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PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX
MANOR OAK HOMES

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment - Appendices

DECEMBER 2013
5202.LVIA.001

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Landscape and Visual Assessment Methodology

Landscape and Visual Methodology

1.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of changes resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity.

1.2 By its very nature a landscape impact assessment requires both objective and subjective judgements. As with any subjective decision care must be taken to ensure the relevant principles are applied consistently throughout the assessment. The division between objective and subjective elements should also be clearly defined.

1.3 The GLVIA states:

> *"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of existing communities and future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It is broadly agreed that it involves finding an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental matters, and that protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment is an important part of this.*

1.4 The GLVIA also states:

> *When the interrelationship between people and the landscape is considered, this introduces related but very different considerations, notably the views that people have and their visual amenity – meaning the overall pleasantness of the views they enjoy of their surroundings.*

Reflecting this distinction the two components of an LVIA are:

- *Assessment of landscape effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*

- *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.*

1.5 An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource. The concern here is with how the proposal will affect the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and its distinctive character.

1.6 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. The concern here is with assessing how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the content and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or introduction of new elements.

1.7 Each effect on landscape receptors and visual effects identified need to be assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced, and its duration and reversibility.

Assessment and Design are an iterative process

1.8 The assessment and design process have been influenced by the appropriate elements of a BS5837 tree survey, long range views and general topography. This integrated approach has been adopted during the development of this scheme.

Mitigation

1.9 Measures which are proposed to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects (or to avoid, reduce and if possible remedy identified effects), including landscape and visual effects.

1.10 In practice enhancement is not specifically related to mitigation of adverse landscape and visual effects but means any proposals that seek to improve the landscape and/or visual amenity of the proposed development site and its wider setting beyond its baseline condition.

1.11 Mitigation measures are generally more effective if they are designed as an integral part of the iterative process of project planning and design. Therefore mitigation is, wherever possible, considered right from the point of project inception, when alternative designs or site options are being considered. It can be used to adapt and modify the development to take account of constraints and opportunities, and achieve the optimum environmental fit as part of an environmentally integrated design.

1.12 In the context of landscape and visual assessment, the following terms are used:

Landscape Character

1.13 The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation,

land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape.

Sensitivity or capacity of the landscape resource

1.14 There is no standard methodology for the quantification of the magnitude of effects. However, it is generally based on the scale or degree of change to the landscape resource, the nature of the effect and its duration.

Sensitivity of visual receptors

1.15 The Sensitivity of visual receptors and views will be dependent on:

- The location and context of the viewpoints;
- The expectation and occupation or activity of the receptors.

Scale or magnitude of visual effects

1.16 In the evaluation of the effects on views and the visual amenity of the identified receptors, the magnitude or scale of visual change is described by reference to:

- The scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture;
- The duration and nature of the effect, whether temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous, etc.;
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

LANDSCAPE IMPACT

1.17 For this assessment the following criteria applies:

Landscape sensitivity or capacity

High	Landscape areas with particularly distinctive or positive characters or with valued landscape features. The areas may be sensitive to relatively small changes.
Medium	Landscape areas with reasonably positive character, but with evidence of alteration or degradation of the character or features. Potentially tolerant of some change.
Low	Landscape areas with a weak character or relatively few features of value, potentially tolerant of significant change.

Magnitude of Landscape Change

High adverse	Total loss of or major alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
Medium adverse	Partial loss of or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
Low adverse	Minor loss of or alteration to the key characteristics or features of the landscape area.
No change	Very minor loss or change to the landscape characteristics or features of the area, compensated by landscape improvements or enhancements.
Low beneficial	Minor improvements to the key landscape characteristics or features, or improvements resulting from removal of inappropriate land uses or features.

Medium beneficial	Notable improvements to the key landscape characteristics or features, or improvements resulting from removal of inappropriate land uses or features.
High beneficial	Major landscape implements, through the creation of a new landscape structure, or the removal of large scale inappropriate features.

1.18 Overall landscape impact is determined by combining the sensitivity of the landscape resource with the magnitude of landscape change. Professional judgement used to determine the overall significance of impact based on these two elements.

1.19 Overall significance is classified by High, Moderate, Low or Negligible and the effects can be adverse or beneficial.

VISUAL IMPACT

1.20 For this assessment the following criteria applies:

Visual Sensitivity

High	Occupiers of residential properties with views affected by the development. Users of outdoor recreational facilities including rights of way where interest may be focused on the landscape
Medium	Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is less important to the activities (e.g. sports pitches). People at work places.
Low	People traveling through the area in cars or on trains, or people at places of work with limited views potentially affected by the development (e.g. Industrial sites).

Visual Magnitude of Change

High Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration in the view.
Medium Adverse	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the view.
Low Adverse	Where the scheme overall would cause a minor deterioration in the view.
No change	Where the scheme overall would not form a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the view.
Low Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a minor improvement in the view.
Medium Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a noticeable improvement in the view.

High Beneficial	Where the scheme would cause a significant improvement to the view.

1.21 Overall visual impact is determined by combining the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of visual change. Professional judgement is used to determine the overall significance of impact based on these two elements.

1.22 Overall significance is classified by High, Moderate, Low or Negligible and the effects can be adverse or beneficial.

Appendix 4
Landscape Planning Policies

National

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2013 – Guidance

14. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

For plan-making this means that:

- local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.
  -

For decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
  - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

Core Planning Principles

17. Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These 12 principles are that planning should:

- be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area. Plans should be kept up-to-date, and be based on joint working and co-operation to address larger than local issues. They should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency;
- not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and

then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities;

- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);

District

Uttlesford District Local Plan (2005)

Policy GEN2 – Design

Development will not be permitted unless its design meets all the following criteria and has regard to adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

a) It is compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings;
b) It safeguards important environmental features in its setting, enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impact of new buildings or structures where appropriate;
c) It provides an environment, which meets the reasonable needs of all potential users.
d) It helps to reduce the potential for crime;
e) It helps to minimise water and energy consumption;
f) It has regard to guidance on layout and design adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the development plan.
g) It helps to reduce waste production and encourages recycling and reuse.
h) It minimises the environmental impact on neighbouring properties by appropriate mitigating measures.
i) It would not have a materially adverse effect on the reasonable occupation and enjoyment of a residential or other sensitive property, as a result of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, overbearing impact or overshadowing.

Policy GEN7 – Nature Conservation

Development that would have a harmful effect on wildlife or geological features will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the feature to nature conservation. Where the site includes protected species or habitats suitable for protected species, a nature conservation survey will be required. Measures to mitigate and/or compensate for the potential impacts of development, secured by planning obligation or condition, will be required. The enhancement of biodiversity through the creation of appropriate new habitats will be sought.

Policy ENV3- Open Spaces and Trees

The loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens through development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value.

The Quality of the Countryside

5.13. Woodland and hedgerows are important components in the local landscape. Many field boundary hedgerows have been lost in recent years and woodlands in the landscape have often acquired particular prominence because of this. Hedgerow legislation introduced in 1997 means that the Council must be notified when an owner wishes to remove a hedgerow. If the hedge is of historic or ecological importance the Council can serve a Hedgerow Retention notice. While development should retain features listed in policy ENV8 wherever possible, it might be necessary, for example, to remove a length of hedging to provide adequate access to a barn conversion. This may be permitted provided there is an agreed scheme of compensating new planting.

Policy ENV5 - Protection of Agricultural Land

Development of the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be permitted where opportunities have been assessed for accommodating development on previously developed sites or within existing development limits. Where development of agricultural land is required, developers should seek to use areas of poorer quality except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.

Policy ENV6 – Change Of Use of Agricultural Land to Domestic Garden

Change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden will be permitted if the proposal, particularly its scale, does not result in a material change in the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. Conditions regulating development rights associated with the proposal may be necessary.

Policy ENV8 – Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation

Development that may adversely affect these landscape elements

Hedgerows
Linear tree belts
Larger semi natural or ancient woodlands
Semi-natural grasslands
Green lanes and special verges
Orchards
Plantations
Ponds reservoirs
River corridors
Linear wetland features
Networks or patterns of other locally important habitats.

Will only be permitted if the following criteria apply:
a) The need for the development outweighs the need to retain the elements for their importance to wild fauna and flora;
b) Mitigation measures are provided that would compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality.
Appropriate management of these elements will be encouraged through the use of conditions and planning obligations.

Policy H3 –New Houses within Development limits
Infilling with new houses will be permitted on land in each of the following settlements if the development would be compatible with the character of the settlement and, depending on the location of the site, its countryside setting. This will be in addition to the sites specifically allocated as urban extensions and settlement expansions.
Windfall sites will be permitted if they meet all the following relevant criteria:
a) The site comprises previously developed land;
b) The site has reasonable accessibility to jobs, shops and services by modes other than the car, or there is potential for improving such accessibility;
c) Existing infrastructure has the capacity to absorb further development, or there is potential for its capacity to be increased as necessary;
d) Development would support local services and facilities; and
e) The site is not a key employment site.
f) Avoid development which makes inefficient use of land.
The list of settlements is:
Arkesden
Ashdon (Incl Church End)

Barnston
Berden
Birchanger and Parsonage Farm
Chrishall
Clavering (Incl. Hill Green)
Debden
Elmdon
Elsenham
Felsted (Including Causeway End, Watch House Green/Bannister Green)
Great Chesterford
Great Dunmow
Great Easton
Great Hallingbury (incl Bedlar's Green)
Great Sampford
Hadstock
Hatfield Broad Oak
Hatfield Heath (East and West)
Hempstead
Henham
High Easter
High Roding
Leaden Roding
Little Easton (Duck Street)
Little Hallingbury (north and south)
Littlebury
Manuden
Newport
Quendon and Rickling Green
Radwinter
Saffron Walden
Sewards End
Stansted Mountfitchet
Start Hill
Stebbing
Takeley
Takeley Street
Thaxted
Wendens Ambo
White Roding
Wicken Bonhunt
Widdington
The limit of each settlement for the purposes of this policy is defined on the proposals map.

