rising sea levels could erode mudflats and saltmarsh further in future.

- Recreational trends with developments of watersports and marina development are ongoing pressures.

- Also possible pressures for new flood defences with little opportunity for managed retreat.

STOUR ESTUARY (F10)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Inappropriate. • Undeveloped character of the shoreline.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Inappropriate. • Undeveloped character of the shoreline.	H
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Inappropriate. • Undeveloped character of the shoreline.	H
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Undeveloped character of the shoreline. • Integrity of mudflats and saltmarsh.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Inappropriate. • Undeveloped character of the shoreline.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Integrity of mudflats, saltmarsh.	H
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderately high intervisibility. • Landform character. • Undeveloped character of this shoreline.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• High intervisibility. • Undeveloped character of the shoreline.	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• High intervisibility. • Undeveloped character of the shoreline.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of saltmarsh.	H

Note:

(a) *The area around Parkeston is of moderate sensitivity to development type 4.*

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.8 Urban Landscapes (G)

4.8.1 These are extensive areas that are dominated by urban land uses so that they can be recognised as a distinct landscape division. They are not completely built-up, and include distinctive, but fragmented, areas of open space that help break up and give character and structure to the surrounding built form, such as formal parks and gardens, allotments, playing fields and, areas of 'encapsulated countryside'. Urban fringe countryside of mixed land use around the settlements is also included.

4.8.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- Very large areas of 20th century residential and commercial developments, usually surrounding a historic core, and/or enveloping former villages.
- Visual dominance of an urban skyline.
- Integral open spaces important for informal/formal recreation and/or wildlife, and which act as green lungs.
- Influence of water, with river valley or large coastal estuary locations, often with an associated gently undulating landform.

4.8.3 The Urban Landscapes comprise four Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- Harlow & Environs (G1)
- Chelmsford & Environs (G2)
- South Essex Coastal Towns (G3)
- Colchester & Environs (G4)

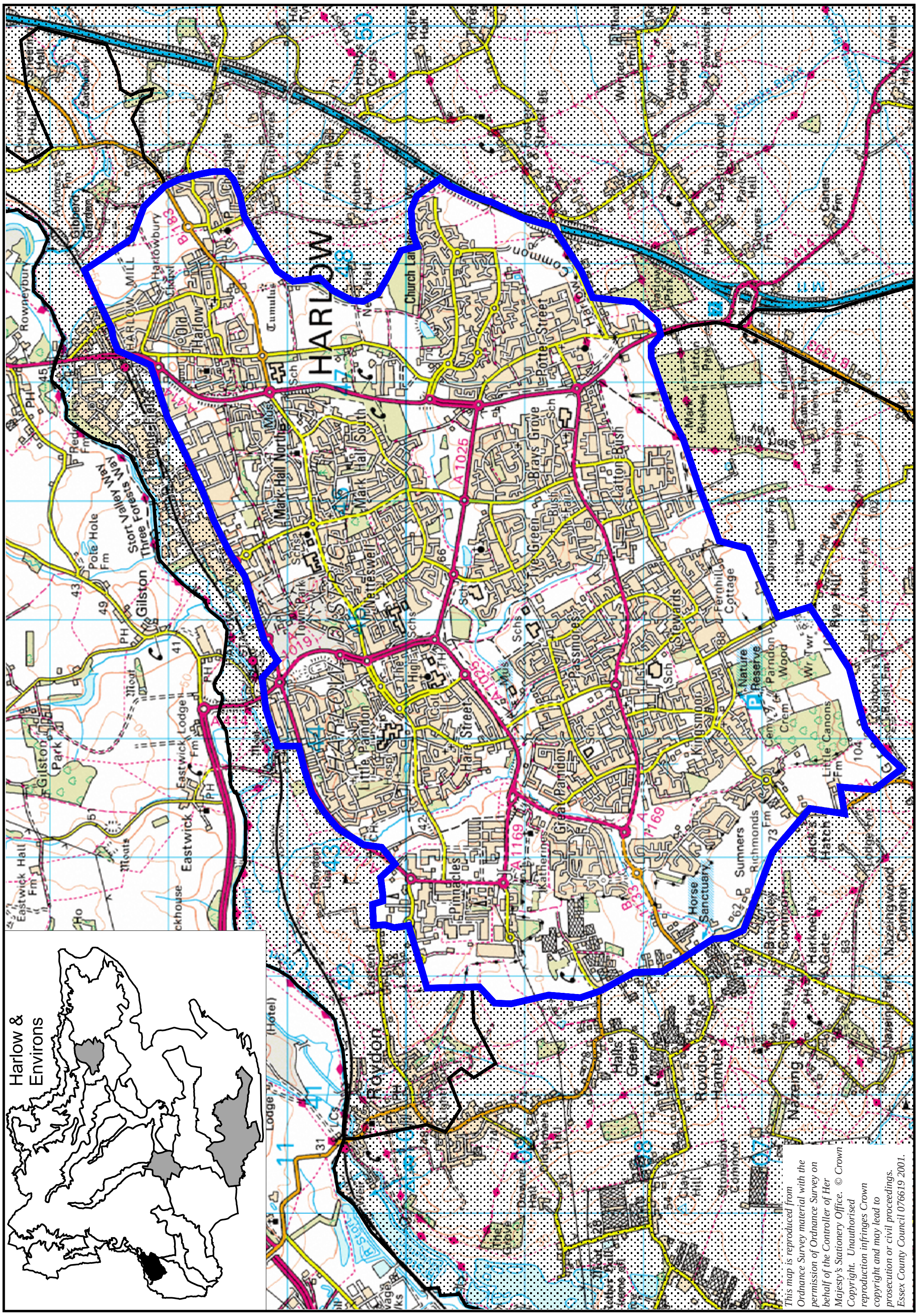
4.8.4 *Harlow and Environs (G1)*

Key Characteristics

- A new town with compact residential neighbourhoods, and distinct zones of commercial development.
- Prominent tower blocks in the centre.
- Extensive linear network of open spaces in valley bottoms and on lower valleysides.
- Mixed arable and pasture farmland on rising ground to the south, west and south east of the town.
- Medium size hedgerowed arable fields on gently undulating/flat land to the east.
- Floodplain edge of the River Stort forms the northern boundary.

Overall Character

This character area comprises the planned new town of Harlow and a surrounding fringe of farmland. The town wraps over valleysides/low hills with higher land and/or tree belts/woodland visually containing it on the southern, western and eastern boundaries. It has a distinctive network of open space corridors following the valleys which, together with the woodlands retained in the development, provide a setting for and soften the urban form. Commercial development tends to be located on the lower valleysides, sometimes screened by thick belts of trees avoiding more visually prominent slopes.


