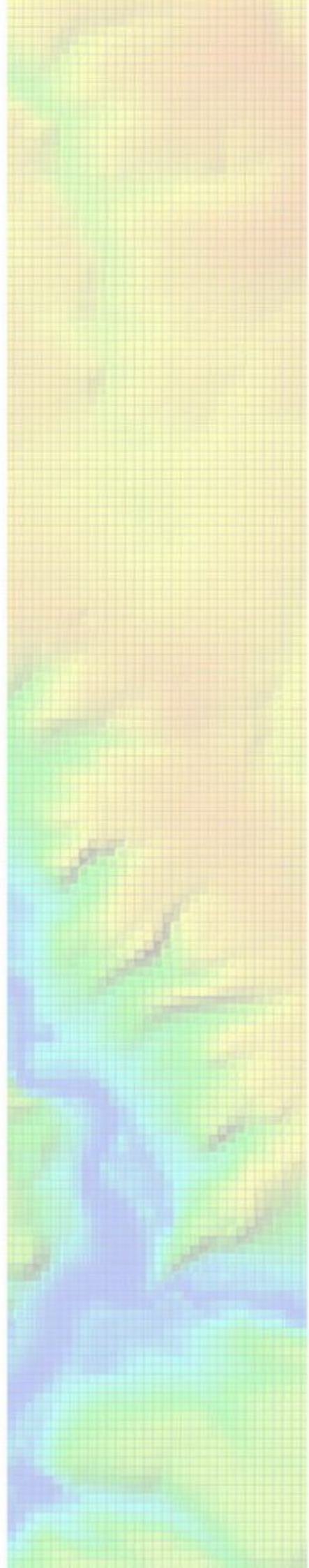


LANDSCAPE & VISUAL APPRAISAL

Land to the east of Henderson Road

Thorpe-le-Soken

Proposed bungalows development



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This document has been produced by Nigel Cowlin Ltd

Nigel Cowlin Ltd is a Landscape Institute Registered Practice with Chartered Landscape Architects specialising in landscape assessment and landscape design issues relating to planning and development. The company's landscape and visual impact assessment experience includes residential schemes ranging from single house developments to large urban extensions, commercial developments, as well as wind and solar energy projects in a variety of contexts. These landscape and visual impact assessment services have been provided in relation to standard planning application cases as well as technical chapters for Environmental Statements and as part of expert witness services for planning inquiries.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out landscape and visual appraisal findings in relation to a proposed bungalows development. It is intended to inform the consideration of landscape and visual issues as part of the planning appraisal of the proposal.

2. Approach

- 2.1 This landscape & visual appraisal report has been informed by desk and field study carried out and interpreted by Chartered Landscape Architects experienced in landscape assessment and landscape design issues relating to planning and development.

- 2.2 Desk study work completed:

- Review of local landscape character publications and any attributed value/quality for the local landscape setting;
- Review of local planning policy context checking for statutory and local planning designations regarding protection of the landscape;
- Review of nearby heritage assets such as Parks & Gardens, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments; and
- Zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) mapping (study area coverage: 5km radius from site centre).

- 2.3 Field survey work completed:

- Site visit to confirm form and features of site;
- Observation of context to review and refine understanding of local landscape character;
- Checking potential visibility of the proposed development from public vantage points (guided by the above ZTV mapping); and
- Collection of viewpoint photography records.

3. The proposal

- 3.1 A development of 28 bungalows, accessed to the rear (east) of an earlier development of 98 dwellings off Landermere Road, on the north side of Thorpe-le-Soken. This report has been prepared based on proposals as detailed on Tim Snow Architects Proposed Development Site Plan ref: 942/01H.

4. The site & setting

Description of the site

- 4.1 The earlier development (98 houses) is Henderson Road, Ronson Drive, Viscount Way, Chaplin drive, Ellis Road and Cross Way (Outline planning permission 16/01169/OUT; Reserved matters 17/01482/DET and from now on referred to as the Henderson Road development). The Henderson Road development started construction in 2018 and is almost completed. It is accessed off Landermere Road, a short way north-east of older houses 78 & 97 Landermere Road. The Henderson Road development occupies what was a green field directly alongside, and wrapping around behind the older houses fronting the south side of Landermere Road. It also extends into part of what was another small field behind Beldams Close and Rolph Close. The now proposed bungalows development site is the remainder of this field and a thin triangle of the field to the north. It lies alongside the east side of the Henderson Road development.

- 4.2 The southern field area is uncropped and the north field is in arable crop production. There is a tall conifer hedge separating these two field areas. The south field is otherwise enclosed by hedging with a number of sizeable Oak specimens. The north field area is bordered to the west by a field hedge separating it from the housing development but it has an open aspect to the east.
- 4.3 The south field is generally level and sits just above the 25m contour. The north field area slopes away from the village northwards down to around the 20m contour.

Description of the site surroundings

- 4.4 The site lies on the northern edge of Thorpe-le-Soken, which is a village on the B1033 road leading to the coastal towns of Frinton and Walton. Landermere Road (B1414) heads north out of Thorpe-le-Soken and, as mentioned above, the site lies behind (east of) the recent Henderson Road development.
- 4.5 To the south the site borders on to an overgrown area of land at the rear of the Elm Farm Caravan Park (accessed from Frinton Road). Static caravans within the park are around 100m south of this boundary. Around 80m to the south-east is Byng Crescent and Byng Close. Around 240m to the east is a small woodland copse. Otherwise, the outlying countryside is arable fields leading away from the site to the east and north-east, dropping towards the Hamford Water estuary area and Horsey Island.

5. Landscape context

Landscape designations

- 5.1 There used to be a Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation located approximately 1.3km north of Thorpe-le-Soken. This was an old Essex County Structure Plan and early Tendring Local Plans designation. It is now a defunct policy.

Heritage designations

- 5.2 There are no listed buildings or other built heritage designations near to the site. The nearest are Listed Buildings within the heart of the village and the Conservation Area centred on the historic core of the village, some way from the site. The village Conservation Area also encompasses the Thorpe Hall Registered Park and Garden but this is in on the other side of the settlement. There are also some outlying listed farmhouses in the countryside to the north, though all of these are around 1km or more away from the site.

Other constraints

- 5.3 There is a SSSI designation across Hamford Water. The nearest part of this is approximately 1.5km to the north-east of the site. Hamford Water is a broad estuarine basin comprising tidal creeks, intertidal mud and sand flats, saltmarshes, islands, beaches and marsh grasslands. As well as the SSSI designation there are several other high level natural environment designations across various parts of Hamford Water.

Public rights of way

- 5.4 There is only one public right of way nearby. This is Thorpe Footpath 7 which traces the northern edge of Thorpe to the west of Landermere Road and cuts a diagonal route across the field on the north-west side of Landermere Road. Other outlying footpaths include Thorpe Footpath 19. This is the sea wall path on the edge of the nearest part of Hamford Water.

Landscape character & sensitivity

- 5.5 The site is located within National Character Area 111, North Thames Basin (NCA111). This is a national scale assessment which provides a broad scale overview of landscape character. The detail of more local scale landscape character assessment studies is of more relevance to the appraisal of development proposals of this scale.
- 5.6 The East of England Landscape Framework (Landscape East 2010) places the site within the Lowland Settled Claylands landscape character type. As with the national scale assessment above, this is a very broad scale landscape assessment providing some overview, but it does not provide the accuracy or detail relevant to the scale of the development and context concerned.
- 5.7 The site is located within the Tendring Plain (E3) landscape character area (LCA) as defined by Essex County Council's 2002 Landscape Character Assessment produced by Chris Blandford Associates. Key Characteristics include:
- *'Large flat farmland plateau, dissected by occasional small narrow valleys.*
 - *Arable land use dominates, but with some pasture and orchards.*
 - *Straight and regular field patterns with mainly low trimmed hedgerows.*
 - *Widely dispersed blocks of woodland/small copses, sparse tree cover in the north.*
 - *Former heathland character near Colchester.'*
- 5.8 Tendring District Council's landscape character assessment (LUC 2001) identifies the site as lying partly with the Clacton and the Sokens Clay Plateau area 8B and partly within the Hamford Coastal Slopes area 3A.
- 5.9 Key characteristics recorded for the Sokens Clay Plateau 8B character area are:
- *'Gently undulating agricultural plateau, drained by the Holland Brook Valley System, in the south-east of Tendring.*
 - *Underlain by a solid geology of London Clay which gives rise to slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils and standing water.*
 - *Low, gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees divide arable fields.*
 - *Remnants of ancient oak and sweet chestnut coppice woodland, including Weeleyhall Wood, one of the finest woods in the district.*
 - *Good access provided by the A133, B1033 and B1441 which form a backbone for the ribbon development that dominates the areas around Clacton and Frinton.*
 - *Urban fringe character enhanced by presence of nurseries, caravan parks, paddocks, holiday parks and industrial estates on the edges of Clacton and Frinton.*
 - *Thorpe-le-Soken is a rural settlement, important in medieval times, and has a wealth of historic buildings.'*
- 5.10 The character of the area is described as:
- 'This agricultural plateau landscape is intensively cultivated and influenced by urban fringe land uses. The presence of extensive areas of built development, urban fringe land uses around Clacton and the*

merging of settlements has masked the rural character of the landscape and the historic settlement pattern. The overall landscape character is weak, although could even be considered to be poor in some urban fringe locations.'

5.11 The condition of the area is described as:

'The loss of landscape features such as unimproved pastures, village greens, hedgerows and ancient woodlands as a result of agricultural intensification, built development and Dutch elm disease means that landscape diversity and condition has been declining over many years. Within the urban fringe surrounding Clacton, development has frequently severed parcels of agricultural land and these marginal areas remain unmanaged/ neglected or have been converted to amenity uses such as horse paddocks.'

5.12 The sensitivity of the landscape is described as:

'The landscape is visually sensitive as a result of its open and rural character and long views. However, the woodlands and gently undulating topography provide some opportunities to integrate development. Sensitive features include the remaining ancient woodlands, village greens, historic lanes and hedgerow oaks. Areas of particular sensitivity to built development are those on the edge of the plateau towards the Hamford Coastal Slopes (3A), St. Osyth Coastal Slopes and overlooking the Holland Valley System (6D).

5.13 The Clacton and the Sokens Clay Plateau area has the landscape management strategy of Strengthen and Enhance:

'The Clacton and the Sokens Clay Plateau is one of the most densely developed rural landscapes in Tendring and has also suffered decline of landscape features. The strategy for this plateau landscape should be to strengthen and enhance the character of the individual villages and the rural wooded character of the landscape. There are particular opportunities to enhance the urban fringe around Frinton and Clacton through the creation of a new landscape character.'