Backland Development and Subdivision of Dwellings

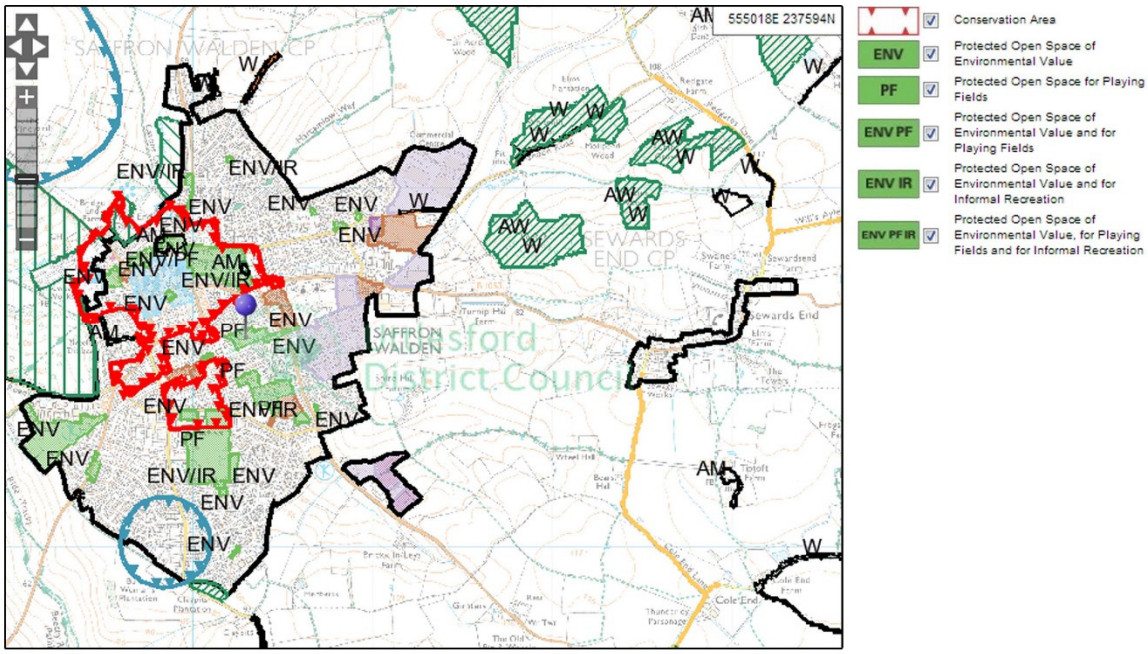
6.15. The development of sites without a road frontage and the conversion of existing large residential properties, into smaller apartments for example, are also acceptable, again subject to safeguards.

SAFFRON WALDEN INSET

15.1. Saffron Walden is one of the finest examples of a market town in the East of England. It is of the highest environmental quality with pleasant shopping streets, open spaces and numerous historic buildings, which attract many tourists.

Traffic

15.2. Traffic in Saffron Walden is a significant problem with its historic street pattern, restricted carriageway widths and junction geometry posing particular problems for heavy goods vehicles. At various times during the day the existing road system is unable to cope with the number of trips being made. This can result in delays, disturbance to the occupants of buildings close to the affected roads and a reduction in the quality of the environment for pedestrians. Further traffic management measures are envisaged during the plan period, to be identified through the Essex Local Transport Plan and Uttlesford Transport Strategy. These will include facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport. The Uttlesford cycle network plan contains a proposal for a cycle route between Audley End station and Saffron Walden. Detailed proposals are being formulated and it is likely that this will be implemented within the Plan period.



Uttlesford District Council Local Development Framework
Supplementary Planning Document - Accessible Homes and Play space (2005)

Disabled children are entitled to the same play opportunities as other children. Carers with disabilities may also require access to play space with their children. High quality, well-used play spaces/areas bring people together and lead to more inclusive communities. Good design of public play space is needed to make this possible. Developing accessible play space is not just about getting the equipment right - how the design of the space allows people to use it in different ways is also important and all children should be able to be included in the play space in some way. There should be consultation with children and parents in preparing the scheme.

The Council will negotiate with developers to achieve provision of secure and accessible play areas that are suitable for integrated play. To achieve this play space provision will be reviewed on an application by application basis. These areas must be accessible for both carers with disabilities and children with disabilities.
The list in appendix 3 gives sources of further guidance on requirements for accessible play space but generally the following should be provided:

- Not all children will be able or want to use all the equipment all the time but the equipment provided should be as accessible as possible so that as many children as possible have the choice to use it.
- The path to the play area should be wide enough for wheelchairs and pushchairs and allow two people to walk side by side (normally 1m minimum) with a firm surface.
- The entrance should be obvious and accessible for wheelchair users, people with pushchairs etc. Dog grids should not be used.
- Bright/contrasting colours should be used to identify sudden or unexpected changes in level.
- Seats should be provided and benches and tables should include some space for wheelchair users.
- Areas of planting can be used to provide shade and shelter and more informal opportunities for play.
- If toilets are being provided these should also be accessible. Simple shelters could be provided to offer carers some protection from the weather.

Appendix 5
Landscape Character Assessment

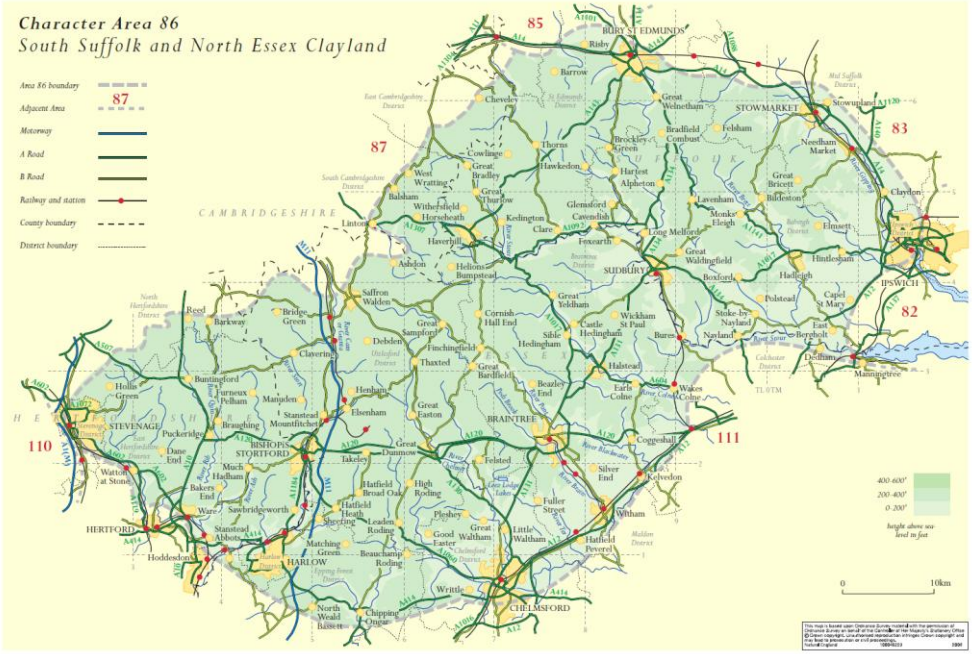
National

NCA: 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands
Key Facts & Data

This document provides a summary of environmental data collected for the NCA. It is intended to help guide anyone making decisions that may affect the local environment. The information contained here is collated from the best available national datasets. It is recognised local information may provide additional detail and that this will not always correspond to national data. If you have any questions about the Key Facts and Data, please contact: ncaprofiles@naturalengland.org.uk. Your feedback will help shape the content of the full NCA profiles, which will be published from September 2012 onwards.

NATURAL ENGLAND

Map of South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Total Area: 328,988 ha



The above map is provided from the Countryside Character Area description pending completion of NCA maps. It is recognised that the content of this map may now be out of date in some cases and is included for general reference only. New maps will include updated content and be provided within the full NCA profiles, due to be completed by 2013.

1. Landscape and Nature Conservation Designations

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 7,708 ha (2%) of the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

1.1 Designated nature conservation sites

The NCA includes the following statutory nature conservation designations:

Tier	Designation	Designated Site(s)	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
International	Ramsar	Lee Valley; Stour & Orwell Estuaries	156 ha	<1%
European	Special Protection Area (SPA)	Lee Valley SPA; Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA	156 ha	<1%
	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	n/a	0 ha	0%
National	National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Hatfield Forest NNR; Bradfield Woods NNR; Hales Wood NNR	464 ha	<1%
National	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A total of 67 sites wholly or partly within the NCA	2,314 ha	1%

Source: Natural England (2011)

Please Note: (i) Designated areas may overlap (ii) all figures are cut to Mean High Water Line, designations that span coastal areas/views below this line will not be included.

There are 1,539 Local sites in South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands covering 11,039 ha (3% of the NCA).

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at: http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm
- Details of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) can be searched http://www.lnr.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/lnr/lnr_search.asp
- Maps showing locations of Statutory sites can be found at http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/ -select 'Rural Designations Statutory'

1.1.1 Condition of designated sites

SSSI Condition Category	Area in NCA	Percentage of NCA SSSI Resource
Unfavourable declining	124 ha	5%
Favourable	761 ha	33%
Unfavourable no change	270 ha	12%
Unfavourable recovering	1,148 ha	50%

Source: Natural England (March 2011)

- Details of SSSI condition can be searched at: http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/reportIndex.cfm

2. Landform, Geology & Soils

2.1 Elevation

Elevation in the NCA ranges from <1m below sea level to a maximum of 161m above sea level. The average elevation of the landscape is 74m.

Source: Natural England (2010)

2.2 Landform & Process

This NCA is made up of undulating countryside, incised by small river valleys flowing east to the North Sea, with sporadic but narrow interfluve plateaux. This is an area of chalky boulder clay (glacial till) but with more topographical variation than the area to the north.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description.

2.3 Bedrock Geology

The solid geology of the East Anglian plain, of which this NCA forms a part, mainly comprises Upper Cretaceous Chalk. Overlying much of the chalk is a complex sequence of Quaternary sediments. A breakdown of solid geology as a proportion of the total land area is: 45% Clay, silt and sand; 41% Chalk and 14% Sand.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description; Natural England (2010)

2.5 Designated Geological Sites

Designation	Number of Sites
Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	9

Mixed Interest SSSIs	0

There is 1 Local Geological Site within the NCA.

Source: Natural England (2011)

- Details of individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest can be searched at: http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/sssi/search.cfm

2.6 Soils and Agricultural Land Classification

The area is bounded to the north-west by the lighter soils of Breckland and to the east by the clays and sands of the Northern Thames Basin, particularly the Essex Heaths of the Colchester area.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description

The main grades of agricultural land in the NCA are broken down as follows (as a proportion of total land area):

Agricultural Land Classification	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Grade 1	0 ha	0%
Grade 2	199,378 ha	61%
Grade 3	109,676 ha	33%
Grade 4	2,280 ha	1%
Grade 5	0 ha	0%

Non-agricultural	4,620 ha	1%
Urban	13,034 ha	4%

Source: Natural England (2010)

3. Key Water Bodies & Catchments

3.1 Major Rivers/Canals

The following major rivers/canals (by length) have been identified in this NCA.