Harlow & Environs
HARLOW
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Character Profile

Geology

- Sands and Gravels, Glacial Till and London Clay

Soils

- Slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils, and well drained fine silty soils.

Landform

- Gentle to moderately undulating valleysides of the Stort, and various tributaries.
- Relatively small low hills/ridges dividing them.
- Higher ridgeline to the south up to 105 m elevation.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Ancient woodlands, marsh, alder carr, reedswamp.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Small to medium size regular and irregular fields. Some large. Bounded by hedgerows.

Farming pattern

- Arable farmland in the south and east. Mix of arable, pasture, and glasshouse use in the west.

Woodland/tree cover

- Small and medium size deciduous woods dispersed through the area.
- Some large blocks of woodland to the south including mixed conifer/deciduous woodland.
- Generally high tree cover associated with extensive landscaping of the new town.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Old village of Harlow in the northeast.
- Town Centre on high land.
- Residential areas of the new town form compact neighbourhoods on higher ground with the valleys largely retained as open spaces, which together with the woodlands form strong green networks.
- Industrial areas of Pinnacles and Temple Fields are on slightly lower ground and are partly concealed by woodland and/or new planting.

Communications

- Major roads generally have extensive open space, planting associated with them.

Other landscape features

- Prominent dry ski slope in the north (now redundant and subject to outline permission for residential development).

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the open spaces within the town is good.

- 'Urban fringe' farmland is generally in moderate condition with few significant urban fringe problems evident.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The major change in the landscape has been the development of the new town.

- Current and likely ongoing pressure for urban development existing within the narrow fringe of surrounding farmland. It will be essential in accommodating any further development to conserve the landscape setting of the town, and the green wedge network within the town.

HARLOW AND ENVIRONS (G1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Some visually exposed high ground/skylines on south and west boundaries of the area. • Integrity of linear open space system in valleys. • Woodland setting.	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Integrity of linear open space system in valleys. • Woodland setting.	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of linear open space system in the valleys.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of linear open space system in the valleys. • Landform character. • Woodland setting.	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Landform character. • Urban character.	L
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of linear open space system in the valleys and of woodlands. • Woodland setting.	L
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of linear open space system in the valleys.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Urban character.	L
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Urban character.	L
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Hedgerow condition.	L

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

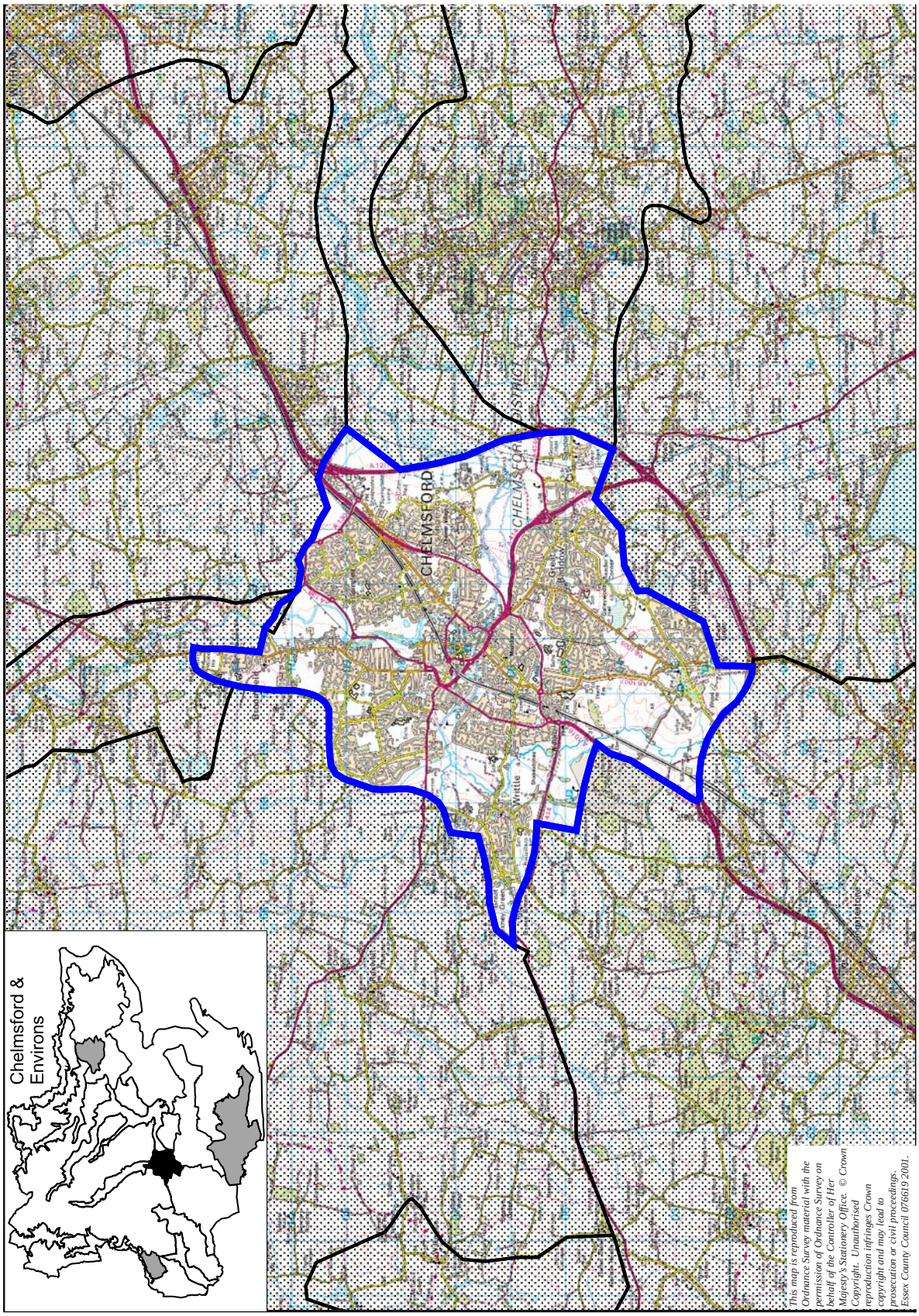
4.8.5 *Chelmsford and Environs (G2)*

Key Characteristics

- Historic town with extensive residential estate development spreading over a gently sloping valleyside landform.
- Wide riverside corridors of green space except in the town centre.
- Fringe of mixed farmland with variable size hedgerowed fields, with few woods or copses.
- Large villages of Writtle and Galleywood physically separated from the town, but with much development of an urban character.