5.14 Key characteristics recorded for the Hamford Coastal Slopes 3A character area are:

- *'Gently sloping land encircling, and forming the setting, the open marshes of Hamford Water.*
- *Low, scrubby and intermittent hedgerows divide regimented fields typical of late enclosure.*
- *Scattered farmsteads and manorial halls form a dispersed settlement pattern.*
- *Kirby-le-Soken is an historic settlement, located along the southern edge of Hamford Water.*
- *Outskirts of Harwich and Frinton continue to expand onto the coastal slopes overlooking Hamford Water.*
- *Panoramic views over Hamford Water towards Harwich.'*

5.15 The character of the area is described as:

'The Hamford Coastal Slopes exhibits characteristics typical of the Coastal Slopes landscape type. This includes the smooth concave landform, rural agricultural landscape with manor halls and open panoramic view across Hamford Water. The gently shelving slopes provide a cohesive visual unit that form an important setting to the Hamford Water marshes (1D and 2D). Overall character is considered to be strong.'

5.16 The condition of the area is described as:

'The Hamford Coastal Slopes is an intensively cultivated landscape. Despite the severe loss of elms in the 1960s and intensification of agriculture, landscape condition can be described as good.'

5.17 The sensitivity of the landscape is described as:

'This landscape character area is highly sensitive to any change as a result of its visibility and its importance as a setting for Hamford Water. It is particularly sensitive to built development that would affect the open views and sense of remoteness. An area of particular sensitivity is the crest of the slope which forms the skyline from Hamford Water.'

5.18 The Hamford Coastal Slopes area has the landscape management strategy of Conserve:

'The Hamford Coastal Slopes forms a rural setting for Hamford Water. The overall landscape strategy for this sensitive rural landscape should be to conserve the existing rural character and panoramic views over Hamford Water.'

5.19 The Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation Project 2008 assessed the Historic Environment of Tendring using character assessments of the urban, landscape and archaeological resource of the district. The results of these studies were then combined to create large Historic Environment Character Areas (HECA). The site is located within HECA 6: South East Tendring Plateau and the Sokens. These HECA's are broken down into smaller Historic Environment Characterisation Zones (HECZ). The site is located on the boundary of HECZ 6.3 The Sokens and HECZ 6.4 Great Holland Area.

5.20 This study describes the following common historic landscape characteristics for both these areas:

- *'They comprise an agricultural landscape, open in aspect, which slopes down to either the marsh-edge of Hamford Water to the north, or the Holland Brook to the south.'*
- *'The fieldscape comprises a mixture of rectilinear fields of ancient origin and some later enclosure, this has suffered from moderate boundary loss. Some early boundary loss may be associated with the creation of the Thorpe Hall parkland.'*
- *'The modern landscape retains much of this historic pattern, although Thorpe-le-Soken has expanded considerably in size. This expansion has its origin in the inter-war period, with the initial construction of streets for a planned 'New Town' (subsequently abandoned), as well as more piecemeal introduction of 'plotland style' development. These roads are still present within the modern street-plan, but have been infilled with modern housing.'*
- *'The name Thorpe-le-Soken indicates Scandinavian origins of the 10-11th century in the area.'*

5.21 Thorpe-le-Soken occupies a ridge of higher ground between the broad valley of Hamford Water to the north and valley of Holland Brook to the south. This ridge of higher ground is accurately described by the Tendring landscape character assessment in its description of the Clacton and The Sokens Clay Plateau. The north-eastern edges of Thorpe are on the cusp of the change from this clay plateau landscape into the broad bowl valley of Hamford Water. This area is accurately described in the Tendring LCA study in its description of the Hamford Coastal Slopes.

- 5.22 The local landscape setting is attractive countryside with the benefit of some positive attributes, but there is not an accumulation of unusual or special attributes, or any individual elements so influential, such that would be indicative of a notably elevated landscape value. For the purposes of this LVA study, it is an area of 'Medium' landscape value. ordinarily attractive countryside. The characteristics and qualities found are therefore not indicative of a 'valued landscape' as referred to in paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019).
- 5.23 The landscape of, and immediately surrounding, the Hamford Water estuary is more distinctive with clear natural heritage interests and perceptual appeal. Accordingly, for the purposes of this LVA study, it is an area of 'High' landscape value.

6. Visual context

Visibility & prominence

- 6.1 The zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) mapping exercise undertaken (see Figure 6) suggests that there may be a splay of potential visibility for the proposed development to the north-east, across the valley of Hamford Water and onto the south-east facing slopes of Beaumont-cum-Moze parish.
- 6.2 Field survey work demonstrated that visibility of the development would be considerably reduced from that suggested in the ZTV mapping. The Henderson Road development would prevent any visibility from directly to the north and more generally to the west, whilst subtleties of landform and land cover reduces visibility elsewhere to a very few publicly accessible viewpoints to the north-east. There is also a view from Damant's Farm Lane around 1km to the east.

7. Landscape & visual appraisal

Summary of physical changes

- 7.1 This proposal would form an advancement of built form to the east of the recent Henderson Road development. However, as single storey development, it would be lower than the predominantly two-storey built form of Henderson Road.
- 7.2 A short section of conifer hedging would be removed, which crosses the centre of the site, but there would be no losses of landscape fabric, such as trees and field hedges, of any value.
- 7.3 The southern section would be a direct extension of the Henderson Road development, occupying the remaining portion of a small, enclosed field that the Henderson Road development has already pushed into. It would be enclosed along its eastern rural edge by good quality field hedging and trees. The northern section would be set beyond the natural boundary to the Henderson Road development, which is formed by and established field hedge. The eastern edge of this section of the proposed bungalows development is open and would need to be formed by new boundary treatments. It is assumed that these will be determined through pre-commencement planning condition and would likely be required to be hedged boundaries.
- 7.4 Small public open spaces would be provided to the south of the development and in the centre. These would be continuations of open spaces provided within and skirting the edge of the Henderson Road development. There would also be a surface water attenuation basin within an open area to the north of the site.

Landscape character issues

- 7.5 The local landscape forming the immediate setting to the north of Thorpe-le-Soken is of medium landscape value (see paragraph 5.24 above).
- 7.6 The susceptibility of a local landscape setting to a type of change depends on the degree of accord it has with the established characteristics of the area and how likely this sort of change would be to erode or compromise the established character. The susceptibility of this local landscape setting to new, single storey, housing development adjacent to the east side of the Henderson Road development, is low. This is because the Henderson Road development provides an established development edge context and backdrop. A small amount of additional, single storey, development alongside may be accommodated without resulting in notable intrusion, and the established character of this landscape would not be notably eroded or compromised.
- 7.7 The size or scale of landscape effect is determined by the prominence and/or importance of features or characteristics that may be subject to change because of the development. In this case, there would be no notable losses of existing landscape features and the proposed development would not be of a particularly prominent nature within the landscape. The size/scale of local landscape effect would therefore be low.
- 7.8 The geographic extent of landscape effect is determined by the relative spread and distribution to which the changes are evident or expressed within the landscape. In this case the effects are predicted to be notable from within the immediate location and a few localised areas within the wider local landscape. This represents a low geographic extent.
- 7.9 A medium local landscape value and low susceptibility are indicative of a low landscape sensitivity in this case. A low size/scale of effect in the local landscape and a low geographic extent of effect are indicative of a low magnitude of effect for this development. Overall, these factors suggest that the proposed bungalows development would affect local landscape character to a minor degree. The qualities of the rural setting to the north of Thorpe-le-Soken and the contribution of the settlement as an incidence in the landscape would not be notably harmed by this development.
- 7.10 There would be negligible effect on the more outlying landscape area of Hamford Water.

Visual amenity issues

- 7.11 Visual receptors identified to have potential effect from this proposed development are:
- People in the public spaces (streets and public open spaces) within the adjacent parts of Henderson Road development;
 - Occupiers and visitors to properties within the adjacent parts of Henderson Road development;
 - People travelling along Damant's Farm Lane, around 1km to the east;
 - People walking Thorpe-le-Soken Footpath 19, on sea wall east of Quay Farm, around 1.5km to the north-east; and
 - People travelling along Harwich Road, east of Beaumont and around 3km to the north-east.

- 7.12 For all visual receptors, except those from within the adjacent Henderson Road development, the magnitude of change in the view would be negligible. At Harwich Road, east of Beaumont, the development is at more than 3km distance and it would be seen as a very marginal addition to the scene. Similarly, for views from Footpath 19, the development would be largely hidden and the composition of the view, incorporating the Henderson Road development, would be hardly altered. From Damant's Farm Lane, the development would also be largely hidden and if visible it would be seen within the immediate backdrop and context of the Henderson Road development. As a result, the overall composition of this view would also be largely unaltered. With this negligible magnitude of effect, the overall level of effect for these visual receptors would also be negligible, regardless of the sensitivity of each as individual visual receptors.
- 7.13 For occupiers and visitors to the properties in the adjacent edges of the Henderson Road development, the magnitude of change in the scene would be more obvious. The existing outlook into undeveloped green field spaces and rural scene would, in most places, be replaced by a view directly into further housing. This would represent a high magnitude of visual effect as the changes would be highly prominent, affecting a large proportion of the available view in this direction, and the source of visual change would be directly alongside the visual receptor location. These should also be considered to have high susceptibility as visual receptors. However, this is greatly moderated by the low value given to private views. This reflects that in planning terms there is no policy or statutory protection of views from private property, and accordingly little weight is normally given to the loss or changes in the outlook from private visual receptors. So long as the changes would not compromise normal expectations of privacy for a dwelling, and the visual changes would not be overpowering to the extent that they would compromise the basic function and amenity of that property as a private dwelling, the loss of a view or outlook from private residences should not be a significant material consideration in the overall planning balance. This is not the case here.
- 7.14 For people in the public spaces (streets and public open spaces) within the adjacent parts of Henderson Road development, the view out over the site is a public view, but one that is largely incidental and has no notable focus or association. It is therefore a view of low value. People here will be engaged in either getting from place to place or recreational activities related to living within a housing estate. There is no great expectation for a scenic outlook and being entirely contained within housing development would not be at odds with normal expectations for these kinds of spaces. As such these are visual receptors of low or medium susceptibility to visual changes. Overall, these are therefore visual receptors of low sensitivity but experiencing a high magnitude of visual change (as noted above). Accordingly, there would be a medium level of effect for these visual receptors.

Mitigation suggestions

- 7.15 The open parts of the eastern edge of the proposed development would need to be formed by new boundary treatments. It would be appropriate for this to be hedging with trees where possible. This would help to provide a more softened and in-keeping rural edge for this part of the development.

8. Summary & conclusions:

- 8.1 This study provides a brief appraisal of potential landscape and visual impacts that would occur because of the proposed development of 28 bungalows adjacent to Henderson Road, on the north edge of Thorpe-le-Soken.