River Name	Length in NCA
River Stour	80km
River Chelmer	50 km
River Brett	39 km
River Stort	38 km
River Colne	31 km
River Pant	29km
River Blackwater	28 km
River Gipping	27 km
River Ash	26 km
River Rib	25 km
River Ter	24 km
River Beane	22 km

River Can	16 km
River Lark	16 km
River Can or Granta	14 km
River Brain	14 km
River Quin	12 km
River Brook	11 km
River Kennett	10 km
River Lee or Lea	6 km
Roman River	5 km
River Granta	2 km

Source: Natural England (2010)

Please Note: other significant rivers (by volume) may also occur. These are not listed where the length within the NCA is short.

The Stour rises in Cambridgeshire, north east of Haverhill at West Wratting and flows in a south-easterly direction through Wixoe, Clare, Sudbury, Flatford and Dedham (in the Dedham Vale AONB), before it finally reaches the North Sea at Harwich. For much of its length it forms the border between Suffolk and Essex. There are numerous pumping stations and bore holes along the river extracting water for local use. The Stour Navigation was established in the early 18th century and there are restored locks at Dedham, Flatford and Great Cornard.

Since 1971, the Ely-Ouse to Essex Transfer scheme has been used to augment the Rivers Stour and Blackwater by up to 340 million gallons of water per day. A vast amount of this water is then pumped to the reservoirs at Abberton and Hanningfield to supply South Essex and

London. Winter rain is stored in these two large reservoirs, which are drawn down in the summer months, when river flows are low.

The River Chelmer flows entirely through the county of Essex. It rises close to the source of the River Can near Debden Green, Thaxted. It generally flows south-southeast and is joined by the River Can in Chelmsford. From there it flows east through the neighbouring NCA 111 and into NCA 81 where it meets the River Blackwater near Maldon and discharges into the North Sea via the Blackwater Estuary.

The River Brett is a picturesque and peaceful northern tributary of the River Stour, which winds its way through the heart of the Suffolk "Wool Towns" region.

The River Stort is a tributary of the Lea or Lee which it joins at Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire. It is a gentle rural river with a winding course that has remained unaltered. The Stort Navigation runs for 22km from Bishops Stortford through a drop of 90ft with 15 narrow locks.

The River Pant which rises in the north-west of the NCA becomes the River Blackwater near Braintree in the east. At Little Sampford the river increases in volume courtesy of an outlet of water piped from the Ely - Ouse to Essex water transfer scheme.

The River Gipping in the very north of the NCA flows in a south-easterly direction. It is the source river for the River Orwell that flows to the North Sea from the port of Ipswich through the neighbouring NCA 82 (Suffolk Coast and Heaths). The route of the river was altered for navigation with the addition of 15 locks between Ipswich and Stowmarket in the late 18th century. Parts of the navigation have in recent year’s undergone restoration (e.g. Baylham lock).

3.2 Water Quality

The total area of Nitrate Vulnerable Zone is 328,988 ha (100% of the NCA).

Source: Natural England (2010)

3.3 Protected Areas

- to be completed in consultation with the Environment Agency (full document only).

3.4 Water Framework Directive

- to be completed in consultation with the Environment Agency (full document only).

4. Trees and Woodlands

4.1 Total Woodland Cover

The NCA contains 13,925 ha of woodland (4% of the total area), of which 7,260 ha is ancient woodland.

Source: Natural England (2010)

4.2 Distribution and size of woodland and trees in the landscape

A shallow wooded ridge sweeps round in a curve from Tiptree to Epping Forest. This area has an open yet wooded character, demonstrating aspects of medieval enclosure and the impact of 20th century field rationalization and Dutch Elm disease. Although the north-western part of Essex was historically not as forested as the ridge that sweeps round in an arc from Tiptree to Epping Forest, it is sufficiently well-endowed with copses and woods to have wooded horizons which give a distinctly enclosed character to the landscape. This pattern varies slightly in the northern part of the NCA, where hedgerow trees are mostly oak and there are a number of larger woods. Within the Stour valley, the main

impression is of modern blocks of cricket-bat willows and poplars planted on the valley floor and sides. The crack willow pollards along the river are also a notable landscape feature of this area, partly reflecting the early 20th century willow industry producing poles and hurdles.

Ancient woodland is strongly represented in the area, though mainly in small parcels. Woods containing small-leafed lime are particularly significant.

Wood pasture and the ancient woodland of Hatfield Forest (formerly a royal hunting preserve) is an important historical and ecological resource.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description.

4.3 Woodland Types

A statistical breakdown of the area and type of woodland found across the NCA is detailed below.

Area and proportion of different woodland types in the NCA (over 2 ha)

Woodland Type	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Broadleaved	8,940 ha	3%
Coniferous	1,871 ha	1%
Mixed	1,619 ha	1%
Shrub / young trees	1,079 ha	<1%
Felled/land for prepared planting	345 ha	<1%

Source: Natural England (2010)

Area and proportion of Ancient Woodland and Planted Ancient Woodland within the NCA

Woodland Type	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Ancient semi-natural woodland	5,168 ha	2%
Ancient re-planted woodland (PAWS)	2,092 ha	1%

Source: Natural England (2004)

5. Boundary Features & Patterns

5.1 Boundary Features

The dominant hedgerow tree in Essex was elm, but Dutch Elm disease has had a profound effect on hedgerow and field boundaries which are now lost, gappy or decrepit. In the Suffolk part of the area, hedgerow oaks and dense hedgerows continue to give a more treed and hedged character.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

5.2 Field Patterns

This is largely an area of 'ancient countryside' where the field boundaries are predominantly substantial hedges of medieval or earlier date. Fields are frequently irregular in shape and without strong patterning; a character which is still evident despite some 20th century hedge removals to increase field sizes. There is, however, a change in character on the western side of the area, roughly on a line running south-westward from Bury St Edmunds to Haverhill, Saffron Walden, Bishop's Stortford and Harlow. To the west of this line there is

substantial evidence of 18th and 19th century parliamentary enclosure of former common arable fields. To the east there is very little evidence of former common fields, except in pockets along the Stour valley, notably around Sudbury and Dedham.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

6. Agriculture

The following data has been taken from the Agricultural Census linked to this NCA.

6.1 Farm Type

The area is predominantly arable with some pasture found in the valley floors. The landscape's mixed farming character is supported by the breakdown of farm types: 1,305 cereals (58% of holdings); 319 'other' types (most commonly associated with smallholdings) (14%); 222 lowland grazing livestock (10%); 148 general cropping (7%); 108 horticulture (5%); 86 mixed (4%); 37 specialist poultry (2%); 28 specialist pigs (1%) and 14 dairy (1%). There has been a 39% decrease in dairy farms (23 to 14 farms). Trends also show a decrease in the number of specialist poultry farms (58 to 37 or 36%) as well as a reduction in the number of general cropping holdings (222 to 148 or 33%), mixed holdings (120 to 86 or 28%) and horticulture holdings (148 to 108 or 27%). Lowland grazing livestock holdings have increased by 30% (171 to 222 holdings) and the general category of 'other' holdings (most commonly associated with small-holdings) has also seen a small increase of 3% (310 to 319 holdings). The number of specialist pig farms has remained static at 28 holdings.

Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)

6.2 Farm Size

Farms over 100 ha are the most common in the area (802 accounting for 35% of holdings) followed by farms between 5 and 20 ha (484 holdings or 21%), farms between 20 and 50 ha (468 or 21%) and farms between 50 and 100 ha (338 or 15%). The least common farm size in the area is holdings under 5 ha (175 or 8% of holdings). The largest holdings i.e. those over 100 ha make up 82% of the total farmed area compared to those under 5 ha which cover less than 0.5% of the farmed area. The trends in farm size show a 21% decrease in the number of farms of less than 5 ha (221 to 175). The number of holdings over 100 ha has also decreased by 10% (888 to 802) as has the number of holdings between 5 and 20 ha by 8% (525 to 484). The number of holdings between 20 and 50 ha has increased by 9% (429 to 468). The number of farms between 50 and 100 ha remained relatively static, increasing by 1% (334 to 338).

Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)

6.3 Farm Ownership

2009: Total farm area = 254,478 ha; owned land = 194,583 ha
2000: Total farm area = 265,939 ha; owned land = 195,435 ha

Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)

6.4 Land Use

Because of the drainage provided by the rolling nature of the countryside, there has always been a significant arable component in the farming of this NCA, subsequently the dominant agricultural land uses are for cereals, accounting for 137,164 ha (54% of the total farmed area). Grass and uncropped land accounts for 38,980 ha (15%). Oilseeds cover 32,008 ha (13%) and 'other' arable crops cover 21,409 ha (8%). Other agricultural land uses each represent less than 5% of the total farmed area. Between 2000 and 2009 there was a 10% decrease in the area of cereals (down by 14,783 hectares) and a 22% decrease in the area of grass and uncropped land (down by 11,018

hectares). The area under oilseeds increased by 13,003 ha (68%) and the area under 'other' arable crops increased by 4,611 ha (27%). There has also been increases in the area of land used for growing stock feed, an increase of 193 ha (140%) and hardy nursery stock, up 13 ha (10%). A decrease was seen in the area of land used for vegetables, down 529 ha (51%). Land used to grow fruit was also down by 344 ha (42%) and land under glasshouses was down 11 ha (33%). Land used for cash roots reduced by 2,347 ha (26%). Other agricultural land uses were relatively static or related to less than five holdings.

Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)

6.5 Livestock Numbers

Pigs are the most numerous livestock within this landscape, numbering 78,600 animals. Sheep are the next most numerous with 45,300 animals whilst cattle numbered 21,900. All livestock numbers have decreased during the period 2000-2009. Pig numbers decreased by 41% (54,600 animals), sheep by 34% (23,700 animals) and cattle by 28% (8,600 animals).

Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)

6.6 Farm Labour

The majority of holdings are run by principal farmers (including their spouses and business partners) rather than salaried managers (3,177 principal farmers, 419 salaried managers). Together, employed full-time and part time workers (1,039 FT and 682 PT) are more numerous than casual/gang workers (746). Trends from 2000 to 2009 show a decrease in the number of principal farmers (down by 415) and an increase in salaried managers (up by 70). During this period the number of full-time workers has decreased (down by 598) as have the number of part time workers (down by 108) and the number of casual/gang workers (down by 200).