Overall Character

Chelmsford lies at the confluence of the Chelmer and Can Rivers with the River Wid on its western boundary. In the town centre dense urban development directly adjoins the rivers, but to the north, west and east, there are wide riverside corridors of green space comprised of a patchwork of small to medium size damp meadows, and land in a variety of other recreational uses. Their character varies from very open to fairly enclosed with dense riverside trees. Between the rivers large areas of 20th century residential development on gentle slopes extend to a narrow farmland fringe. The farmland has a varied character with both large arable fields with few hedgerows, and contrasting areas with a smaller scale pattern


CHELMSFORD
Chelmsford &
Environs
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of pasture and arable fields. The character area is crossed by many major roads with the A12 visually prominent on embankment to the north east. Overhead lines and a tall mast also visually interrupt the landscape in the south.

Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Glacial Tills, Sand and Gravels, Alluvium

Soils

- Wide range of soil types. Deep well drained and slowly permeable calcareous clay soils, well drained fine, coarse loamy and sandy soils and deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform

- Mostly gently undulating.
- Gentle shallow valleys of the Rivers Chelmer, Can and Wid cut through/bound the area. Chelmer and the Can, have narrow flat valley floors to the north and west, widening out to the east.
- Relatively higher ground around Galleywood up to 70 m elevation.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Pockets of alder carr, ancient woodland of mixed species.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Irregular field pattern of small, medium and large hedged fields, some on the valley floor bounded by ditches.

Farming pattern

- Both arable and pasture farmland.
- Valley floors have extensive horse grazing.
- Orchards around Galleywood.

Woodland/tree cover

- A few scattered copses/tree belts/plantations within the urban area, in the valleys or at the edges of the area.
- Variable ornamental tree cover. Some of the main approaches to the town/associated older residential neighbourhoods have a higher tree cover compared with more recent development.

S*ettlement pattern and built form*

- Dense historic town centre of Chelmsford occupies a slightly elevated position above the Can and Chelmer. Mixed skyline including some larger tower blocks.
- Variable width of undeveloped open spaces and fields adjacent to the rivers create green corridors dividing and softening the urban form. Only within the town core are the valley floors fully developed.
- Modern residential development has spread absorbing some former villages.
- The large villages of Galleywood and Writtle retain strong historic cores but have much modern development.

Communications

- The main A12(T) forms part of the eastern boundary to the area.
- Major ring road around the town centre.
- Railway principally on embankment acts through the area southwest-northeast.

Other landscape features

- Pylon routes in the north east and south of the area.
- High mast at Great Baddow.
- Golf courses near Widford and the Can Valley.
- Partly canalised course of the River Chelmer with locks.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows in the farmland are in mixed condition, some fragmented.

- The public open spaces within the valleys are in good condition. However, the condition of the meadows/pasture is very mixed. Along the Chelmer Valley some are overgrazed by horses.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The town of Chelmsford has grown very significantly in the 20th Century.

- Riverside open spaces have been retained but are under pressure from a variety of urban fringe activities including the expansion of horse grazing.

- Additional urban development on the urban fringe is likely to be an ongoing trend, as well as transportation improvements.

CHELMSFORD & ENVIRONS (G2)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of river valley corridors. • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Some visually exposed valleysides. • Coalescence. *Any new development should include strong new woodland/hedgerow framework planting particularly where arable farmland is in poor condition.*	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Integrity of river valley corridors. *Possible opportunities to improve some existing urban edges.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of river valley corridors. • Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Integrity of river valley corridors. • Moderate to high intervisibility. *Siting, massing, form and colour and appropriate woodland, hedgerowed framework are critical.*	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Some visually exposed valleysides. • Moderate to high intervisibility. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of river valley corridors. • Integrity of hedgerow field pattern. *Possible opportunities to create new woodlands within surrounding farmland.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Integrity of river valley corridors.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Urban character.	L
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Urban character.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Urban character.	L