- 8.2 It reviews how this development might fit into the setting and how this may affect the character of the countryside and the appearance of the settlement in the landscape. It also addresses the potential visual effects in relation to adjacent and nearby visual receptor locations, such as footpaths, roads, and nearby houses.
- 8.3 The basic findings are as follows:
- The local landscape setting, on the north edge of Thorpe-le-Soken, is medium value, ordinarily attractive countryside. Further north, the landscape of, and immediately surrounding, the Hamford Water estuary is more distinctive with clear natural heritage interests and perceptual appeal.
 - Effect on local landscape character is predicted to be minor, with negligible effect on the more outlying landscape area of Hamford Water.
 - One instance of medium visual effect is noted for people using the public spaces with the adjacent edges of the Henderson Road development.
 - Negligible levels of visual effect are recorded for all other identified visual receptor locations.
- 8.4 The Henderson Road development would provide an established development edge context and backdrop for this bungalows development. The proposed amount of additional, single storey, development alongside could be accommodated without resulting in notable intrusion, and the established character and appearance of this area should not be notably eroded or compromised.
- 8.5 The qualities of the rural setting to the north of Thorpe-le-Soken and the contribution of the settlement as an incidence in the landscape would not be notably harmed by this development.
- 8.6 The level of landscape and visual effects likely to result from the proposed development would be modest for a development of this nature, indicating that this location has a good degree of suitability for such a development.

APPENDIX A

Methodology & criteria for Landscape & Visual Appraisal (LVA)

Purpose

- a2. LVIA can be employed in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment work where it may form a technical chapter in the Environmental Statement. This is considered the formal application of LVIA. Landscape and visual impact assessment is also often provided to assist with the appraisal of otherwise ordinary planning cases. These situations are considered to represent the informal application of LVIA and they are commonly referred to as landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVA).
- a3. This methodology framework has been developed for use in Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) relating to common development proposal scenarios going through ordinary planning processes.

Best practice guidance

- a4. The methodology set out here has been developed with reference to industry best practice guidance for landscape and visual impact assessment as set out in 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (Third Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in 2013 (GLVIA3). The principles, approaches and terminology employed in this methodology are consistent with that as set out and used in GLVIA3.

LVIA/LVA theory overview

- a5. GLVIA3 provides the following basic definition of LVIA:
*'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity'*¹
- a6. There are two linked but separately assessed components to LVIA/LVA:
- The assessment of landscape effects, i.e. the effects on the landscape as a resource, whereby the landscape is broken down at different scales into defined and identifiable character areas (grouped and described as landscape receptors); and
 - The assessment of visual effects, i.e. the effects on views and visual amenity as experienced by people (grouped and described as visual receptors).
- a7. Step by step flow diagrams for the process of assessing landscape effects and visual effects are provided as Figures A1 & A2 below. These are based on figures 5.1 & 6.1 within GLVIA3 (but there is some adjustment to tie more closely with magnitude of effect factors as set out in the text of GLVIA3).
- a8. These processes are designed to inform judgements about the nature and seriousness of effects. It is common environmental practice to determine the level of effect by combining judgements regarding the 'sensitivity' of receptors and the 'magnitude' of change, and from those factors make a judgement as to the seriousness (significance or level) of the effect. This methodology follows this approach and further utilises the relevant factors outlined in GLVIA3 for informing the determination of sensitivity and magnitude in relation to landscape effects and visual effects.

¹ GLVIA3, page 4, paragraph 1.1

- a9. In relation to the assessment of landscape effects the following factors should be taken into account:
- The size or scale of change in the landscape;
 - The geographical extent over which the landscape effect will be felt;
 - The duration and reversibility of the effects;
 - The ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the changes with regard to maintaining the baseline condition or in relation to the aims of adopted landscape policy or strategies (this is known as landscape receptor susceptibility); and
 - The relative value or status of the landscape receptor as indicated by landscape designations and/or an appraisal of recognised qualitative criteria.
- a10. Similarly, for the assessment of visual effects the following factors are relevant considerations:
- The size or scale of change in the view;
 - The geographical extent of visual effect;
 - The duration and reversibility of the effect;
 - The occupation or activity of people at a particular location and the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on views and visual amenity (visual receptor susceptibility); and
 - The relative value attached to those views, perhaps indicated by planning designations, literary references or simply the numbers of people benefitting from the view.
- a11. The last two points in each of the above lists generally relate to judgements concerning the sensitivity of receptors and the other three points align more with judgements of magnitude of effect.

Figure A1 - Flow diagram for assessment of landscape effects

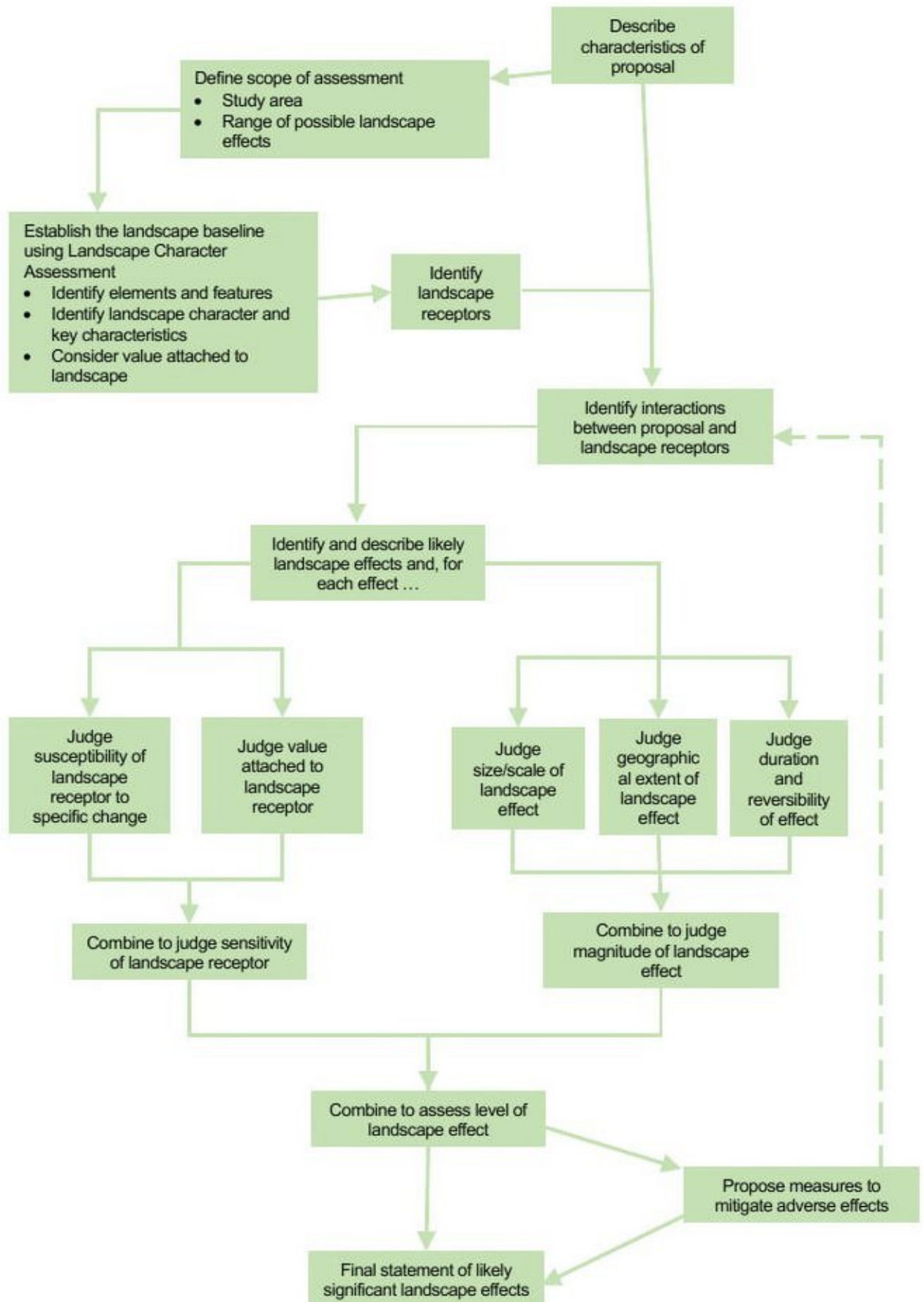
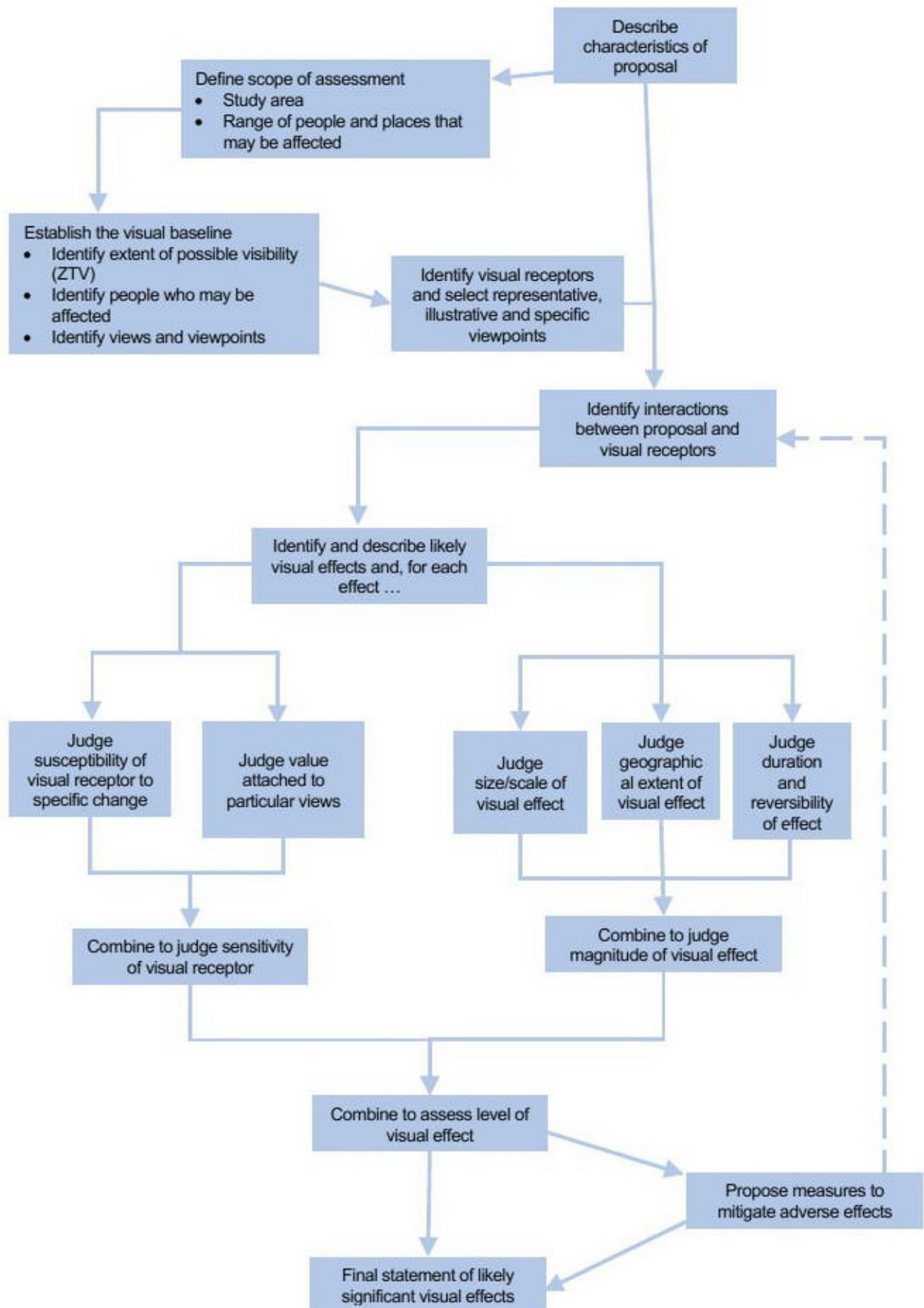


Figure A2 - Flow diagram for assessment of visual effects



Tailored methodology

- a13. As identified, in the LVIA theory overview above, sensitivity and magnitude judgements are two factors that in combination assist with consideration and determination of overall grading of the level of effects. Similarly, judgements of sensitivity and magnitude are each informed by two or more other factors. The principal focus of this tailored methodology is to provide guidance on what indicators should be considered and how to understand the level or relative grading of these indicators when forming judgements about each of these factors. The methodology also provides guidance on issues to consider when combining different factors to form sensitivity and magnitude judgements, as well as when combining sensitivity and magnitude judgements to inform overall assessment of the seriousness or level of the effect.
- a14. The guidance on indicators to assist with consideration of factors leading to judgements about sensitivity and magnitude is set out in table form in the next section of this methodology framework. These are organised into different sections for landscape effects and visual effects.