Source: Agricultural Census, DEFRA (2010)

Please Note: (i) Some of the Census data is estimated by Defra so will not be accurate for every holding (ii) Data refers to Commercial Holdings only (iii) Data includes land outside of the NCA belonging to holdings whose centre point is within the NCA listed.

7. Key Habitats and Species

7.1 Habitat distribution / coverage

A breakdown by habitat is included below:

Wood pasture, parkland and Veteran trees – pollarded willows line some of the rivers, especially the River Stour on the Suffolk/Essex border. Many other veteran trees can be found in hedgerows, on field boundaries, in churchyards, on the boundaries of ancient coppice woods, and in parkland.

Lowland mixed and broadleaved woodland – compared to other areas South Suffolk and North Essex is fortunate to have a high density of woodland. This primarily is a wooded arable landscape, except on the river valley floors where arable land, grassland and willow pollards dominate (e.g. River Chelmer valley). Hedgerows, copses and blocks of woodland are numerous with many examples of ancient woodland still surviving. The Dedham Vale for example has an open wooded character.

Ancient and species rich hedgerows – a higher than average density of hedges can be found in this area giving a well-wooded feel to the landscape. Remnant hedgerows are also common and hedgerow trees persist in many areas. The dominant hedgerow tree in South Suffolk is oak and in Essex it is elm, however Elms have been severely affected by impact of Dutch Elm disease resulting in the loss of the species from many hedgerows and field boundaries. Largely associated with arable

land, hedgerows provide valuable linkages and buffers for a variety of wildlife within the landscape especially when found in conjunction with field margins and ditches.

Wetland habitats – numerous small rivers flow east towards the North Sea supporting a range of species and habitats including reedbed and fen. The Stour valley contains blocks of cricket-bat willows and poplars planted on the valley floor and sides, with pollarded crack willows being a notable feature of the riversides.

Lowland meadow – only very small fragments of lowland meadow remain. The existing resource is very fragmented and declining in quality and quantity. The survival of some species now relies on the protected road verge systems that run in both Suffolk and Essex.

Lowland heathland and acid grassland – The area is bounded to the north-west by the lighter soils of Breckland and to the east by the transition to former heathland on lighter soils. Some small areas of heath are recorded in Great Cornard, Leavenheath and East Bergholt.

Source: East Anglia Plain Natural Area Profile

7.2 Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority habitats

The NCA contains the following areas of mapped priority habitats (as mapped by National Inventories). Footnotes denote local/expert interpretation. This will be used to inform future national inventory updates.

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
Broadleaved mixed & yew woodland (Broad Habitat)	9,232 ha	3%
Coastal floodplain & grazing marsh	1,465 ha	<1%

Lowland meadows	316 ha	<1%
Lowland calcareous grassland	91 ha	<1%
Lowland dry acid grassland	51 ha	<1%
Lowland heathland	4 ha	<1%
Mudflats	1 ha	<1%

Source: Natural England (2011)

Maps showing locations of UK BAP Priority Habitats are available at

- http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/ select 'Habitat Inventories'

7.3 Key species and assemblages of species

- These are listed in Annex 1 (full document only)
- Maps showing locations of S41 species are available at http://data.nbn.org.uk/

8. Settlement and Development Patterns

8.1 Settlement pattern

The existing pattern of towns and villages was laid down by the time of the Domesday survey of 1086, when the area was already densely settled. This pattern intensified with the development of the medieval woollen trade, which was mainly home-based, backed up by a collection of interdependent trade's people within the towns and major villages with markets. The latter tend to be larger than villages in the South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands due to this industrial growth. Otherwise there is a similarity of a dispersed settlement pattern of small hamlets and dispersed farmsteads. Manorial halls, often with a medieval church nearby, form primary settlement clusters of likely Late Saxon origin in the river valleys, with secondary settlements clustering

around the the edges of greens on the adjacent interfluve plateaux. Because of the narrowness of the interfluves, the greens in this NCA are significantly smaller and narrower than those in the South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands. The use of the term 'tye' for a green (as in Barking Tye and Bulmer Tye) is locally distinctive and does not occur to the north of Stowmarket. Most of the dispersed farmsteads are medieval in origin and many display their status by being encircled by water filled moats.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

8.2 Main Settlements

The main settlements within the NCA are: Bishops Stortford; Braintree; Bury St Edmunds; Chelmsford (northern half); Harlow; Haverhill, Ipswich (western half); Stevenage; Stowmarket and Sudbury. Both Harlow and Haverhill were developed after World War II as overspills for London. Chelmsford was awarded City status in 2012.

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

8.3 Local vernacular & building materials

Timber is the main building material of this area, with late medieval timber-framed buildings being most numerous in the districts to the south and west of the rivers Lark and Gipping, especially in the old textile areas along the Stour and its tributaries, particularly in towns like Lavenham, Hadleigh, and Sudbury, or in formerly industrialised villages like Kersey. Traditional timber construction used an infill of 'loam and laths' between vertical timber studs, which was then lime washed to protect it from the elements and to enhance its appearance. Coloured washes became more popular after 1900, as did the practice of exposing the timber frame. Pargeting, a form of raised plaster decoration on external walls, was popular in the 17th century, but is now

undergoing a revival. Good examples can be seen in Clare, Hadleigh, Ipswich and Saffron Walden.

Brick is also widely used, formerly supplied by numerous local brickworks; those at Bulmer being a rare survival. Little Wenham Hall (Wenham Castle) in the east of the area dates from the 1270s and is the oldest substantially brick building in England. The Deanery Tower in Hadleigh, Melford Hall and Horham Hall and notable examples of Tudor brick buildings. Many of the 'brick' buildings are however just a Georgian or later brick facing to an older timber framed structure. 'Clay lump' (large unfired clay bricks) was also used as a building material in the 19th century, mainly for farm buildings and cottages. Other forms of clay construction, such as cob or rammed earth, are also found. There is a concentration of clay buildings in Buxhall, the home of the Revd Copinger Hill, a strong advocate of clay building in the 1840s.

Pegtiles rather than pantiles are mainly seen in this area and there is a significant amount of wheat straw thatch.

Ipswich contains examples of Victorian neo-Italianate Gothic buildings (Norman Scarfe).

Source: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Area description; Countryside Quality Counts (2003)

9. Key Historic Sites & Features

9.1 Origin of historic features

This is mainly an anciently-enclosed landscape of mixed farming practises, with a pattern of small isolated farms and farming hamlets around greens and commons which retain a rich legacy of historic barns and other farm buildings. Confirmation of the age of the dispersed settlement pattern is provided by the numerous halls and farmsteads that are surrounded by medieval and Tudor moats.

The area also has some of the finest medieval churches in East Anglia, many of them funded by the lucrative wool trade – as at Lavenham and Long Melford.

Medieval deer parks and the later 'landscape' parks surrounding substantial country houses have left numerous traces in the landscape, as at Ickworth, Kentwell in Long Melford and Chadacre.

Audley End became the royal palace of Charles II in the 17th century.

Towns such as Long Melford, Lavenham, Sudbury Thaxted, Halstead and Coggeshall and Bury St Edmunds maintain their medieval street patterns and contain a wealth of remarkable buildings that demonstrate the wealth founded in the medieval wool trade.

Hatfield Forest (formerly a royal hunting preserve) is an important historical and ecological resource.

Bury St Edmunds on the northern edge of the area contains the remains of one of the five richest and most powerful abbeys in England during the Middle Ages.

Flatford Mill in East Bergholt is strongly represented in the paintings of John Constable, as are other scenes in the locality (Dedham, Stoke-by-Nayland) giving this part of the Stour Valley an identity as 'Constable Country' and a claim to be the iconic landscape of lowland England. The Sudbury area features in the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough and other artists such as Sir Alfred Munnings, Sir Cedric Morris and John Nash also worked in the area.

A long string of World War II pillboxes is a legacy of a 1940 defensive 'stopline' called the Eastern Command Line that ran from the River Colne northwards to Bures, along the River Stour to Long Melford and then across the country to Bury St Edmunds and the River Lark. There

are also remnants of wartime airfields at Chedburgh, Lavenham, Rattlesden, Stradishall, Sudbury and Raydon; with the one at Wattisham still being in active service.

The Norman Foster designed Willis building in Ipswich, constructed between 1970 and 1975 is seen as a landmark in the development of the 'high tech' architectural style. It was listed as a Grade 1 building by English Heritage in 1991.

Source: Countryside Quality Counts Draft Historic Profile, Countryside Character Area description.

9.2 Designated Historic Assets

This NCA has the following historic designations:

- 44 Registered Parks and Gardens covering 3,004 ha
- 0 Registered Battlefield/s covering 0 ha
- 330 Scheduled Monuments
- 17,233 Listed Buildings

Source: Natural England (2010)

- More information is available at the following address: http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/

10. Recreation and Access

10.1 Public Access

1% of the NCA 3,628 ha is classified as being publically accessible.

The table below shows the breakdown of land which is publically accessible in perpetuity:

Access Designation	Area in NCA	Proportion of NCA
National Trust (Accessible all year)	531 ha	<1%
Common Land	386 ha	<1%
Country Parks	505 ha	<1%
CROW Access Land (Section 4 and 16)	721 ha	<1%
CROW Section 15	232 ha	<1%
Village Greens	258 ha	<1%
Doorstep Greens	4 ha	<1%
Forestry Commission Walkers Welcome Grants	1,710 ha	1%
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	316 ha	<1%
Millennium Greens	16 ha	<1%
Accessible National Nature Reserves (NNR)	456 ha	<1%
Agri-environment Scheme Access	137 ha	<1%
Woods for People	1,846 ha	1%

Sources: Natural England (2011)

Please Note: Common Land refers to land included in the 1965 commons register; CROW = Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; OC and RCL = Open Country and Registered Common Land.

10.2 Rights of Way

There are 6,375 km of Public Rights of Way at a density of 1.9 per km2.

There are no National Trails within the NCA.

Sources: Natural England (2010)

11. Experiential Qualities

11.1 Tranquillity

Based on the CPRE map of Tranquillity (2006) it appears that the lowest scores for tranquillity are associated with the urban centres of Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, Sudbury, Braintree, Chelmsford, Bishops Stortford, Harlow and Stevenage. Other areas of disturbance can be seen to be associated with the main transport routes linking these centres, the M11, A120, A131, A14 and A12. The highest scores for tranquillity are within the upper clay plateau north of the NCA within south Suffolk and north Essex on the agricultural land between the settlements.