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

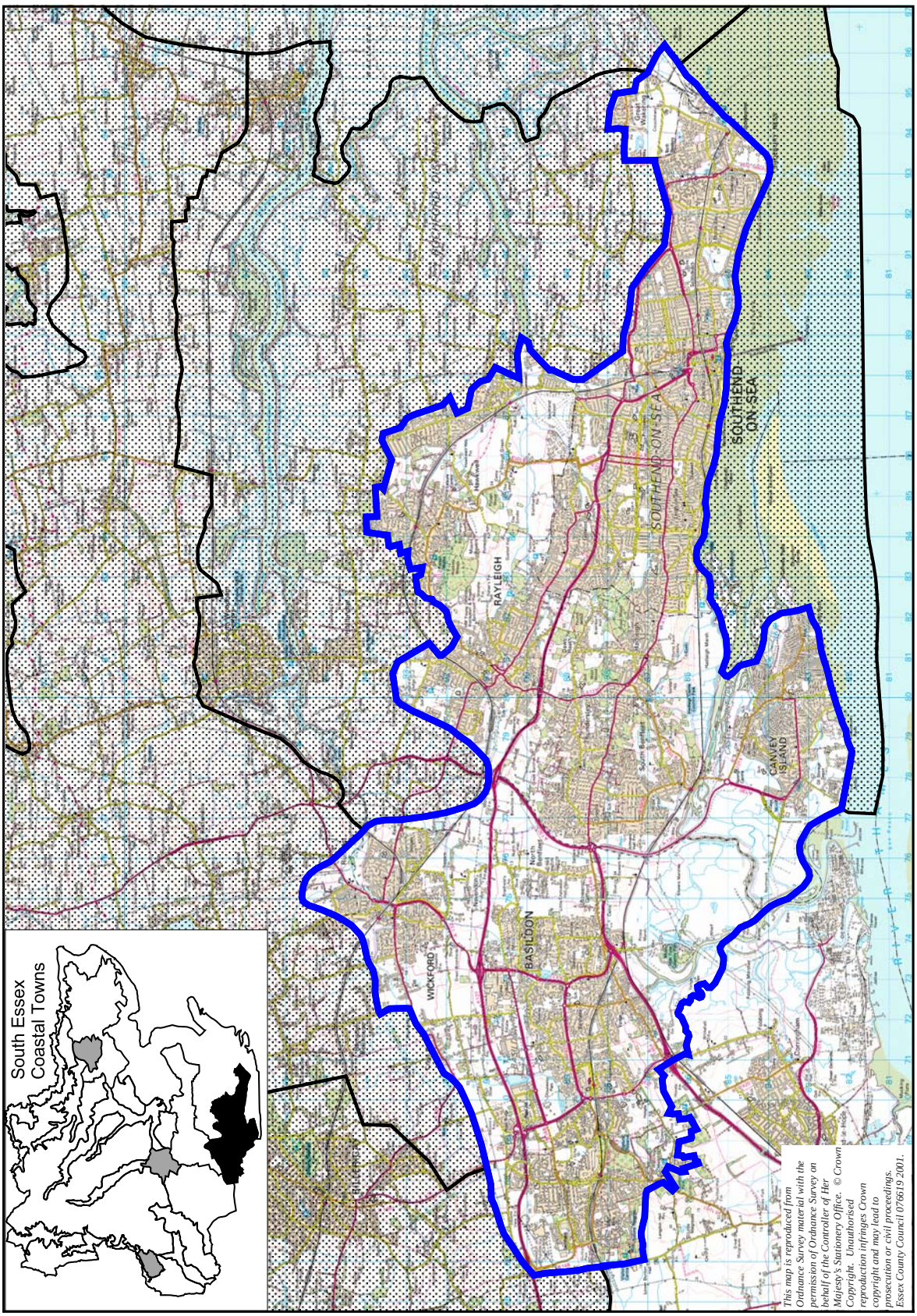
4.8.6 *South Essex Coastal Towns (G3)*

Key Characteristics

- Large areas of dense urban development.
- Strongly rolling hills with steep south and west facing escarpments covered by open grassland or a mix of small woods, pastures and commons.
- Extensive flat coastal grazing marshes in the south adjacent to the Thames Estuary.
- Large blocks of woodland in the centre of the area.
- Narrow bands and broader areas of gently undulating arable farmland, with a remnant hedgerow pattern, separating some of the towns.
- Particularly complex network of major transportation routes.
- Pylon routes visually dominate farmland in the A130 corridor.

Overall Character

The South Essex Coastal Towns is an area of very mixed character, but unified by the overall dominance of urban development, with frequent views of an urban skyline. The major towns spread over gently undulating or flat land, but locally extend over prominent ridgelines and hillsides as well. A distinctive steep sided south facing escarpment between Hadleigh and Basildon retains significant areas of open grassland, as well as a patchwork of small woods, including woods on former plotlands and small pastures. Contrasting flat coastal grazing marsh lies to the south. In some parts such as south of Hadleigh, and around Hockley, the urban form is softened by very large woodlands and the Roach Valley is largely undeveloped.


South Essex
Coastal Towns
RAYLEIGH
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
SOUTHEND ON SEA
CANVEY ISLAND
BASILDON
WICKFORD
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However, many residential and industrial edges with areas of adjacent open arable farmland are hard and abrupt with few hedgerows and woodlands remaining.

Character Profile

Geology

- Claygate and Bagshot Beds, Sands and Gravels, Brickearths and Loams, Alluvium

Soils

- Slowly permeable clayey soils. Fine silty and fine loamy soils. Deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform

- Very varied topography.
- Flat low lying land south east of Basildon, around Canvey Island and Rochford, and east of Southchurch.
- Steep south and west facing ridges/escarpments from Leigh on Sea to Benfleet extending around to Rayleigh/Hockley, tailing out towards Southminster. Moderate to steep escarpment south and south east of Basildon.
- Gentle-moderately undulating land in the remainder of the area.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Coastal grazing marshes, reedbeds marsh, extensive areas of ancient woodland including sessile oak woods, some unimproved meadows.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Varied field pattern.
- Small irregular fields bounded by straight and winding ditches on the marshlands.
- Small to medium size semi-regular hedged fields, sometimes bounded by woodland, in South Benfleet, Hadleigh, Daws Heath, Hockley areas. Some parts with larger fields where hedgerow pattern has been lost.
- Regular large size fields with fragmented hedgerow pattern north of Basildon and in the Wickford and Rochford areas.

Farming pattern

- Arable farmland associated with flat to gently undulating land, pasture more common on steeper slopes.
- Extensive coastal grazing marsh between Canvey and Basildon.

Woodland/tree cover

- High concentration of woodland in the Thundersley/South Benfleet, Daws Heath and Hockley areas and around the Langdon Hills, including small and large blocks of interlocking deciduous woodland. Some secondary woodland associated with previous plotland asreas.
- Absence of woodland/trees on the flat low lying marshes.
- Small, very dispersed woods and copses in the west of the area.
- Southend has many avenue trees. Basildon New Town has extensive landscaping.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Urban settlements cover a very large area.
- Basildon New Town occupies gently undulating land to the south and east of the steeper Langdon Hills. Distinct pattern of compact residential neighbourhoods, industrial areas, town centre interspersed with broad corridors of green space along the roads, and a number of large parks and playing fields.
- Southend on Sea, and its associated neighbourhoods is the largest urban area with a dominant grid pattern of streets running parallel and at right angles to the contours. Dense urban form, but with some large parks and open spaces.
- Rayleigh, Hockley and Wickford are principally dormitory towns with a more varied urban form, and street pattern. Housing areas sometimes are visually prominent wrapping over hillsides and valleysides.
- Canvey Island is on flat low lying land and has a grid street pattern, with a network of draining dykes within the built form.

Other landscape features

-- Rayleigh and Hadleigh Castles.
- Pylons and overhead lines are visually prominent between Basildon and Benfleet, Wickford and Rayleigh, and Rayleigh and Rochford.
- Oil storage depots, landfill sites near Canvey Island.
- Southend Airport.
- A number of golf courses.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the settlement is very mixed. Poor quality intrusive commercial 'shed' development is common within the area.

- The condition of the woodlands and hedgerows is moderate.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- The area has been subject to very significant change in the 20th Century, with massive expansion of urban areas, and urban development pressure is likely to be a significant ongoing trend.

- Areas where traditional landscape character survives well, such as the Upper Roach Valley, the Crouch Valley, the Thames Marshes, Langdon Hills and Dunton Ridges need particular protection from landscape or development change.

- Recreational pressures are also likely to be considerable.

SOUTH ESSEX COASTAL TOWNS (G3)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Visually exposed steep escarpments. • Integrity of woodlands and hedgerow pasture fields. • High intervisibility on marshlands. • Coalescence. • Major green spaces/integrity of major green corridors. • Poor condition of some arable farmland with intrusive pylons, transportation routes. *Any new development should include strong new woodland/hedgerow framework particularly where arable farmland is in poor condition.*	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Visually exposed steep escarpments. • Integrity of woodlands, hedgerow field pattern. • High intervisibility on marshlands. *Opportunities to improve some existing harsh urban edges.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• High intervisibility of marshlands. • Landform character.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Visually exposed steep escarpments. • Integrity of woodlands and hedgerow field pattern. • High intervisibility on marshlands. • Poor condition of some arable farmland at the edges.	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Visually exposed steep escarpments. • High intervisibility on marshlands.	L
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Visually exposed steep escarpments. • Integrity of coastal grazing marsh. *Opportunities to improve areas in poor condition.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• High intervisibility on marshlands. • Landform character.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Strong urban character.	L
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Visually exposed steep escarpments. • High intervisibility on marshlands. • Low capacity for further change.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Woodland and hedgerow and unimproved grassland condition.	H