Note on subjectivity

- a15. LVIA work is not a simple objective scientific discipline. The formulation of methodologies can only go so far in providing a framework attempting to maximise transparency and consistency in the complex processes involved. Professional judgement is therefore a very important part of LVIA work and there will inevitably be a degree of subjectivity in making LVIA judgements.

Note on flexibility of approach

- a16. The tables provided with this methodology identify typical indicators for judgement levels relating to the different consideration factors leading to decisions about magnitude and sensitivity. These indicators are not likely to address all scenarios and are intended only as a starting point and guide.

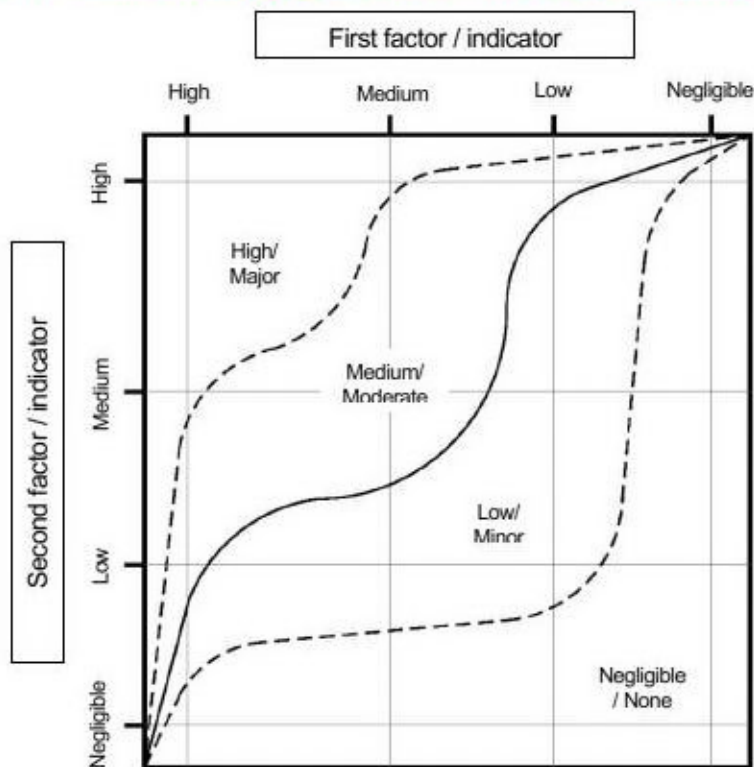
Note on duration and reversibility

- a17. Consideration of the duration and reversibility of effects (one of the potential factors relating to magnitude of effects) is not included in this methodology. This is because for common development scenarios, for which this methodology is directed, there is little variance in terms of duration and reversibility. Landscape mitigation measures may reduce or modify the effects over time, but the fundamental changes remain. The benefits and implications of mitigation measures are specifically addressed in LVIA study and lead to moderated determinations of level of effect at timeframes representing stages of growth and maturity of any landscape mitigation measures. As this is separately dealt with in the study, and there are no remaining aspects of duration and reversibility that need further consideration, this methodology provides no further reference to these matters.

Note on combining factors

- a18. The overall level of effect is derived from a combination of judgements about sensitivity of receptor and magnitude of change/effect. In this methodology framework sensitivity and magnitude are likewise derived from a combination of two factors. At both stages of the process the same principles apply in the combination of two factors for the outcome in another. Most importantly, it is acknowledged that the combination of two factors to determine a resultant judgement should not be assumed a linear relationship with equal weighting or balancing of the two factors. The two factors are indicators of a judgement, but in each case a discerning assessment is required as one factor may outweigh the other and vice versa. Where both factors generally accord, the resultant judgement will most likely be clear and definitive. However, where the two factors are at odds, with one regarded as high and the other low, the overall judgement requires more consideration. In these situations, it may be that a balanced averaging of the two would be appropriate, but in some cases one factor may outweigh another. Professional judgement supported by rational argument must be applied. The matrix below provides an illustration of this more fluid relationship between assessment factors or indicators in the determination of overall LVIA judgements. This is based on a similar diagram that was provided in the 2011 IEMA Special Report - The State of Environmental Impact Assessment Practice in the UK.

Figure A3 - Matrix showing judgement from two factors/indicators



N.B.

Judgement of sensitivity and magnitude are derived from factors/indicators that are represented in this methodology on a four-band verbal scale. The same four band verbal scale is used for the resultant judgements of sensitivity and magnitude (Negligible/Low/Medium/High). Whereas a different four band scale is employed to distinguish overall levels of effect (Negligible/Minor/Moderate/Major).

Note on significance / level of effect

- a19. For the purposes of EIA it is necessary to identify whether effect is likely to be environmentally significant. As this methodology is not intended for use in EIA development scenarios, and to avoid any confusion of interpretation, use of the term 'significant' or 'significance' is largely avoided.

Note on bias – adverse or beneficial

- a20. Landscape and visual effects can be of an adverse or beneficial nature. The methods for assessing level effect outlined in this methodology are not concerned with the bias of the effect. This is a separate concern and it is sometimes an entirely subjective matter. However, the following general rules are suggested:
- a21. Beneficial landscape effects will relate to the introduction of elements/characteristics that would be considered complimentary to (enhance/reinforce/restore) what is attractive and distinctive about the character of the given area, or the removal of elements/characteristics that would be considered at odds with or degrading to the attractive and distinctive qualities of landscape character in the area. Conversely, negative landscape effects will relate to the introduction of elements/characteristics which would be considered at odds with or degrading to the qualities of landscape character in the area, or removal of elements/characteristics which would be considered complimentary to (enhance/reinforce/restore) qualities of landscape character in the area. There may also be scope for effects of a neutral nature if the subject elements/characteristics are not notably contributing to nor detracting from what is attractive about the landscape in the area.
- a22. Beneficial visual effects will relate to the introduction of features which would be considered complimentary to (enhance/reinforce/restore) what is attractive or special about a given scene composition, or the removal of features which would be considered at odds with or degrading to the attractive qualities of the scene composition. Conversely, negative visual effects will relate to the introduction of elements/characteristics that would be considered at odds with or degrading to the attractive qualities of the scene composition, or removal of elements/characteristics that would be considered complimentary to (enhance/reinforce/restore) the attractiveness of the scene composition. There may also be scope for effects of a neutral nature if the subject elements/characteristics are not notably contributing to nor detracting from attractive qualities of the scene composition.
- a23. In the absence of any qualification on effect bias, it can be assumed that the change(s) described represent adverse effects.

Landscape resource / receptor sensitivity factors**Table A1 – Value of landscape resource**

level/grade	indicators
High	A landscape exhibiting particularly notable qualities in relation to recognised indicators of landscape value (see note below) and no notable detracting aspects. (Likely to be recognised by a national level landscape designation such as National Park or AONB, or in the case of more localised occurrences, a local designation such as Special Landscape Area. Otherwise, likely to be readily recognised as very attractive countryside).
Medium	A landscape exhibiting some qualities in relation to recognised indicators of landscape value (see note below) and with few detracting aspects. (Likely to be areas of what would be considered ordinarily attractive countryside).
Low	A landscape not exhibiting particular qualities in relation to recognised indicators of landscape value (see note below), and/or with some notable detracting aspects. (Likely to be areas of what could be considered less attractive or less interesting countryside).
Negligible	A landscape, more influenced by detracting aspects than any notable qualities. (Likely to be areas of what would be commonly regarded as unattractive or degraded countryside).

Note:

In the absence of, or as supplement to landscape designations, recognised factors which may be indicative of landscape value include: natural heritage interests, cultural heritage interests, landscape condition, associations, distinctiveness, recreational opportunities, perceptual appeal (scenic / wildness & tranquillity), functional role (this list is from Table 1 of LI TGN 02/21).

Table A2 – Susceptibility of landscape resource

level/grade	indicators
High	Where the type of changes that would be brought by the proposals being considered would be strongly discordant with the established character of the area and even small-scale intervention of this nature would be a notable intrusion and would erode or compromise the established character.
Medium	Where the type of changes that would be brought by the proposals being considered would be moderately discordant such that small intervention of this nature may be accommodated, but more than this would result in a notable intrusion and would erode or compromise the established character.
Low	Where the type of changes that would be brought by the proposals being considered would be of a marginally discordant nature and only large-scale intervention of this nature would result in notable intrusion such that the established character would be eroded or compromised.
Negligible	Where the type of changes that would be brought by the proposals being considered would be able to be accommodated or would be in keeping as interventions of this nature would not be likely to cause any notable degradation of the established character.

Note:

Strongly distinctive landscapes of consistent and harmonious characteristics will tend to have higher susceptibility to change as a wider range of interventions would tend to be discordant and more notably intrusive. Also, a specific role or function of a landscape, perhaps in terms of providing a separation/key gap between settlements, or a setting to an important place or feature, could be a defining aspect of an area and this may therefore influence landscape susceptibility judgements.