A breakdown of tranquillity values for this NCA is detailed in the table below:

Tranquillity	Tranquillity Score
Highest Value within NCA	36
Lowest Value within NCA	-95
Mean Value within NCA	-8

Sources: CPRE (2006)

- More information is available at the following address: http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside/tranquil-places/in-depth/item/1688-how-we-mapped-tranquillity

11.2 Intrusion

The 2007 Intrusion Map (CPRE) shows the extent to which rural landscapes are 'intruded on' from urban development, noise (primarily traffic noise), and other sources of visual and auditory intrusion. This shows that disturbance is associated with the busy 'A' roads that run through and around the boundaries of the area including the A120, A131, A14 and A12, together with the M11 and the major settlements of Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, Sudbury, Braintree, Chelmsford, Bishops Stortford, Harlow and Stevenage. A breakdown of intrusion values for this NCA is detailed in the table below.

Intrusion Category	1960s	1990s	2007	Percentage change (1960s-2007)
Disturbed	16%	35%	42%	26%
Undisturbed	81%	62%	53%	-28%
Urban	3%	3%	5%	2%

Sources: CPRE (2007)

Notable trends from the 1960s to 2007 are a notable increase of disturbed or intruded land by 26% which is matched by a reduction of undisturbed or un-intruded land by 28%.

- More information is available at the following address: http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places

12 Data Sources

- *East Anglia Plain Natural Area Profile, Natural England (English Nature 1997)*
- *South Suffolk North Essex Claylands Countryside Character Description, Natural England (Countryside Commission/Countryside Agency 1998/1999)*
- *Countryside Quality Counts, Natural England (Countryside Agency 2003)*
- *Agricultural Census June Survey 2000/2009, Defra (2010)*
- *Intrusion Map, CPRE (2007)*
- *Tranquillity Map, CPRE (2006)*
- *Draft Historic Profiles, English Heritage (2004)**
- *For further information on Natural England data sources please see the* Key facts and data interpretation note

Please note all figures contained within the report have been rounded to the nearest unit. For this reason proportion figures will not (in all) cases add up to 100%. The convention <1 has been used to denote values less than a whole unit.

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County

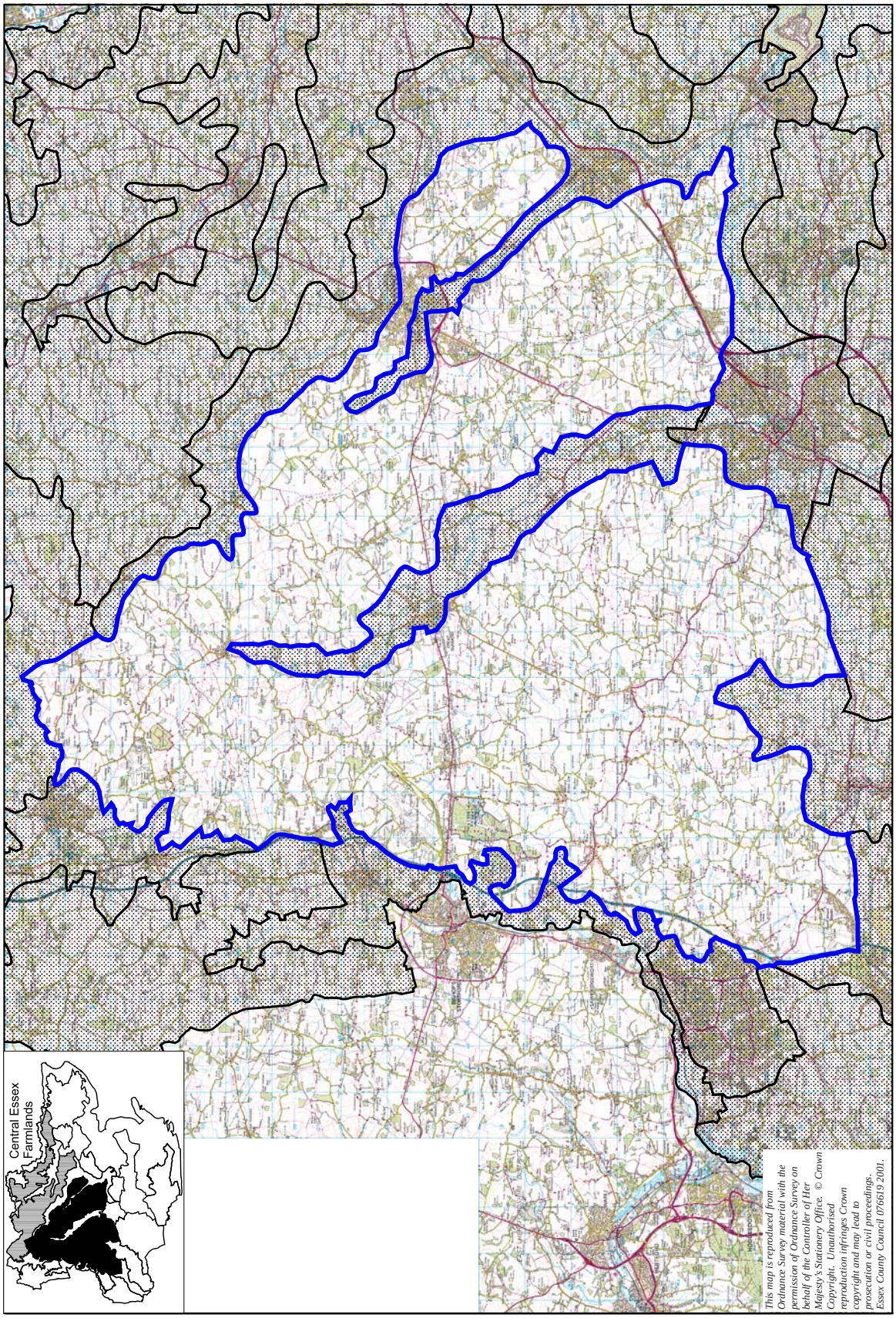
4.3.5 *Central Essex Farmlands (B1)*

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

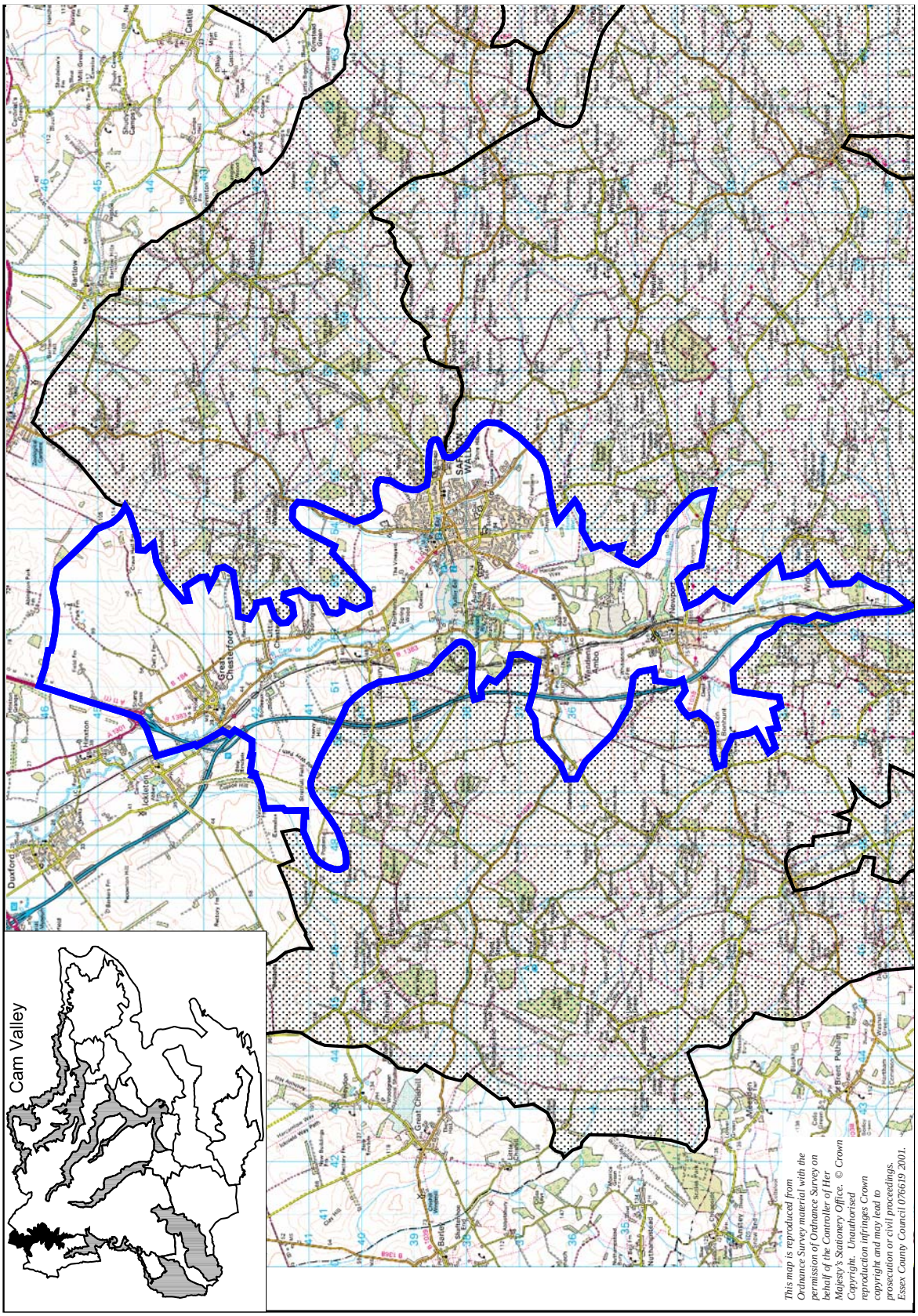
4.4.5 *Cam Valley (C1)*

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.