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

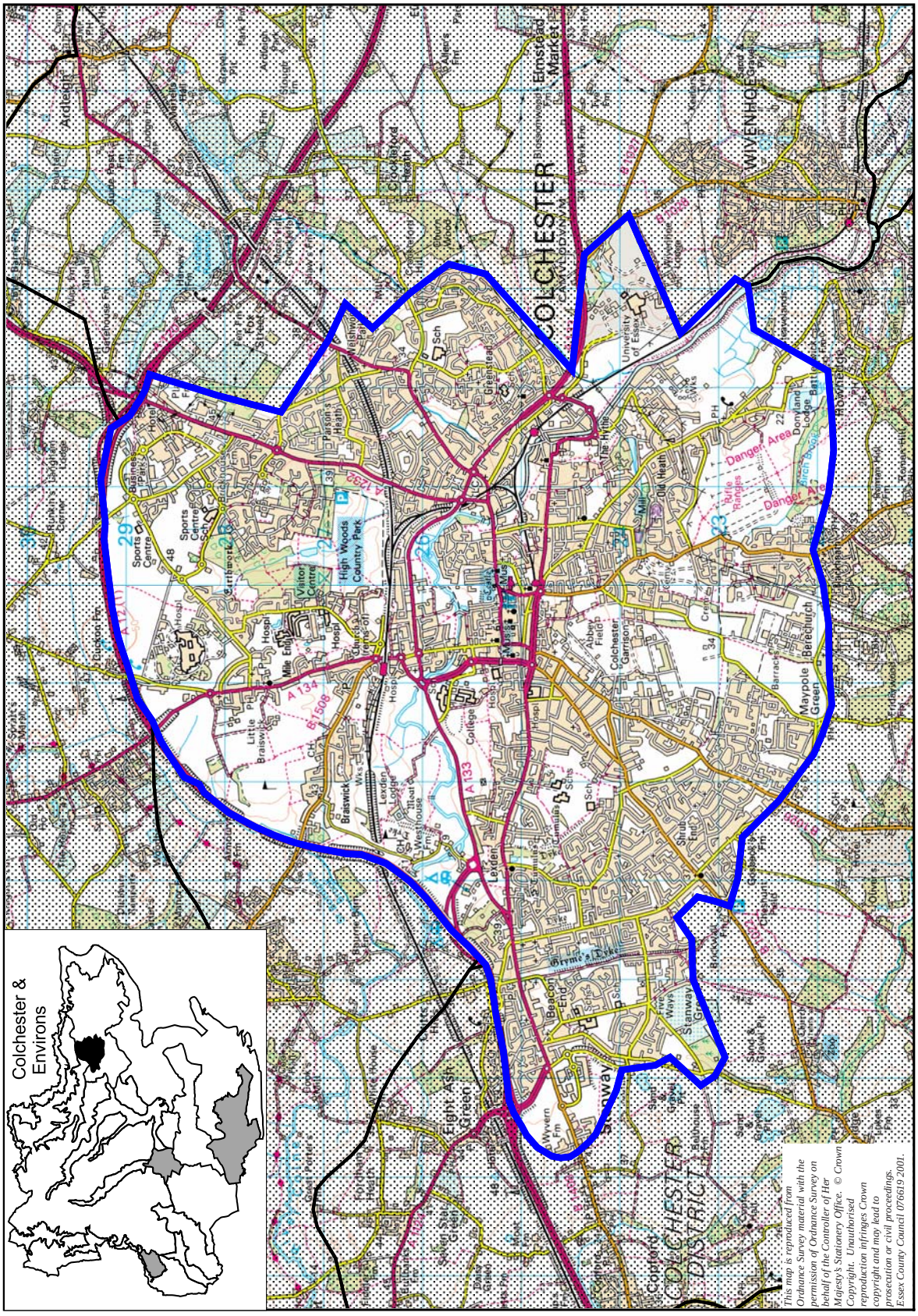
4.8.7 *Colchester and Environs (G4)*

Key Characteristics

- Historic town core with a strong grid pattern on a low hill above the River Colne.
- Residential and commercial development wraps over valleysides or slightly elevated flatter land.
- Uninterrupted valley floor of the Colne forms a ribbon of green space running through the centre of the urban area.
- Large blocks of woodlands and open spaces on some valleysides.
- Variable size regular hedgerowed fields in the fringing farmland.

Overall Character

The centre of the town with its distinctive roman/medieval street pattern, occupies a low rise above the River Colne. Dense residential and commercial development has spread along main routes into the town, and extended over valleysides and elevated flatter land absorbing former villages such as Lexden. The urban form, however, is broken by the valley floor of the meandering River Colne which has a mostly broad band of green space, and small linear woodlands alongside it. A network of large open spaces/woodlands and smaller tree belts, also connect the town to the surrounding countryside in the north and south, providing a setting and softening the urban development. Mixed farmland occurs on the northern and southern fringes. This is fragmented by a variety of other land uses.


Colchester &
Environs
COLCHESTER
WIVENHOE
Eight Ash Green
Stanway
COLCHESTER DISTRICT
Danger Area
This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Essex County Council 076619 2001.

Character Profile

Geology

- Sands and Gravels, London Clay, Alluvium

Soils

- Deep permeable coarse loamy soils, deep stoneless alluvial soils.

Landform

- Gentle to moderate undulating valleysides and flat valley floor of the River Colne, which is tidal south of Hythe.
- Connecting moderate to steep sided tributary valleys with small streams.
- Flat to gently undulating higher ground, max of 35 m elevation, above valleysides.
- Small area of very flat low lying marshes in the south east.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Coastal grazing marsh, some ancient woodland of mixed species.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Small and medium size semi regular fields with straight hedged or sinuous and straight ditch boundaries.

Farming pattern

- Mix of pasture and arable fields. Orchards near Stanway Green and Bullock Wood.

Woodland/tree cover

- Linear copse/woods on the valleysides of the Colne and its tributaries.
- Medium-large blocks of woodlands in the north.
- Tree belts, plantations south of Colchester Garrison
- Distinctive avenue of birch trees on A133 approach to Colchester.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Historic core of Colchester with a strong grid street pattern.
- Modern town with extensive residential ribbon and cul de sac development, and a number of dispersed industrial estates extends over valleysides, low hills, absorbing villages such as Lexden.
- Largely undeveloped valley floor of the Colne forms a green space corridor.
- A network of open space/pockets of farmland and woodlands also connect the town to the surrounding countryside generally north to south.

Communications

- A12(T) forms the outer boundary to the area to the north with a number of major A roads connecting to the town centre. South of the town centre and Lexden, there are no major roads.