Landscape effect magnitude factors**Table A3 – Size/scale of landscape effect**

level/grade	indicators
High	<p>Loss of highly prominent elements/characteristics of the landscape which are critical to its distinctive character and the scale of change in the landscape is to an extent that the landscape is fundamentally altered in a given area.</p> <p>Or introduction of new elements/characteristics that would be highly prominent within the landscape and the scale of change in the landscape is to a degree that the landscape is fundamentally altered in a given area.</p>
Medium	<p>Loss of moderately prominent elements/characteristics of the landscape which provide moderate contribution to its distinctive character and the scale of change in the landscape is to an extent that the landscape is notably altered in a given area.</p> <p>Or introduction of new elements/characteristics that would be moderately prominent within the landscape and the scale of change in the landscape is to a degree that the landscape is notably altered in a given area.</p>
Low	<p>Loss of less prominent element/characteristics of the landscape but which provide some contribution to character and the scale of change is to an extent that the landscape is slightly altered in a given area.</p> <p>Or introduction of new elements/characteristics that would be of a less prominent nature within the landscape and the scale of change is to a degree that the landscape is slightly altered in a given area.</p>
None/ Negligible	<p>No notable loss or only loss of elements/characteristics of the landscape which are not notably prominent and/or do not notably contribute to character of the landscape, such that the landscape is hardly altered in a given area.</p> <p>Or no notable introduction or only introduction of new elements/characteristics in the landscape that would not be notably prominent, and the landscape is hardly altered in a given area.</p>

Note:

Elements or characteristics lost or introduced can be either of a physical or aesthetic/perceptual nature.

Table A4 – Geographical extent of landscape effect

level/grade	indicators
High	Landscape effects are evident or expressed widely at the scale of landscape types or character areas.
Medium	Landscape effects are evident or expressed moderately within the local landscape.
Low	Landscape effects are evident or expressed in more than one landscape parcel or location, but do not extend to more than a few localised areas within the wider local landscape.
Negligible	Landscape effects are contained within one landscape parcel or location and to no more than a very localised nature beyond that.

Visual receptor sensitivity factors**Table A5 – Value attached to a view**

level/grade	indicators
High	A key public view to or from a designated heritage asset or valued landscape. A celebrated public view with cultural relevance and recognition.
Medium	A well-known and popular view to or from a notable public place; a view that is likely to be noted by and a part of the public/community consciousness of the area. A lesser but still noteworthy public view to or from a designated heritage asset or valued landscape.
Low	A public view, but one that is largely incidental and has no notable focus or association. A private view to or from a designated heritage asset or valued landscape, or otherwise of cultural relevance and recognition.
Negligible	An ordinary, incidental, private view.

Table A6 – Susceptibility of visual receptor

level/grade	indicators
High	People engaged in recreation where scenic appreciation of the outdoor environment is an important aspect of the activity (walking rural footpaths for example). Residents at home are also considered to have high susceptibility as a visual receptor.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes, where scenic appreciation is a secondary or more incidental aspect of the activity.
Low	People engaged in recreation, where scenic appreciation is of little or no relevance (playing sport for example). People at their place of work are also generally considered to have low susceptibility as a visual receptor.
Negligible	N/A (this category is rarely used for visual receptor susceptibility, as whatever the activity engaged, if there is a scenic outlook it is likely to be appreciated in some sense or degree).

Note:

It should be noted that although residents at home are considered to have high susceptibility as visual receptors, this is greatly moderated by the low value given to private views. This reflects that in planning terms there is no policy or statutory protection of views from private property, and accordingly little weight is normally given to the loss or changes in the outlook from private visual receptors. So long as the changes would not compromise normal expectations of privacy for a dwelling, and the visual changes would not be overpowering to the extent that they would compromise the basic function and amenity of that property as a private dwelling, the loss of a view or outlook from private residences should not be a significant material consideration in the overall planning balance and therefore should not be given greater weight in LVIA work.

Visual effect magnitude factors**Table A7 – Size/scale of visual effect**

level/grade	indicators
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The addition of features in the view that would be highly prominent/discordant in the existing scene composition. The addition of features in the view that would be of a particularly large scale or exhibited to an extent that a particularly large proportion of the available view would be altered. The loss of highly prominent features. The loss of features of a particularly large scale or across a particularly large proportion of the available view.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The addition of features in the view that would be moderately prominent/discordant in the existing scene composition. The addition of features that would be of a moderate scale or would affect a moderate proportion of the view. The loss of moderately prominent features The loss of features of a moderate scale or across a moderate proportion of the available view.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The addition of features that would not be particularly prominent/discordant in the existing scene composition. The addition of features in the view that would be of a small scale or affecting a small proportion of the view. The loss of not particularly prominent features in the existing scene. The loss of features of a small scale or across a small proportion of the available view.
None/ Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No notable addition or loss of features in the view and the existing scene composition would not be notably altered.

Note:

The relative time over which the visual receptor would be exposed to the visual change would also moderate considerations of visual effect size/scale; a quick glimpsed view would represent a smaller change than one which the viewer is exposed to for a prolonged period.

Table A8 - Geographical extent of visual effect

level/grade	indicators
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual changes extend beyond a single aspect into a panoramic field of view Source of visual change is directly alongside the visual receptor location Visual changes are experienced in largely continuous fashion from throughout the visual receptor activity location
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual changes affect a large breadth of a single aspect or ordinary focus of a view Source of visual change is nearby but away from visual receptor location Visual changes are experienced for a recognisable portion of or repeated several times across the extent of the visual receptor activity location
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual changes are of a localised nature within a single aspect or ordinary focus of a view Source of visual change is at some distance from visual receptor location Visual changes are only experienced at one or few points within the visual receptor activity location
Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual changes appear as only a single very small point Source of visual change is at great distance away Visual changes are experienced only by finding a particularly obscure vantage point at the visual receptor activity location

APPENDIX B

Methodology for production of Zone of Theoretical Visibility Mapping (ZTV)

- b1. The zone of theoretical visibility mapping indicates where the potential development may be visible from.
- b2. It is an approximation based on broad scale data sets and overall provides an exaggerated (worst case scenario) impression and should only be used as a broad guide to the extent of areas where views may be possible.
- b3. The map has been produced based on a digital terrain model using OS Terrain 50 data. This is OS height data sampled on a 50m grid providing 10m contour intervals and a vertical accuracy of 4m RMSE. In addition, woodland areas and buildings have been modelled onto this digital terrain model. This utilises OS Vectormap District GIS data sets for woodland and buildings. This maps major woodland areas and buildings as plotted on 1:25,000 scale OS mapping. The woodland areas have been modelled as obstructions of 15m height and the buildings 7.5m height.
- b4. The supplementary modelling of major woodland and buildings provides a more realistic impression of the likely visibility of the proposed development than using the landform data alone. However, it should be noted that this does not take account of any localised obstacles not included in the broad scale data sets used, such as smaller groups of trees and hedges.
- b5. A multiple point analysis of the development area is employed to ensure that the mapping provides a proportional representation of the visibility of the development.

Station point height:

- | |
|--|
| b6. 6m above ground level to represent the ridge height of a bungalow. |
|--|

- b7. A viewer eye level height of 1.65m was also used in the calculation.

Zone of Visual Influence Mapping (ZVI)

- b8. The zone of visual influence mapping is a refinement to the ZTV mapping. This has been achieved through observational field survey work. In addition to the computer modelling of potential visibility, this map takes more account of other visual barriers of a finer grain nature that are not included in the computer modelling. This includes hedgerows, tree cover, other means of enclosure, and localised variations in landform. It also adjusts from real observation of buildings in the landscape, woodland cover and other infrastructure. Nevertheless, this is still a best effort approximation of potential visibility.

APPENDIX C

Methodology for visual representation techniques employed

- c1. Specific guidance for visual representation in LVIA/LVA work is set out in Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals (TGN 06/19).
- c2. The aim of all visual representation in this LVA study is to provide fair representation of the appearance of the proposed development, in selected views, using techniques proportionate to the case in hand.
- c3. TGN 06/19 defines 4 basic types of visualisation with varying levels of sophistication:
 - Type 1 are annotated photographs.
 - Type 2 are 3D wireline / models (presented without photography).
 - Type 3 are approximate photomontage or photowire images.
 - Type 4 are survey and scale verifiable photomontages or photowire images.
- c4. The appropriate choice of visual representation technique depends on matters such as the stage of the project and planning procedure engaged; the nature of the proposed development; and the sensitivity of the context.

Visualisation type employed and reasoning:

- c5. Type 1: Annotated viewpoint photographs
 - This case involves a development proposal subject to an ordinary planning application procedure where normal rural / settlement proximity sensitivities apply.
 - Annotated viewpoint photographs with simple notations indicating the position and extent if the development are considered appropriate.

Photography specification:

- c6. The viewpoint photography was only carried out when atmospheric visibility was favourable.
- c7. A digital SLR camera was employed (Canon EOS 400D (CFS) with Canon EFS 18-55mm lens):
 - The lens setting was calibrated and fixed to mimic a full frame sensor SLR camera with a 50mm lens (31mm capturing a 39.6° field of view).
 - All photography was captured with a camera height of 1.65m above ground level.
 - Any panoramic images were collected with sequential and 50% overlapping frames taken from the same location.
 - Panoramic shots are then stitched together in photography software and are presented in cylindrical projection.

Location recording:

- c8. Type 1 visualisation:
Location recording to OS mapping (indicative only).

Viewing distance and image enlargement:

- c9. Images are presented to a scale matching the TGN 06/19 definition of a 100% reference image. This equates to presenting a single frame (from a full frame sensor SLR camera with a 50mm lens) at 390mm x 260mm (fitting on an A3 sheet). A 39.6° horizontal field of view is presented for correct viewing at a comfortable arm's

length. Specifically, this creates an image that is correctly scaled (mathematically) when viewed at 542mm from the eye.

- c10. Where panoramas are presented, larger sheet sizes (A1) are employed. For panoramas it should be noted that for correct scaling of the periphery of these images, one eye should be used and the paper curved so that all parts of the image are the same distance from the eye. In practice this may be hard to do, so be aware that leaving the image flat makes the features at the far right and left appear slightly smaller and more spaced than they should be.

Visualisation production:

- c11. For Type 1 visualisation, any superimposed outline of the proposed development is an indicative sketch. These outlines are produced by eye with positioning and scaling guided by known references in the photographic images.