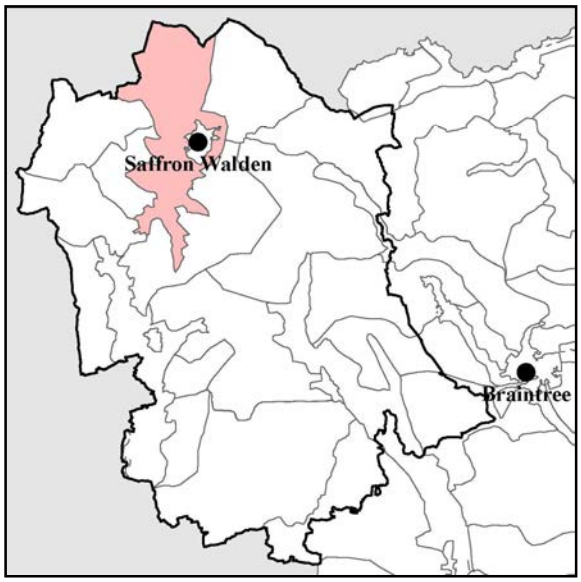
CAM VALLEY (C1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

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

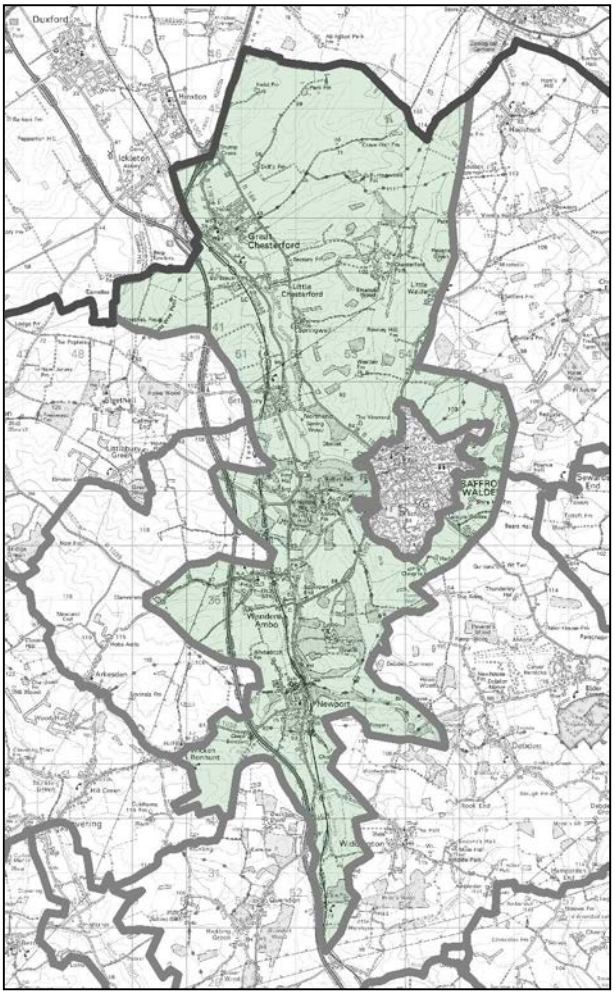
District

A1 CAM RIVER VALLEY



Key Characteristics

- Rolling, open landscape of chalky boulder clay with wide views from higher ground.
- Well vegetated riverbanks with shrubs, trees and water meadows along the winding narrow river corridor.
- Large-scale downland reflecting late enclosure, with rectilinear field pattern .
- Low hedges and few trees mainly in small copses.
- Ancient town of Saffron Walden.
- Dispersed settlements on valley sides connected by busy B roads.



Overall Character

The Cam River Valley extends from the Cambridgeshire-Essex boundary south to Newport where the M11 and the B1383 roads converge. It is a broad rolling landscape that drains the River Cam and its tributaries, Debden Water and Wicken Water. The eastern slopes are dominated by the historic settlement of Saffron Walden, with its imposing church. This side of the river valley is characterised by large farms and small villages connected by small lanes. In contrast, the western slopes are more diverse, with small quiet villages, and many busy roads. The eastern slopes are a large-scale landscape of primarily arable fields, with some grazing pastures. Dense blocks of trees, including some ancient woodland, punctuate the western slopes where the field boundaries are typically organic in shape. The M11, the railway line and the B1383 run north–south through the

western slopes of the Cam River Valley. Disused clay pits and chalk pits can be seen in places on the lower slopes. On the eastern slopes, the settlement pattern is dispersed, with isolated farmsteads and nucleated villages such as Little Walden and Little Chesterford. Colour-washed thatched or mellow red brick houses are found throughout the valley which enhance its visually rich heritage, and there are some outstanding old barns. Great Chesterford is a larger village, with business parks and significant commercial areas. Field pattern is regular, bounded by gappy hedgerows, drainage ditches and occasional trees. Views from the higher ground are often framed by distant patches of woodland and scattered copses. The narrow course of the River Cam meanders within its floodplain between Great Chesterford and Shortgrove Bridge. The river corridor is fringed by trees which delineate its shape within the patchwork of pasture and plantation woodlands that line the valley floor. Audley End - an outstanding Jacobean manor set in its eighteenth century Capability Brown landscape park is a distinctive area of local character. In the upper reaches, arable farmland covers steep slopes descending almost to the river's edge. The village of Littlebury, with its picturesque setting along the River Cam and its historic houses in many shades of colour-washed plaster, also possesses the former King's Mill - an old watermill that bridges the river behind the village.

Visual Characteristics

- Attractive panoramic views from the eastern slopes to western valley slopes framed by distant blocks of trees.
- Views of towns and villages from higher ground.
- Valley sides descend quite steeply from rolling arable fields to the river and its tributaries and dramatic views are possible from the ridges.
- Large ancient town of Saffron Walden, and its distinctive church spire can be seen from many directions due to its position on the higher slopes.
- Intimate views on the lower slopes of wooded river valley floor.
- Intimate scale of villages and towns contrasts with large-scale modern agriculture.
- Hedgerow loss is visible in the landscape.
- Urban fringe settlement often not well integrated into the landscape.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by large common-fields of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type, which developed here, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex. Some of these were enclosed by agreement in the early post-medieval period, the remainder being enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, partially as a function of the parliamentary enclosure act. The main historic landscape features include:

- The valley of the River Cam which forms a natural routeway through the ridge.
- A series of parks - Shortgrove, Audley End and Chesterford - which are strung out along the river valley itself and on the valley slopes.
- Winding lanes, dispersed hamlets and greens, with ancient woodlands on the higher ground.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture surrounding settlements. However, the area does contain 16 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Debden Water SSSI) (220 hectares) - comprising open water and lake side habitats.
- Eight CWSs comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland including Burton Wood, Paddock Wood and Emanuel Wood, Spring Wood, Westley Wood, London Jock Wood, Brakey Ley Wood and part of Pounce Wood.
- Eight CWSs comprising pasture or road verges with unimproved grassland or fen including Little Walden Road Quarry, Byrd's Farm Lane, Ashdon Road, Audley Park Pastures, Audley End Park Wall, Spring Hill Fen, Newport Churchyard and Crave Hall Meadow.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for erection of new farm buildings, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential pressure for increased use of narrow and minor lanes especially during peak tourist periods.
- Potential pressure from urban expansions on the edges of Great Chesterford and Saffron Waldon.
- Potential pressure for increased use of narrow and minor lanes due to development of Chesterford Park.
- Pressure from potential expansion of villages within adjacent character areas infringing upon the generally open character of the area.
- Potential further decrease in hedgerows and tree cover due to agricultural practice.
- Potential for pollution of the River Cam from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley side and farmland plateau areas.
- Potential decrease in hedgerows and tree cover due to pressure from adjacent agricultural land use.
- Potential loss of riverside marshland and pastures due to agricultural encroachment.
- Visual intrusion of potential road expansion linked to pressure of traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.
- Intrusion on tranquillity with potential of increasing traffic on minor roads due to proposed development at Chesterford Park.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the patchwork pattern of pasture and plantation woodlands, which would be sensitive to changes in land management. The open skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive, with new development potentially being highly visible within panoramic inter and cross-valley views. Intimate views from lower slopes to the wooded river valley floor and views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. Historic integrity is relatively strong with a dispersed historic settlement pattern and several winding lanes, greens and ancient woodlands. Several important habitats for wildlife and biodiversity are scattered throughout the area (including 16 County Wildlife sites and an open water SSSI). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

Conserve **-** seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

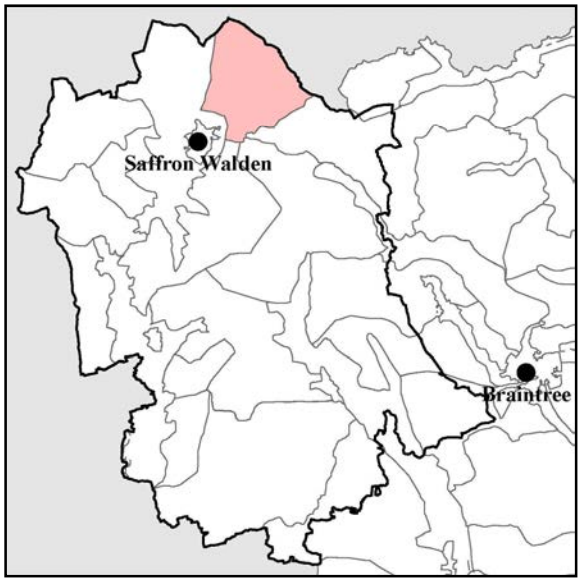
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Maintain cross-valley views.
- Consider the landscape pattern and structure of large woodland areas and the role that they have in the composition of views to and from the area.
- Ensure that new woodland planting is designed to enhance landscape character and that species composition reflects local character.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale and that it responds to historic settlement pattern, form and building materials.
- Encourage the re-use of redundant agricultural farm buildings, especially red brick or black timber-framed and boarded barns.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

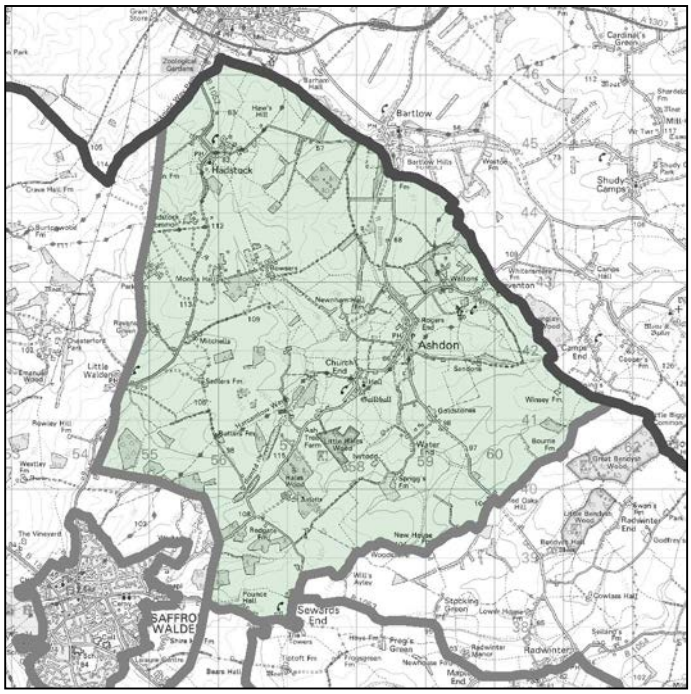
- Develop strategies to deal with peak flows of traffic in tourist season, particularly near Audley End.
- Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows and restore where possible.
- Establish arable field margins.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient woodland as historical landscape and nature conservation features.
- Consider the visual impact of new farm buildings on the valley slopes and encourage the planting of tree groups around visually intrusive buildings.