Other landscape features

- A massive water tower, the town hall, church spires and a number of tower blocks create a mixed skyline in the centre.
- Colchester Castle - Norman Keep.
- Extensive parks and open spaces notably Castle Park.
- Essex University tower blocks.
- Colchester Garrison/Middlewich Rifle ranges.

Landscape Condition

- The condition of the open spaces and woodlands is mostly good.

- Pasture/grazing marsh on the Colne Valley floor is overgrazed in parts due to horsiculture.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Significant expansion of the town took place in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

- There are current and likely ongoing considerable urban development pressures within the relatively narrow fringe of surrounding farmland.

COLCHESTER AND ENVIRONS (G4)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands.	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands.	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands.	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate intervisibility. • Some visually exposed valleysides.	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Landform character. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Some visually exposed valleysides.	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Largely urban character.	L
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate intervisibility. • Some visually exposed valleysides.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Woodland and hedgerow condition.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

5.0 LANDSCAPE ISSUES IN ESSEX

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 As a result of increased pressures for housing, minerals, transport, recreation, energy generation and other major land uses, there has been a general erosion of the character, quality and diversity of the Essex landscape since the mid-twentieth century. The cumulative effects of small-scale changes have also had a significant impact.

5.1.2 This section identifies and summarises the key issues for the planning and management of the landscape in the plan area, both generic or countywide issues and landscape type/character area specific issues. It is expected that, where appropriate, these issues would be addressed by a future Landscape Strategy for Essex and Southend on Sea. The Strategy would provide land management and planning guidelines, and identify priorities for action in relation to opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape.

5.2 Countywide Landscape Issues

Climate Change

5.2.1 It is widely acknowledged that global climate change is inevitable, and that it is likely to have significant physical impacts on the landscape. The South East region including Essex is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change. The principal implications of global warming are likely to be:

- Sea level rises, threatening important coastal habitats, and increasing the risk of flooding in low-lying areas.
- Warmer year round temperatures, wetter winters and drier summers, which may cause habitat and species displacement, and changes in cropping patterns.
- Increased frequency of extreme weather events – drought conditions, storms and flooding.

5.2.2 The exact climatic changes and their effects on character and condition of the landscape are difficult to predict, so environmental monitoring is essential to inform future planning and land management decisions.

5.2.3 However, key issues may include:

- Replacement of traditional crops with new crops such as sunflowers, maize, soya, as well as renewable energy crops such as willow coppice, with associated changes in agricultural practices.
- Irrigation for summer droughts which may increase the need for farm reservoirs .
- Greater soil erosion, and reduction in productivity of the soils through droughts, high winds, storm runoff, which may affect farm viability and create additional pressure for new uses in the countryside.
- Changing livestock practices and housing, which may affect grazing patterns and require new types of farm building.
- New pests and diseases and/or more stress from drought which may lead to the loss of particular species and species groups that contribute to the individuality of different landscapes.
- Potential greater storm damage to woodlands.
- Erosion of intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh.
- Construction of new larger types of sea defences.
- New renewable energy generation developments, such as wind farms and tidal barrages.

Urban Development and Urban Fringe

5.2.4 Urban development has placed an increasing pressure on all aspects of the landscape over the last fifty years in particular. This is resulting in urban expansion into undeveloped rural areas, redevelopment and intensification of urban areas, increasing urbanisation and development of rural villages and hamlets. Closely associated with urban areas, the urban fringe is often used to locate access roads, sewage works, waste disposal facilities and intensive recreation uses. However, the urban fringe also provides a setting for urban areas, and often contains important landscape features/habitats.

5.2.5 The key issues include:

- Settlement-edge housing and commercial/retail estate development impacts on landscape character and wider visual impacts on the countryside.
- Unsympathetic infill of historic settlement cores.
- Quality of built environment.
- Loss/erosion of urban open spaces and of tree cover.
- Decline in the condition of landscapes in the urban fringe, with problems such as lack of management of hedgerows/trees, poorly managed horse paddocks and flytipping.

Transport

5.2.6 Reflecting the national trend, the county has seen increasing levels of car usage. This is leading to major congestion, pollution problems, and pressures for new road schemes in the countryside between major urban areas, and roads improvements that significantly affect landscape character. New types of pressure may be created by upgrading of the rail network and the building of new multi-modal transport interchanges.

5.2.7 The key issues include:

- The effects of new roads and bypasses and service stations, including the introduction of new structures, lighting, and earthworks into the landscape.
- Road improvements that can have an urbanising effect, especially on rural lanes, by road widening, straightening and introduction of features such as kerbs, lighting and signage.

Tranquil Areas

5.2.8 Nationally, extensive tracts of tranquil and undeveloped countryside are becoming an increasingly limited resource: maintaining extensive areas of tranquil countryside largely free from the influence of urban intrusion and major transport corridors is of critical concern to the protection of the essential character of the county. Figure 9 shows how the pattern of tranquil areas in the county has changed dramatically between the 1960s and 1990s. Only the most remote northwest and eastern parts of the county now contain extensive tranquil areas. The lack of tranquillity associated with the urban landscapes of South Essex has been exacerbated by the effects of traffic along the M25/M11/A12/A13 road corridors.

5.2.9 The key issues include:

- Fragmentation of tranquil areas by major road transport corridors.
- Threats from various developments to existing extensive tranquil areas and remaining ‘islands’ of tranquillity.

Mineral Extraction & Waste

5.2.10 Mineral extraction occurs in many parts of Essex. The county is the largest producer of sand and gravel in the Southeast Region, regularly producing over 20% of the Regions output. Clay, brickearth and small quantities of silica sand are also extracted. The extent to which