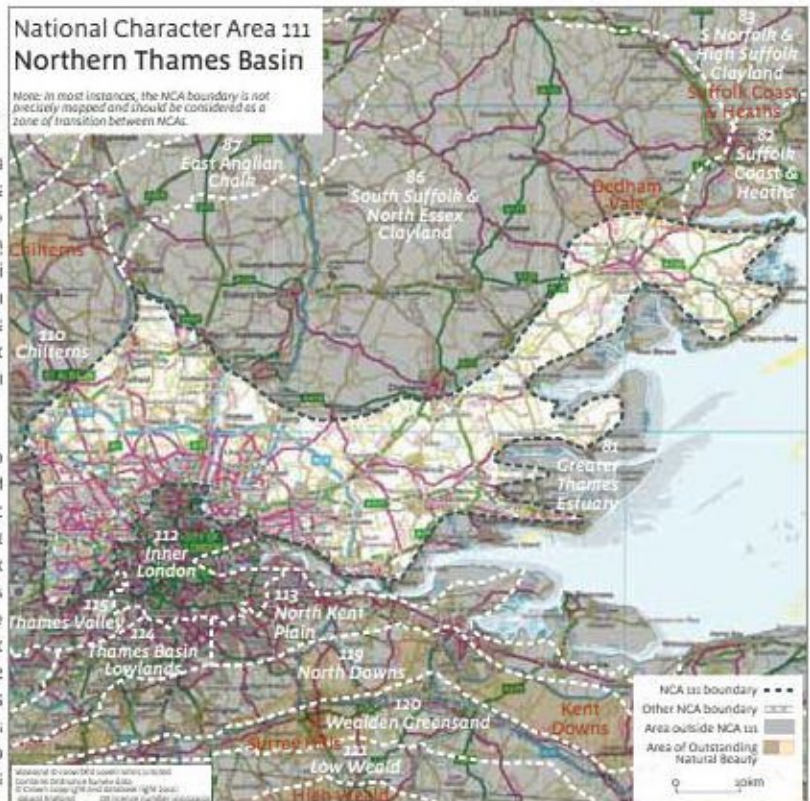
APPENDIX D

Published landscape character assessment extract(s)

Summary

The Northern Thames Basin is a diverse area which extends from in the west to the Essex coast in the east. It is separated from the Thames Estuary by a narrow band of land that makes up the Greater Thames Estuary National Character Area (NCA). Included within this NCA are suburbs of North London and also historic towns and cities including Welwyn Garden City and Colchester, as well as new and planned towns such as Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield and Basildon. Although arable agriculture is a large part of the area the soil quality ranges from good to poor quality. The Low Weald provides a poor quality soil that becomes waterlogged in winter and shrinks in summer. Better quality soil is found in areas that catch deposits from the Thames and other rivers in the area as they have changed position over time.

The Northern Thames Basin is an area rich in geodiversity, archaeological and diverse landscapes ranging from the wooded Hertfordshire plateau and river valleys, to the open landscape and predominantly arable area of the East Anglian Chalk heathlands, with areas of urbanisation mixed in throughout. Urbanisation has been a feature of this area since the 16th century when wealthy merchants were conducting business in London built homes on its outskirts, in the Hertfordshire area. This trend increased dramatically from the mid-19th century as infrastructure improved and people could travel to work in London from surrounding areas in an hour or less. This has put increased pressure in terms of extra housing developments, schools and other necessities on the surrounding populations, with a consequential reduction in tranquillity. Tranquillity can be found in parts of Hertfordshire and Essex in areas that have a more rural settlement pattern broken up by arable land and semi-natural habitats.



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The main changes to the area have resulted from increased construction and commercial-scale farming. Both of these have increased pressures on water availability, water flow, soil quality, biodiversity and sense of place. Although housing, other construction and agriculture are significant for the area it is important that these are developed in a sustainable way so that predicted changes in climate and the effects on the area's character are considered and sense of place and history are preserved.

The main opportunities available to this area are the continuation of the agricultural tradition, but within this land management should consider methods that are more sustainable in terms of water use and soil quality in order for it to continue to be a viable industry in the future. The areas of various semi-natural habitats also present opportunities to improve water storage and soil quality for surrounding agricultural land as well as to increase advantageous species that will aid pollination and reduce pest species. In addition to this the woodlands in the area could be an important resource to supply timber and fuel to the local area if they were managed effectively.



Farmland next to the River Colne in Essex.

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Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Manage rivers and river valleys to protect and improve water quality and help to alleviate flooding in the downstream urban areas, while also helping to improve aquifer recharge and provide a sufficient store of water to meet future need, especially with predicted climatic changes. Conserve the riparian landscapes and habitats, for their recreational and educational amenity for their internationally significant ecological value.

SEO 2: Manage the agricultural landscape and diverse range of soils which allow the Northern Thames Basin to be a major food provider, using methods and crops that retain and improve soil quality, water availability and biodiversity.

SEO 3: Protect and appropriately manage the historic environment for its contribution to local character and sense of identity and as a framework for habitat restoration and sustainable development, ensuring high design standards (particularly in the London Green Belt) which respect the open and built character of the Thames Basin. Enhance and increase access between rural and urban areas through good green infrastructure links to allow local communities recreational, health and wellbeing benefits.

SEO 4: Manage and expand the significant areas of broadleaf woodland and wood pasture, and increase tree cover within urban areas, for the green infrastructure links and important habitats that they provide, for the sense of tranquility they bring, their ability to screen urban influences and their role in reducing heat island effect and sequestering and storing carbon.



Ancient woodland at Pound Wood in Benfleet, Essex.

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Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The Northern Thames Basin forms the rising land above the low-lying marshy landscapes adjoining the coast and estuaries of the Greater Thames Estuary and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Character Areas (NCAs) to its east and south-east extent and enjoys associated views of these areas. Chalk geology commonly underpins this NCA and the neighbouring Chilterns and South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands NCAs to the west and north; The Chilterns, a formation of chalk hills and plateaux with a prominent escarpment, offers views across to this similarly elevated NCA. To the south-west the Thames Valley NCA forms a wedge-shaped area containing the open Thames flood plain surrounded by rolling clay farmland. Directly south is the Inner London NCA on the banks of the Thames where the river valley widens out into a broad flood plain.

The London Basin Chalk aquifer, which underlies much of the western section of the Northern Thames Basin NCA, is the principal aquifer supplying water to Inner London. The Chalk is confined in the basin by the overlying Tertiary formations of London Clay, which means recharge largely occurs in the extensive Chalk outcrop of the Northern Thames Basin and into the Chilterns NCA to the north and the North Downs to the south.

A small part of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) straddles the eastern edge of this NCA, the more northerly South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands and the south-western tip of the Suffolk Coast and



Major transport links include the M25 motorway.

Heaths NCA. The urban character in the south of the Northern Thames Basin continues into the Thames Valley and Greater Thames Estuary NCAs.

The landscape becomes extensively urbanised towards the Inner London NCA and includes major transport links from outside the area such as the East Coast mainline railway, M11 which connects to London and Cambridgeshire, the M1 which passes north-west through the Chilterns to the Midlands beyond, and

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the M25 which provides circular access to all parts of London and the south. Important A roads providing wide physical links include the A12 and A120 and the A1(M), which has a similar route to the M1 but diverts towards the East Anglian Chalk and Bedfordshire Claylands NCAs.

Many watercourses feed in or flow from surrounding areas, often along courses incised into boulder clays or tills, for instance the Blackwater and Colne flowing from the South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands and the Ver and Lea from the westerly Chilterns NCA which flow into Hertfordshire before joining the Thames in inner London. These, along with others, form a series of river valleys draining south to the Thames and east to the North Sea and Thames Estuary, including the Roding, Wid, Chelmer, Roach and Crouch. Also notable is the Grand Union Canal, which runs from here through several other NCAs northwards to Birmingham.

Distinct areas

- Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys
- Essex wooded hills and ridges
- London Clay lowlands
- Essex heathlands



River Mimram valley flood plain, Hertfordshire.

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Key characteristics

- The landform is varied with a wide plateau divided by river valleys. The prominent hills and ridges of the 'Bagshot Hills' are notable to the north-west and extensive tracts of flat land are found in the south.
- Characteristic of the area is a layer of thick clay producing heavy, acidic soils, resulting in retention of considerable areas of ancient woodland.
- Areas capped by glacial sands and gravels have resulted in nutrient-poor, free-draining soils which support remnant lowland heathlands, although these are now small. Areas that have alluvial deposits present are well drained and fertile.
- The water bearing underlying Chalk beds are a main source of recharge for the principal London Basin Chalk aquifer.
- A diverse landscape with a series of broad valleys containing the major rivers Ver, Colne and Lea, and slightly steeper valleys of the rivers Stour, Colne and Roman. Numerous springs rise at the base of the Bagshot Beds and several reservoirs are dotted throughout the area
- The pattern of woodlands is varied across the area and includes considerable ancient semi-natural woodland. Hertfordshire is heavily wooded in some areas as are parts of Essex, while other areas within Essex are more open in character. Significant areas of wood pasture and pollarded veteran trees are also present.
- The field pattern is very varied across the basin reflecting historical activity. Informal patterns of 18th-century or earlier enclosure reflect medieval colonisation of the heaths. Regular planned enclosures dating from the Romano-British period are a subtle but nationally important feature on the flat land to the south-east of the area. In the Essex
- heathlands 18th- and 19th-century enclosure of heathlands and commons followed by extensive 20th-century field enlargement is dominant.
- Mixed farming, with arable land predominating in the Hertfordshire plateaux, parts of the London Clay lowlands and Essex heathlands. Grasslands are characteristic of the river valleys throughout. Horticulture and market gardening are found on the light, sandy soils of former heaths in Essex, particularly around Colchester, along with orchards, meadow pasture and leys following numerous narrow rivers and streams.
- The diverse range of semi-natural habitats include ancient woodland, lowland heath and floodplain grazing marsh and provide important habitats for a wide range of species including great crested newt, water vole, dormouse and otter.
- Rich archaeology including sites related to Roman occupation, with the Roman capital at Colchester and City of St Albans (Verulamium) and links to London. Landscape parklands surrounding 16th- and 17th-century rural estates and country houses built for London merchants are a particular feature in Hertfordshire.
- The medieval pattern of small villages and dispersed farming settlement remains central to the character of parts of Hertfordshire and Essex. Market towns have expanded over time as have the London suburbs and commuter settlements, with the creation of new settlements such as the pioneering garden city at Welwyn and the planned town at Basildon.
- Brick-built dwellings are characteristic from the late 17th century onwards. Prior to this dwellings and farm buildings tended to be timber built with weatherboarding, now mainly painted white but traditionally black or tarred, and whitewashed plaster walls.

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Northern Thames Basin today

The Northern Thames Basin is a large and diverse landscape with a similar overarching character of agricultural land, interspersed with woodland, dissected by rivers and influenced by the urban areas of North London. It falls naturally into several distinct areas, shaped by their geology, topography and land use which are called: Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys, Essex wooded hills and ridges, London Clay lowlands and the Essex heathlands

The Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys to the north-west of the NCA are high, broad arable plateaux divided by wooded and pastured valleys which have a mainly rural feel with, on the whole, small developments. Rivers that drain the plateaux are the Colne, Ver and Lea and the soils are mainly underlain with London Clay, resulting in heavy, acidic, nutrient-poor soils with poor drainage; however, in the river valleys alluvial deposits provide fertile and well-drained soils. The area is underlain by extensive Chalk beds of the principal London Basin chalk aquifer, which provides the main source of water for London. Recharge of the aquifer largely occurs from the Chalk as water flows underground to London from the Chilterns, and water quality and availability within the aquifer are largely dependent on land management practices in the area.