B1 ASHDON FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating glacial boulder clay (till) with broad ridges on the high ground.
- Scattered farmsteads, hamlets and a few large villages.
- Irregular field pattern follows topography.
- Roads and lanes rarely straight.
- Ancient landscape with subtle qualities.
- Wide views from open roads on high plateau contrasts with enclosed nature of wooded areas in valley bottoms.



Overall Character

This character area lies in the glacial till plateau landscape defined by its soil and its topography - north Essex clay that has been worked for centuries. Extending from the Icknield Way above Hadstock in the north to the Ashdon road from Saffron Walden in the south, its western edge is the B1052. The eastern side extends beyond Ashdon to the boundary of the Study Area. This strongly rolling landform rises to a broad, open plateau, dissected by small streams whose valleys give great variety to the countryside. This produces a landscape character of upland with wide-open vistas on the ridge tops, and also enclosed wooded areas in the valley bottoms. Patches of ancient woodland remain. The tree cover is mainly deciduous, with blocks of trees and hedgerows framing channelled views. Telegraph poles are the landmarks on the horizons here, with the occasional church or water tower visible in the distance. The field pattern is irregular, and the field scale varies from medium to large. The land appears in good condition, with many strong hedgerows and verges well maintained, although large-scale arable farming has left a legacy of many broken hedges on field boundaries. This is an area characterised by the absence of towns. Ashdon and Hadstock, the two large villages, are historic settlements along the only two minor roads through the area. Both have village greens. A complex footpath network criss-

crosses the area, including both the ancient Harcamlow and Icknield Ways. Access to farmsteads is via winding lanes and tracks. Other settlement is either in the form of small hamlets or scattered farmsteads. There is a rich heritage of vernacular buildings visible in many shades of colour-washed plaster, or of mellow red brick or flintwork. Some black weatherboard or red brick barns are notable as well. Ashdon has a particularly fine historic timber-framed Guildhall, and both have notable ancient churches. The changing texture of this landscape is visible in the contrasts of its verges, fields, trees and hedges, as well as in the diversity of materials and colour of its buildings. Overall, this is a character area with a strong sense of place, and a strong sense of tranquillity.

Visual Characteristics

- Panoramic views on high plateau, including to Saffron Walden and to Linton.
- Rolling landscape with lush wooded valleys and less wooded higher ground.
- Wealth of historic buildings.
- Few settlements, scattered farmsteads.
- Minor roads and winding lanes or tracks.
- Wide and narrow verges.
- Some sunken lanes.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a mixture of pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and former common fields, of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex. These were usually enclosed in the 18th century by piecemeal agreement. Historically the settlement was very dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farms or small hamlets strung out along the roads or roadside greens. The historic landscape features include a number of ancient woodlands.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. However, the area does contain 23 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Nunn Wood SSSI, Hales and Shadwell Woods SSSI (including Hales Wood NNR) and Langley Wood SSSI all comprising a variety of ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats.
- Ashden Meadow SSSI comprising a diverse grassland flora.
- Fifteen CWSs comprising a variety of ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Hadstock Wood, Home Wood, Madge Hobs Wood, Shadwell Wood West, Grimsditch Wood, Little Grimsditch Wood, Bright's Wood, Little Hales Wood, Hales Wood Meadow, Whitehill Wood, Mollpond Wood, Robins Grove/Hills Wood, Martin's Wood, part of Pounce Wood and Grigg's Grove.
- Three CWSs comprising a variety of semi-natural grassland habitats including Harrison Sayer Reserve, Ashdon Waltons Park and Burnt House Meadow.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management, with resultant loss of field pattern.
- Potential further loss of hedgerows due to the introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Potential for new development in the adjacent settlements over the district boundary to the north (South Cambridgeshire) of the character area which would be visually intrusive to views within this character area.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include enclosed wooded areas within the valley bottom and strong hedgerows at field boundaries (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open nature of the skyline of the ridge tops is visually sensitive to new development (particularly tall vertical development), which may be visible within panoramic views to and from Saffron Walden and Linton. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a wealth of historic buildings and a historic settlement pattern comprising dispersed hamlets, which are connected by a series of winding lanes. This pattern is sensitive to potential large-scale development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 18 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland and semi-natural grassland habitats), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

Conserve - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

Enhance - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

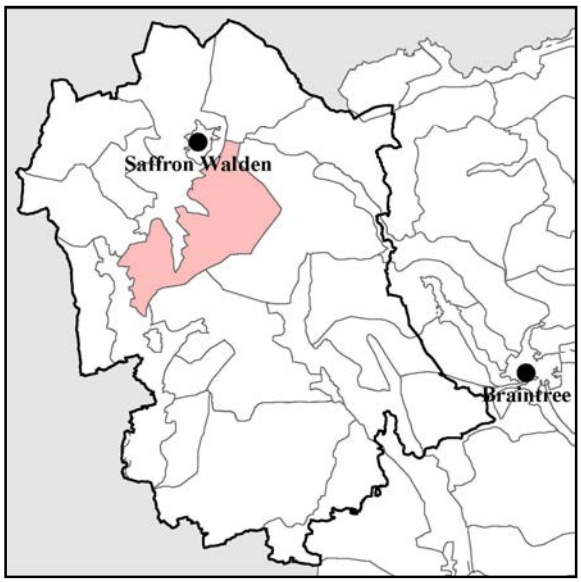
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve the rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that uses materials and colours that respond to landscape setting and landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings.
- Small scale development should be carefully sited in relation to existing farm buildings.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

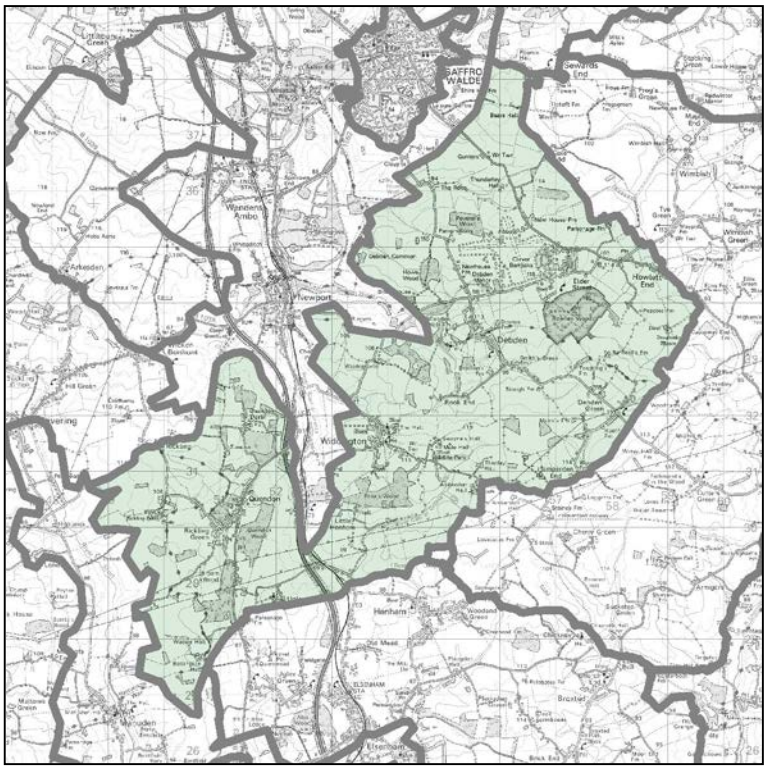
- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted to emphasize the existing landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites such as Shadwell Wood.
- Conserve and restore important areas of unimproved grassland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites such as Ashdon Meadow.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.

B7 DEBDEN FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

- Dense woodland patches or copses, many of them ancient, provide structure in the landscape
- Gently rolling plateau incised by River Cam in the south, Debden Water west of Debden, and a small section of the River Pant in the northeast corner near Bears Hall.
- Tall trees or overgrown hedgerows line some roads or lanes; broken hedgerows evident or absence of hedgerows due to agricultural intensification.
- Expansive views on open roads at higher elevations.
- Settlements visible in most directions.
- Rich cultural heritage with many vernacular buildings.



Overall Character

This character area encompasses the countryside south of Pounce Hall (B1) in the northeast corner, across the farmland plateau centred on Debden village, with Howlett End on the east and Widdington on the western edge. It also includes Quendon area, touching the boundaries of the chalk upland and the Cam River Valley slopes (A1) - all on the western side of the M11 corridor. The field pattern is a mixture of medium to large-scale irregular arable fields framed by dense patches of woodland and gappy hedgerows with some hedgerow trees. Some smaller scale fields are apparent near settlements. Woodland is predominantly deciduous and adds a visible framework to the landscape in all seasons. Remnant ancient woodland is scattered throughout the countryside. Trees also give structure to this landscape, surrounding settlements, fields and lanes. In contrast, the higher ground is more open, with

large fields surrounded by broken hedgerows, ditches and grassy tracks. The land looks in good condition. Views can be panoramic, but are often blocked by distant woodland blocks or linear windbreaks. Channelled views of the Cam Valley slopes are possible from many points on the open roads on higher ground. The centre of the plateau is dominated by the Carver Barracks, a sprawling military airfield complex, and its radar tower is visible from a great distance. This is in sharp contrast to the intimacy of many villages shrouded in trees on slopes or ridges. Settlements are small, but dispersed with an even regularity over the area; Debden is the largest village. Vehicular access is relatively good, as several B roads cross along the ridges. Pedestrian links are ample, including Harcamlow Way between Newport and Thaxted. This area has long been settled; historic moats and manors dot the countryside, as do a rich variety of vernacular buildings. Local materials range from colour-washed plaster or half-timbered, to flintwork and red brick. Pylons range across the horizon looking south; elsewhere the usual telegraph poles are the only landmarks. This is a textured, varied landscape, with a strong sense of tranquillity that is only interrupted by the proximity to a busy road, or the planes into Stansted.