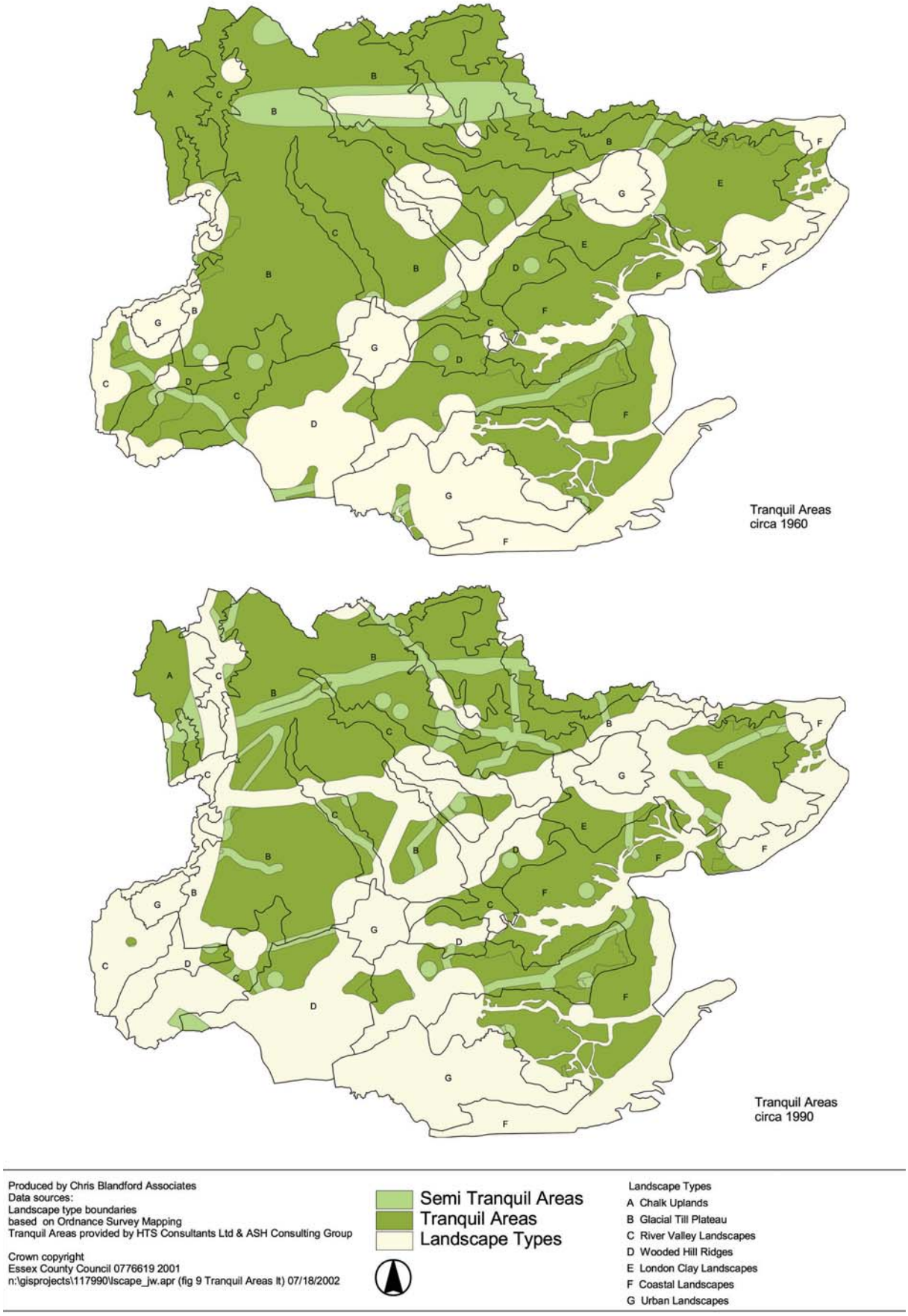


Figure 9 Tranquil Areas

mineral extraction continues to impact on the landscape may depend upon whether more recycled aggregates or alternative sources from outside the area are used. With regard to waste, despite moves away from landfill as the primary means of waste disposal, this is likely to continue for some time and other methods of waste management may create new pressures on the landscape.

5.2.11 The key issues include:

- The effects of minerals/landfill operations including changes to field pattern, loss of landscape features, introduction of alien landforms, landraising, haulage routes, lighting.
- The effects of restoration schemes depending on restoration to agriculture, woodland or other uses, and whether these are sympathetic to landscape character.

Agriculture and Agricultural Diversification

5.2.12 Agricultural activity is a vital aspect of the rural environment and can be considered as the primary factor in shaping the character of the landscape. Agriculture has the ability to substantially enhance and detract from the character of the landscape in a relatively short period of time, primarily due to mechanisation and intensive practices. These have, over the last fifty years, contributed to the changes in the rural environment through intensive cropping, loss of field boundaries, drainage of marshes/wetlands, and the introduction of new farm buildings. Pastures and coastal grazing marshes are dependent on appropriate livestock grazing practices. On some coastal grazing marshes scrub encroachment is becoming a problem due to lack of grazing/management. Changes in farming practice and fluctuations in the agricultural economy have an important impact and this will only increase, as global markets become a major influencing factor.

5.2.13 Farm diversification is also causing changes in the farmland landscape as the pressures to help maintain farm viability culminate in new enterprises and adaption of buildings.

5.2.14 The key issues include:

- Continuing decline/loss of landscape features such as hedgerows, field margins and farm ponds as a result of maximising field size, lack of appropriate management, and spray drift.
- Soil erosion as a result of autumn cultivation of arable crops.
- Introduction of large, new farm buildings in the landscape as a result of new EU standards.

- Farm diversification such as the adoption or reuse of farm buildings for commercial, industrial and storage uses which may conflict with historical/architectural character and the introduction of new industrial crops.
- The effects of agri-environmental schemes such as countryside stewardship.
- Impact of events such as foot and mouth disease on livestock grazing practices.

Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows

5.2.15 The varying patterns of the trees, woodlands and hedgerows within Essex are very important elements of its landscape character. They are also significant in historic and wildlife terms.

5.2.16 The key issues include:

- Decline of traditional woodland management practices such as coppicing, pollarding.
- Decline of grazing in wood pasture woods.
- Continuing loss of hedgerows/lack of management of hedgerows.
- Lack of management of shelterbelts.

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

5.2.17 There is a strong relationship between landscape character and nature conservation/ biodiversity. Particular habitats and groups of species are an essential part of the character of the Essex landscape. Essex remains rich and diverse in wildlife despite significant losses of landscape features and habitats, but continuing threats from changing land management practices and from development remain.

5.2.18 The key issues include:

- Agricultural intensification, urban development, mineral extraction, waste disposal resulting in direct loss of habitats and species, or indirect losses due to associated pollution, changes to the water table.
- Introduction of genetically modified crops and possible effects on native fauna and flora.
- Introduction of non-native species, or native species not of local provenance.

Historic Landscapes

5.2.19 Essex was enclosed early. The tapestry of ancient woodland, hedgerows and trackways is a major part of the historic landscape, which is therefore very sensitive to the loss of these features, or to changes to them. There has been loss of/a decline in the structure and condition of surviving historic landscape features.

5.2.20 The key issues include:

- Vulnerability to neglect of features such as historic buildings and structures, earthworks, hedgerows, areas of ancient woodland and historic parks and gardens.
- Erosion of historic lanes and tracks by traffic/road improvements.
- Introduction of new uses such as golf courses into historic parks and gardens.
- Vulnerability of historic coastal landscape features to sea level rise and development.