While the plateaux are predominantly in arable use, the valleys by contrast contain areas of pasture and have a more intimate character, although some have been heavily modified by reservoirs, gravel workings, landfill sites and river realignments. The valleys contain all the main settlements within the area. Field boundaries are dominated by informal enclosure patterns of the 18th century, with thorn hedges relating to rationalisation and amalgamation of this pattern in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is a well-wooded landscape, especially to the east, with a number of ancient broadleaved woodlands including oak



Crazing marsh at Kings Meads Valley Meadowlands alongside the urban landscape of Hertford.

and hornbeam coppice. Isolated areas of remnant heathland survive within commons. The area retains a substantial legacy of funerary monuments and settlement sites associated with the prehistoric period and was intensively settled in the Roman times, with a number of major and minor towns (including St Albans and Welwyn) having a Roman origin. Today, a medieval pattern of small villages and dispersed farming settlement is central to the area's character and there is good survival of medieval timber-framed houses and barns, moated sites and small medieval castles. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the growth of rural estates and country houses for London merchants and the landscape parklands surrounding these houses are a particular feature of the

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area today. The area merges with the outer London suburbs of Enfield, Barnet, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow. It also contains many large towns including Watford, Hatfield, Hertford and St Albans which have developed as commuter settlements as well as the pioneering and influential garden cities of Ebenezer Howard at later Welwyn. Road and rail routes plus utility infrastructure are now dominant features of some parts of the area. To the far south the area is heavily urbanised as it becomes part of London, where housing, industrial areas and shops dominate. Green areas are restricted to city parks, grassed areas in front of housing developments and residents' gardens.

The Lea Valley within the area has been exploited for supplying London with water and for generating power for a wide range of industries, together with extraction of sand and gravel. This historic use has underpinned its current importance for wildlife. The Lower Lea valley, which lies in the south of the area and in the adjacent Inner London NCA, was heavily regenerated for the 2012 London Olympics, bringing ecological landscape, recreational and economic benefit.

The designations afforded to this area are Ramsar, which is an international designation for wetland habitats, and Special Protection Area (SPA), which is a European designation; also, within the Lea Valley and the surrounding areas there are many Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The main reasons for the designations within the Lea Valley area are its importance as a wetland site; wetlands and reservoirs occupy a large part of the valley and support many important overwintering waterfowl. The species of particular importance are bittern, which over-winter in the reedbeds in the area which at peak times can support around 6 per cent of the UK's population, as well as gadwall and shoveler which also over-winter here (representing almost 2 per cent of their overwintering European population). There are also two important woodland

complexes within the area: Wormley and Hoddesdon Park Wood, which is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Broxbourne Wood, which is a National Nature Reserve (NNR). Wormley and Hoddesdon Park Wood is an almost exclusively hornbeam woodland which has been managed through coppicing with oak standards. The ground flora supports bluebells and great wood-rush as well as important mosses. Broxbourne Wood is an ancient woodland which supports the rare butterfly purple emperor and also has historical value as the area has been managed since Roman and medieval times as a source of wood

The Essex wooded hills and ridges lie to the east of the Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys to the north of the NCA. This area has several ridges where the soils are acidic and stony and have low fertility but are easily cultivated. This and the wet soils at the base of the Bagshot Beds limit the agricultural potential for the hill slopes, but farmland can be found in the lower-lying areas. The ridges of Epping Forest, Brentwood to High Wood, Thorndon to Billericay and Danbury to Wickham Bishops are dissected by the river valleys of the Roding, Wid and Chelmer. The Ter, Brain and Blackwater also contribute to the drainage of the area and Hanningfield Reservoir provides an area of open water.

This area is in the central part of the NCA, and extends roughly from Epping Forest in the west to Danbury in the east. It is a transitional landscape between the London Clay lowlands and the South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands NCA. It is formed by a series of hills and ridges created by the resistant Bagshot Sands which rise up above the clay lowland as at Epping Forest, Brentwood to High Wood, Thorndon to Billericay and Danbury to Tiptree. These well-wooded hills contain extensive areas of ancient woodland, remnant wood pasture and secondary woodland on commons as well as more recent plantations. These include the substantial wooded areas of Hainault Forest and Epping Forest, formerly Royal Forests, now managed for conservation and recreation.

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Historically, settlement was sparse with scattered villages associated with the commons and areas of wood pasture. Today, settlement is dominated by large, 20th-century urban areas. The A12, the former Roman road connecting London with Colchester, is a major commuter route through the area.

Within this area Epping Forest is an important site for wildlife and as such has been designated as an SAC. The main reason that this site is important is the beech forests found here and the rare species that these support – rare mosses and also fungi and deadwood invertebrates owing to the high number of veteran trees present. Also found here are significant populations of stag beetle.

The London Clay lowlands lie south and east of the Essex wooded hills and ridges and are characterised by the heavy, acidic soils associated with this area, which is the dominant feature of the London Basin, although lighter soils can be found on some footslopes. The heavy soils are difficult to drain and easily become waterlogged. The area is drained by numerous rivers such as the Roach, Crouch and Blackwater, which merge to create the flat marshes to the east. The large expanse of open water at Abberton Reservoir, formed by the damming of the Layer Brook on its way to the Roman River, is a notable feature.

This area embraces the outer east London suburbs at Grays and Thurrock and extends eastwards to the Dengie Peninsula. It includes the town of Basildon.

This area is essentially a flat to gently undulating lowland landscape. Local variation is created by the Laindon and Hockley Hills, formed of the more resistant sandy Bagshot Beds which cap the clay.

The east of the area is characterised by a planned Roman landscape with a rectilinear pattern of fields which is a nationally important but subtle feature



Wet heathland, acid grassland and coppiced ancient woodland at Bricket Wood Common, Hertfordshire.

of the landscape today. The heavy clays were difficult to work and remained in pasture; however, during the 1950s and 1960s the land was improved so that arable is now also a dominant land use. By contrast, the hills around Laindon, Hockley and Rayleigh are relatively well wooded. In addition, 19th- and 20th-century plantations and regenerated, formerly urbanised plotland landscapes add a further wooded aspect to parts of the area. The landscape today has an urban character, including the expanded resort of Southend, the 1950s planned

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town of Basildon and extensive 20th-century commuter settlements such as at Laindon and Rayleigh. Large areas of recreational land including parkland, golf courses and horse paddocks serve the urban population.

This area has many important wetland sites including Abberton Reservoir (designated as a Ramsar site and SPA) and also two reservoir areas recognised as SPA, the Crouch and Roach Estuary and Blackwater Estuary; however, only a small proportion of the two estuaries is found in this NCA with the majority falling within the Greater Thames Estuary. Abberton Reservoir is a significant site as it supports many important overwintering waterfowl such as golden plover, gadwall, shoveler and teal, as well as breeding cormorant, and also qualifies as a wetland of importance as it supports more than 20,000 waterfowl. The Crouch and Roach Estuary is an important site for overwintering dark-bellied Brent goose and the Blackwater Estuary (which is also an NNR) is important for overwintering avocet, golden plover, hen harrier, dark-bellied Brent goose, redshank and breeding little tern: it too is recognised as a wetland of international importance because it supports more than 20,000 waterfowl.

The Essex heathlands lie north-east of the London Clay lowlands and Essex wooded hills and ridges, in the north-east of the NCA. The geology of the area is predominantly sands and gravels, which were deposited by the Thames as it changed its course over time to its present location. Around the Tendring area deposits of wind-borne silty loam overlie the sands and gravels but overall the soils are light and free draining. The area is relatively flat with contrast provided by the steep-sided slopes of the Stour, Colne and Roman river valleys which, along with their tributaries, drain the plateau and are eventually discharged into the North Sea.

The east of this area is broadly bounded by the Stour Estuary to the north and the Thames Estuary to the south and east, and covers the land around

Colchester and the Tendring plain. It is separated from the North Sea and Thames Estuary by a narrow strip of coastal marshes which form part of the Greater Thames Estuary.

The area consists of a broad, sandy plateau created by ancient river deposits from the Thames. Historically it was dominated by extensive heaths and commons, although these are now restricted to isolated fragments of heath and scrub within an intensively farmed and largely arable agricultural landscape. Agriculture includes improved grassland and arable fields as well as distinctive areas of horticulture and market gardening associated with the light, sandy soils of former heaths. Orchards are a feature around Colchester.

A pattern of small but intricate creeks and valleys breaks up the plateau edges where the land falls to the Thames Estuary along the coast and extends the coastal influence inland. The narrow river valleys which incise the plateau also create areas of contrasting enclosed landscape, with abundant woodland and meadows, some with wider flood plains and wetland vegetation. Much of the woodland is ancient; however, in general the plateau has an open, treeless character owing to the loss of field boundaries.

Vernacular buildings are constructed of timber, with either weatherboarding or whitewashed plaster. The principal settlement is Colchester, the walled Roman capital and England's oldest town, dating from 49 AD.

Within this area is Hamford Water, designated as a Ramsar site as well as an SPA and SSSI owing to the important waterfowl that use it. Many species over-winter here, including avocet, golden plover, ruff, black-tailed godwit, grey plover, ringed plover and teal – up to 25 per cent of the UK population of overwintering avocet has been recorded here. In addition, little tern use it

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as a breeding site and the area is considered to be a wetland of international importance as it supports more than 20,000 waterfowl. Part of the Colne Estuary is in this area (although the majority of it falls within the Greater Thames Estuary NCA); this is also a Ramsar site and SPA, and of national importance for geology. Similar species are found here to those found in Hamford Water, and in addition overwintering hen harrier, dark-bellied Brent goose and redshank. This area is also considered a wetland of international importance and includes a small part of the predominantly pastoral character of the Dedham Vale AONB. St Osyth marsh is an important site for salt marsh morphology dating back around 4,000 years, while geological exposures at East Mersea show important deposits beneath gravels which are attributed to the Thames and Medway system and are of considerable importance in Pleistocene studies.

The whole area is a combination of countryside mixed in with urban areas, with important habitats and species, especially woodland and wetland habitats and associated species. The rural area acts as a recreational opportunity for those living in the surrounding towns and cities and the urban areas offer work and recreation opportunities for those living in more isolated villages and settlements in the rural environment. There is strong historical association throughout the area owing to its close proximity to London and the Roman occupation of Colchester and the links that this creates within the area as a whole. Dedham Vale is strongly associated with the artist John Constable whose paintings were inspired by the landscape.

The landscape through time

The NCA is the northern part of the London Basin, a broad, concave fold which opens out towards the East Coast. This structure means that the oldest rock strata are at the periphery, with younger deposits towards the centre. Chalk deposited in the tropical seas of the Cretaceous Period (65–95 million years ago) underlies the area and forms the bedrock of adjacent NCAs, extending beneath London and providing the major aquifer for the capital. The folded structure, a syncline, developed some 20–40 million years ago during the Tertiary Era (2–64 million years ago) at the time that the Alps were being formed in southern Europe. During this period of uplift, the area became dry land and rivers developed, including the proto-Thames along a course to the north of its present location. Overlying the chalk is a series of sands and mudstones (Reading Beds) deposited during the Tertiary Era by ancient river systems that drained into the basin. The thick layer of London Clay which characterises this NCA today was laid down as a sequence of fossiliferous, shallow marine sediments under semi-tropical seas some 55 million years ago. Overlying the London Clay are sands and clays of the Bagshot, Barton and Bracklesham Beds.