Visual Characteristics

- Visible cultural heritage of halls, moats and outstanding Prior's Hall Barn, Widdington.
- Many wooded areas, including ancient woodlands.
- Radar tower at Carver Barracks, pylons in the south.
- Open and closed landscape views, tending to be more panoramic on the higher, more exposed upper plateau levels.
- Windmill at Debden not visible from a distance.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, interspersed by the occasional common field which had been later enclosed piecemeal by agreement. Historic settlement is dispersed in nature, with isolated farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along linear greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- Debden Park, of medieval in origin.
- 20th century Carver Barracks.
- Wimbish airfield, which is a relic of World War II.
- Twisting and often partially sunken roads.
- A number of areas of ancient woodland.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture and a large area of grassland close to the airport runways. However, the area does contain 31 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Quendon Wood SSSI (34 hectares) comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats
- Twenty-one CWSs sites also comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland habitat including: Crowney Wood, Harrison's Wood, Peverel's Wood, Howe Wood, Rowney Wood, Scabbard's Wood, Becks Wood, Park Wood, Littley Wood West and East, Horseley Wood, Grove Spring, Hamperden End Wood, Prior's Wood, Broom Wood, Burney Woods, Paysden Wood, Coney Acre Wood, Catherine Grove and Northey Wood.
- Nine CWSs comprising a variety of scrub and grassland habitats including: Fuflen Slade Lane, part of Debden Road, Elder Street, Debden Green/Cutlers Green, Widdington – Waldgraves, Prior's Wood Lane, Bushey Lays, Spring Close and Quendon Park.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements and Carver Barracks which may be detrimental to landscape character and visually intrusive.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include dense woodland patches and copses, which provide structure within the landscape and are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline of areas of the plateau (where panoramic views, often towards settlements can be gained) is visually sensitive to new development, which may interrupt such views. There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from dispersed historic settlement pattern (with isolated farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along linear greens), which is sensitive to potential large-scale development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 30 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, scrub and grassland habitats), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

Conserve - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve the rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that use of materials, and colour, is appropriate to the local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings.
- Conserve open views to historic buildings and local landmarks like churches.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats.

Appendix 6
Historic Settlement Character Assessment,
August 2007 - Extract

SAFFRON WALDEN – June 2007

Introduction.

Saffron Walden is a fine example of a market town. It is of the highest environmental quality with pleasant shopping streets, open spaces and numerous historic buildings of the very highest quality which attract many visitors. Saffron Walden is the largest settlement in the District with the most important shopping centre. Because of its importance and its fine environmental qualities it is therefore particularly important to assess its environmental sensitivity and capacity so as to understand the extent to which it might be able to accommodate such development.

General character.

Saffron Walden is the focal point of the northern part of the District and the largest town in it. The town lies about a mile east of the main road and rail communication corridor to London (about 40 miles) and Cambridge (about 15 miles). The is the administrative and commercial centre of the District and contains many other services including a leisure centre, a library, a museum and a number of schools. The population is currently about 15,000.

The historic core and its relationship with the built up area of the town as a whole.

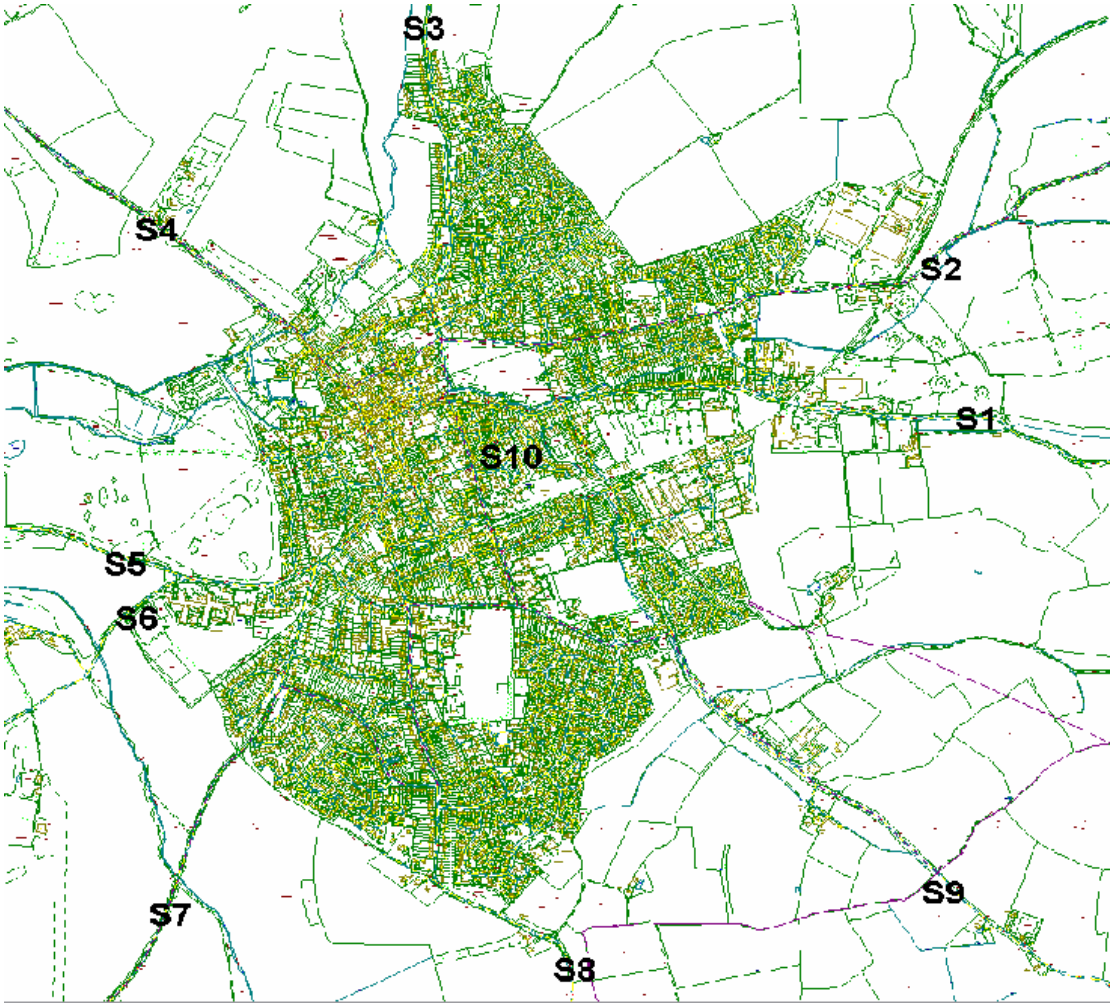
There are about 400 individually listed buildings in the parish of Saffron Walden the great majority of which are in the designated conservation area. About 10 are listed Grade 1 including Audley End House, the former Sun Inn, the 11th century Castle Keep, St Mary's Church and St. Mark's College. Some 30 are listed Grade 11* and these include houses in the village street at Audley End and the 19th century bank (now Barclays) on the Market Place. The majority of listed buildings (40%) are from the 19th century in which the influence of the Gibson family is noted. The 16th century is well represented with about 20% and the 17th century with about 10%. Other buildings of earlier dates are also represented as are several 20th century listed buildings including the water tower on Debden Road.

The town was a flourishing settlement in medieval times and since then and until recent times, growth has been organic with building styles from many periods being very well represented and importantly many of them still located in original and unaltered settings. Important elements in the character of the historic core are the wealth and variety of architectural detailing, the medieval roof line that is very fine indeed, the form and spatial dimensions of street widths and the overall relationship of buildings to urban spaces, including a number of very fine open spaces, brief details of a selection of which are set out below. Another important architectural feature of the town is the use of boundary walls, many dating from the 19th century.

Throughout the conservation area there are trees in abundance, some of which have been made subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

Expressed in percentage terms the historic core of the town centre and Mount pleasant Road represents about 20% of the built up part of the town. In addition to this there is the large conservation area at Audley End that embraces Audley End village and Audley End House.

The quality and general function of landscapes in and adjacent to the town by sector and a broad statement as to the effect of development in each sector.



Map of Saffron Walden showing the sectors.

Sector 1. The Radwinter Road approach from Sewards End.

Quality of Landscape. This approach to the town is characterised by a sunken road that is further enclosed by tree and hedgerow cover. The landscape is arable and undulating with strong hedge boundaries and enclosed by woodland blocks in places. The edge of the town is defined by the Tesco store on the south side and the Willis and Gambier commercial buildings to the north. These large buildings and the manner in which they dominate the local scene together with the traffic they generate and the parked vehicles and signage associated with such establishments makes this area one of the least attractive edges to Saffron Walden. To the east of a track referred to below

are derelict buildings at Turnip Hall Farm. Whilst they are close to the Radwinter Road they are not readily visible from this approach.

To the south of the Tesco store the land rises to Shire Hill Farm and is defined to the west by an access track that is hedge lined for the most part. Whilst the land so defined by this track and the edge of the existing town at the Shire Hill industrial estate to the east is contained it nevertheless appears as part of the open countryside. The outbuildings to Shire Hill Farm are dominant and some are in poor condition. Part of the land near the farm complex is used as horse paddock.

Glimpses of the dominant church spire can be seen even at this distance from it.

Several footpaths and byways exist in the gap between Sewards End and the town.

General function of Landscape. The landscape contains the edge of the town at the bottom of a bowl where there is a change in level and provides a rural approach to the town. Its gap maintains the separate identity of nearby Sewards End on the higher ground to the east.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development in this location would have no detrimental effect on the historic core which is separated from it by modern development. The general effect would be loss of agricultural farmland and to spread urban development onto rising undulating arable farmland of visual quality, resulting in the loss of a rural approach road to the town and narrowing the already narrow gap with the freestanding village of Sewards End.

In broad summary it is considered development in this sector would significantly diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of not only Saffron Walden but potentially also that of the nearby small village of Sewards End. This is especially true in respect of the rural approach road from Sewards End. However it is acknowledged that the large buildings that introduce the town in this location make this edge one of the least attractive of Saffron Walden.

Sector 1 looking north along track accessing Shire Hill Farm.

Overall summary.

The detail is contained in the findings above that should be referred to.
However In broad summary it is considered that:

(1) Development in Sectors 4, Sector 5 and sector 10(a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and in part (g) would have a particularly seriously detrimental effect on parts of the historic core.
(2) The sites identified in the adopted local plan at Ashdon road for employment and housing are appropriate designations in terms of their visual impact in respect of the historic core and the town as a whole.
(3) The visual effect of development between the Kilns development and Rylstone Way would be neutral.
(4) The visual effect of development in other locations would be damaging and would diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness in their respective locations.
(5) The edges of the town at Radwinter Road (Sector 1) Ashdon Road (Sector 2) and Thaxted Road (Sector 9) are the three least attractive edges where commercial buildings, generally of mediocre to poor visual quality, detract from their immediate surroundings.