Recreation and Tourism

5.2.21 The Essex landscape is important as an attraction for recreation and tourism. 'Honeypot' areas include Dedham Vale, parts of the coast, some historic parklands, and major wooded areas such as Epping Forest. In the largely arable county of Essex footpaths and bridleways are very important for countryside access. Informal recreation is the most popular, and usually least intrusive form of recreation. Problems arise when overuse and overcrowding damage/disturb the landscape and the quality of the experience. New formal recreational activities can introduce urbanising effects.

5.2.22 The key issues include:

- Effects of formal recreational activities such as golf courses, including possible loss of landscape features, new buildings, car parks, modifications to landform, lighting.
- Effects of noisy water and motor sports on tranquil areas.
- Effects of horseculture including sub division of fields, new stables, overgrazing and construction of menages/jumps.
- Effects of tourism related developments, e.g. caravan parks and management of visitors in 'honeypot' areas.

5.3 Landscape Character Type Issues

Coastal Landscapes

5.3.1 The key issues for the coastal landscapes include:

- Development issues (ports, dredging, energy related developments, marinas and other tourism related developments).
- Flood protection and managed retreat issues.
- Access and recreation (management of visitors).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (changes in the traditional management of grazing marsh).

Glacial Till and London Clay Plateau Landscapes

5.3.2 The key issues for the clay plateau landscapes include:

- Development issues (road developments, historic village infill, telecommunication masts, proliferation of small agricultural reservoirs).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (changing grazing regimes of pastures, increase in farm size/subdivision of farmland for non-farm uses, lack of appropriate woodland management, decline in hedgerow management).

River Valley Landscapes

5.3.3 The key issues for the river valley landscapes include:

- Development issues (sand and gravel extraction).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (changing grazing regimes).

Urban Landscapes

5.3.4 The key issues for the urban dominated landscapes include:

- Development issues (settlement extensions, urban infill, commercial warehousing, landfill, waste incinerators, green open space networks, tree cover).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (encapsulated countryside, ecologically sensitive previously used urban land).

Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes

5.3.5 The key issues for the wooded hill and ridge landscapes include:

- Development issues (settlement extensions, historic village infill).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (common land management; management of mature trees and pollards; lack of continuity of management).

Chalk Upland Landscapes

5.3.6 The key issues for the chalk upland landscapes include:

- Development issues (telecommunication masts, new agricultural buildings).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (management of woodlands and of remnant chalk grassland).

5.4 Landscape Character Area Issues

5.4.1 Specific issues relating to individual character areas are highlighted under past, present and future trends for change.

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APPENDIX A - RECORD OF STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Initial Stakeholder Workshop (15th June 2001)

Attendees

Melvyn Crow	Braintree District Council
David Churchill	Brentwood District Council
Derek Stebbing	Chelmsford Borough Council
Terry Bailey	Chelmsford Borough Council
Adam John	Colchester Borough Council
Tim DeKeyzer	Countryside Agency
Peter Ennis	Dedham Vale Project
Kim Pearce	DEFRA
Martin Barrell	Environment Agency
Chris Neilan	Epping Forest District Council
Roy Lewis	Essex County Council
Martin Wakelin	Essex County Council
Crispin Downs	Essex County Council
Wendy Frost	Harlow District Council
Simon Odell	Hertfordshire County Council
Peter Holborn	Suffolk County Council
Phil Green	Tendring District Council
Sarah Nicolas	Uttlesford District Council
Jamie Cole	Rochford District Council

Facilitators

Dominic Watkins	Chris Blandford Associates
Justine Dowsing	Chris Blandford Associates

Second Stakeholder Workshop (20 March 2002)

Attendees

Melvyn Crow	-	Braintree District council
Paul Munson	-	Braintree District Council
David Churchill	-	Brentwood District Council
Paul MacBride	-	Chelmsford Borough Council
Katherine Blake	-	Dedham Vale & Stour Valley Project
Martin Barrell	-	Environment Agency
Chris Neilan	-	Epping Forest District Council
Martin Wakelin	-	Essex County Council
Crispin Downs	-	Essex County Council
Peter Holborn	-	Suffolk County Council
David Pugh	-	Tendring District Council
Jamie Cole	-	Rochford District Council
Andy Day	-	Castle Point Borough Council
Mike Stranks	-	Castle Point Borough Council
Nigel Cowlin	-	Maldon District Council

Facilitators

Dominic Watkins	-	Chris Blandford Associates
Matthew Bright	-	Chris Blandford Associates

APPENDIX B - SUMMARY MATRIX OF CHARACTER AREA SENSITIVITY EVALUATIONS

To be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 - 1.4.17

CHARACTER AREAS		1 Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	2 Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	3 Major transportation developments/ improvements	4 Commercial/ warehouse estate/port development	5 Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	6 Large scale 'open uses'	7 Mineral extraction/ waste disposal	8 Incremental small scale developments	9 Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	10 Decline in traditional countryside management
A1	North West Essex Chalk Farmlands	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	M	M
B1	Central Essex Farmlands	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
B2	North Essex Farmlands	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	H	M
B3	Blackwater/Stour Farmlands	M	M	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	L
B4	Gosfield Wooded Farmlands	H	L	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	M
C1	Cam Valley	H	M	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	M
C2	Stort Valley	H	M	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	M
C3	Lee Valley	H	L	M	M	M	L	M	M	M	M
C4	Roding Valley	H	M	M	H	H	M	M	M	M	M
C5	Chelmer Valley	H	M	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	M
C6	Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys	H	L	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	M
C7	Colne Valley	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	M
C8	Stour Valley	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H
D1	Epping Forest & Ridges	H	M	H	H	M	H	H	M	M	H
D2	Brentwood Hills	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	H	M	H
D3	Danbury Hills	H	L	H	H	H	M	M	M	M	H
D4	Tiptree Ridge	H	L	H	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E1	South Essex Farmlands	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E2	South Colchester Farmlands	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E3	Tendring Plain	M	L	M	H	H	L	M	H	H	M
E4	North Colchester Farmlands	M	M	M	H	M	M	M	M	H	M
F1	Thames Estuary	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
F2	Crouch & Roach Farmland	H	M	M	H	H	M	M	M	H	M
F3	Dengie & Foulness Coast	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	H
F4	Blackwater Estuary	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
F5	North Blackwater/Colne Coastal Farmlands	H	M	H	H	M	M	H	M	H	M
F6	Mersea Island	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	M
F7	Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast	H	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	H	L
F8	Hamford Water	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M
F9	Stour Estuary Slopes	H	M	H	H	M	M	H	M	M	M
F10	Stour Estuary	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
G1	Harlow & Environs	M	L	M	M	L	L	H	L	L	L
G2	Chelmsford & Environs	M	L	M	M	M	M	H	L	M	L
G3	South Essex Coastal Towns	M	L	M	M	L	M	M	L	H	H
G4	Colchester & Environs	M	L	M	M	M	M	H	L	M	M