The diverse geology has considerable influence on the landscape. The London Clays are heavy and typically difficult to work, resulting in the retention of pasture and considerable areas of ancient woodland. The lighter, sandy soils of the Bagshot Beds are likely to have remained relatively open and unwooded since prehistoric times and areas of remnant heath are a feature, particularly within the Essex heathlands and wooded hills. In Essex, the harder rocks of Bagshot Beds deposits form distinctive features, creating low hills and ridges such as at Danbury Hill, rising to a high point of 116 m.

The Quaternary deposits which overlie the clay provide an insight into Britain's most recent geological past. The Anglian ice sheet which reached

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the outskirts of London approximately 500,000 years ago (evidenced at Hornchurch SSSI) advanced to the rim of the basin, leaving a series of glacial sands, gravels and clays and moving the course of the Thames southwards to its present location. Quaternary deposits have yielded artefacts illustrating early human presence (approximately 300,000 years ago) in the Thames Basin and more recently the evolution of prehistoric society. By the time that Britain was cut off as an island during the Holocene, humans had settled along the margins of the Thames and its tributaries. The light, sandy soils of the Essex heathlands to the east are particularly rich in buried archaeological remains associated with prehistoric and Roman occupation. Funerary monuments and settlement sites visible as cropmarks and earthworks are also a feature of the Hertfordshire plateaux and valleys and were extensively cleared and occupied in the prehistoric period. Here, the limited survival of coaxial field systems potentially of bronze-age origin is highly significant.

Roman occupation has left a significant impact on the area. A major road, now the A12, connected the Roman capital at Colchester to London. Other major and minor Roman towns and cities include St Albans and Welwyn and there are extensive villa estates, notably in the west of the area (in Hertfordshire). Also in Hertfordshire, the distinctive settlement pattern of 'homestead moats' aligned with the grid pattern is thought to be influenced by Roman estate management techniques. The London Clay lowlands are also characterised by planned landscapes created during the Roman period, forming a still distinct rectilinear pattern of enclosure on the Dengie Peninsula and in the area between Thurrock and Wickford. By comparison, the central part of the NCA (the Essex wooded hills) was relatively sparsely settled. Orchards were established around Colchester, as well as a significant area of meadow pasture and leys following the numerous narrow rivers and streams.



Traditional medieval timber-framed houses in Colchester, Essex.

Throughout the Northern Thames Basin, settlement is essentially based on a pattern of dispersed nucleated villages and farming settlements established in the medieval period. Post-Roman decline in Hertfordshire is evident in the number of medieval place names and settlement patterns which imply re-colonisation and clearance of a wooded landscape and late-medieval timber-framed houses and moated sites are a distinctive feature. In the Essex heathlands the dispersed settlement pattern was established within extensive tracts of heathland. In the London Clay lowlands some larger villages and small towns developed in the medieval period associated with local centres of civil

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or religious authority. The exception to this dispersed pattern is in the Essex wooded hills where settlement remained sparse in the medieval period and was associated with the extensive commons or management of wood pasture and other resources belonging to medieval monastic houses.

The 16th, 17th and 18th centuries saw the growing influence of London, particularly in Hertfordshire, with the growth of market towns and rural estates and country houses for London merchants. Profitable farming conditions saw the demise of much medieval parkland in the 17th and 18th centuries, alongside the growth of substantial farming estates for the London merchants, rising nobility and gentry. The remaining associated parkland landscapes form a distinctive feature of the area today, particularly within the Hertfordshire plateaux area.

Industries based on agricultural produce (such as malting and brewing, paper making, hat making and tanneries) contributed to the prosperity of the market towns and developed further in the 19th century, aided by the growth in communications. This also stimulated the development of commuter settlements in the 19th and 20th centuries, and the urbanisation and expansion of existing towns and villages. The creation of new settlements is a particular feature, with the pioneering garden city at Welwyn and the planned 1950s town of Basildon. The edge of London has also expanded outwards with suburbs now embracing former villages. Communication routes – motorways (the M1, A1(M) and M11), main roads and railways running north–south connecting to London, plus the M25 radial route – are dominant features.

In the 1970s Dutch elm disease transformed many parts of the landscape, with the loss of tree and woodland cover, and the area continues to change with pressure for housing and industrial growth associated with, for instance,



Mixed coppice ancient woodland at Norses Wood near Billericay, Essex.

the Thames Gateway, Haven Gateway and other strategic growth points such as Chelmsford, identified in the East of England Improvement Plan, the Lea Valley regeneration area (including the Olympics legacy) and changes in the agricultural landscape.

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Ecosystem services

The Northern Thames Basin NCA provides a wide range of benefits to society. Each is derived from the attributes and processes (both natural and cultural features) within the area. These benefits are known collectively as 'ecosystem services'. The predominant services are summarised below. Further information on ecosystem services provided in the Northern Thames Basin NCA is contained in the 'Analysis' section of this document.

Provisioning services (food, fibre and water supply)

- **Food provision:** This is a predominantly arable landscape with arable crops covering 53 per cent of the area – primarily wheat and oilseed rape. The area also includes a sizeable sheep flock (approximately 18,800 breeding ewes in 2007) but relatively few cattle (only approximately 2,600 breeding dairy cattle and 3,200 breeding beef cattle), all of which have declined in number since 2000.
- **Timber provision:** The area only has 6 per cent woodland cover. This resource is unevenly distributed and some parts of the NCA have a relatively high woodland cover. The main areas of commercial timber are the coniferous plantations situated on former lime tree woods in the river valleys of Hertfordshire; these cover some 0.7 per cent of the total area of the NCA.
- **Genetic diversity:** Remnant traditional orchards provide a genetic stock of old apple varieties, many of which are no longer commercial. There are also rare animal breeds associated with the area including the British Saddleback Pig (which is partially bred from the Essex Pig), White Park Cattle, Red Poll Cattle, Jacob Sheep, Bagot Goat, Hackney Horse, Hackney Pony, shire horses and British Percheron Horse.

Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)

- **Climate regulation:** Soils, woodland and hedgerows are likely to be significant stores of organic carbon across this area.
- **Water availability:** The Chalk which underlies the west of the area is extensively abstracted for drinking water in the NCA and provides a main source of recharge for the principal aquifer supplying Inner London.
- **Regulating soil erosion:** The sandy soils of the Essex heathlands and hills and ridges are susceptible to erosion if high risk crops are cultivated on sloping ground and in dry summers will become increasingly prone to wind erosion if they are left exposed. The restoration of hedgerows across the landscape can reduce the scale of wind erosion.



The River Lee near Hertford.

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- **Regulating soil quality:** This NCA has a range of soil types and the condition of these soils varies significantly. Within the area as a whole more than 50 per cent of the land is classified as excellent to good/moderate quality, which supports a wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops.
- **Regulating water quality:** The rivers flowing south and east from the chalk strata into the Thames and to the coast are of variable ecological quality. While most are considered to be of moderate quality, parts of the Lea are of poor quality as are some of the smaller rivers, such as the Rib. These classifications are based on results from the Environment Agency within their work under the European Water Framework Directive. Land management practices within the NCA will have a major impact on water quality in the underlying aquifer.
- **Pollination:** The areas of semi-natural habitat – heathlands, grasslands and woodland edges in parts of Essex and Hertfordshire – provide important habitats for pollinating insects. The extensive agricultural lands can provide habitats in the form of hedgerows, edges of farm tracks and ‘set aside’ areas. This in turn will be beneficial for food production through pollination of food crops, particularly oilseed rape, through pollinating invertebrates.
- **Pest regulation:** The presence of semi-natural habitats such as grasslands, woodlands, road-side verges and uncut farm tracks can provide overwintering habitats for beneficial predatory invertebrates which will help to control populations of many pest species. An example of this is the Carabidae family of beetles which feed on a number of pest species. Careful management of land to encourage such species can reduce the need for chemical control measures.

Cultural services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

- **Sense of history:** A strong sense of history is captured in the ancient

woodlands and trees of the area – the Broxbourne Woods and Epping Forest – and also the built environment, including significant estates.

- **Recreation:** There is a strong appreciation of the local landscape as a ‘green lung’, offering opportunities for active and passive recreation away from the Greater London conurbation, and a ready recognition of the coast as offering a nearby visitor destination. The easy accessibility of the countryside and coast is a very important aspect of the lives of local residents.
- **Biodiversity:** The diverse range of semi-natural habitats present in the NCA, which includes 3 SAC and 3 SPAs, include ancient woodland, lowland heath and floodplain grazing marsh and provide important habitats for a wide range of species including great crested newt, water vole, dormouse and otter. The area is also important for wetland birds, especially the Ramsar wetland sites of Lee Valley, Hamford Water and Abberton Reservoir.
- **Geodiversity:** The area has a clear identity created by the geodiversity underpinning the diverse landscape. The underlying sediments themselves contain a record of ancient landscapes and climates. There are 20 geological SSSI in the area and 3 Local Geological Sites which are of local and national importance. These sites preserve important deposits of chalk stratigraphy and evidence for the formation of the London Clay as well as conserving several key geomorphological features. The majority of sites within this NCA, however, preserve evidence for past glaciations and the evolution of the Thames during the Quaternary. These sedimentary deposits and the fossils contained within them represent significant records of climate and environmental change that provide an important context for our understanding of and insights into the potential impacts of future climate change on our landscapes. Several sites also preserve important evidence for early human occupation of the area dating back around 300,000 years.



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Lowland Settled Claylands



Summary

Overall description:

Low lying, rolling coastal farmland forming a hinterland between the Coastal Levels and the Wooded Hills further inland.

Location:

Located mainly in the southern parts of Essex.

Physical environment

Landform:

Low-lying, gently rolling topography, associated with London clay.

Natural / water features:

Land is drained by a criss-cross pattern of drainage ditches.

Vegetation and land use

Ecological character:

The predominantly low lying nature and clay character of the substrate indicate the potential presence of wetland habitats, a few fragments of which survive. These are relatively well protected, with a high proportion of designated sites.

Primary land use :

Arable land use. Some areas of peri-urban landscape.

Tree cover:

Sparse woodland cover, but some copses and shelter belts.

Cultural pattern

Historic features:

Right angled bends in lanes reflecting an ancient field pattern and churches in historic settlements which act as local landmarks.

Enclosure pattern:

An irregular/ sinuous field pattern, in places defined by a mixture of field sizes. Field boundaries mostly comprise well trimmed low hedges, or ditches.

Settlement pattern:

A densely dispersed settlement pattern comprising scattered farmsteads, hamlets and clusters of dwellings, with occasional towns. There is a strong urban influence, with many new housing developments and some vastly expanded historic settlements.

To be completed at a later date.

Historic development :

An early enclosed landscape dominated by co-axial fieldscapes. Late Enclosure is rare and usually associated with enclosure of commons.

Perceptions

Tranquillity:

Urban development and road infrastructure undermine the tranquillity of the area as a whole.

Views:

An open farmed landscape, with long distance views over adjoining coastal levels and marshes.

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Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan Review

ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Final Report

2003



CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning

4.6.7 *Tendring Plain (E3)*

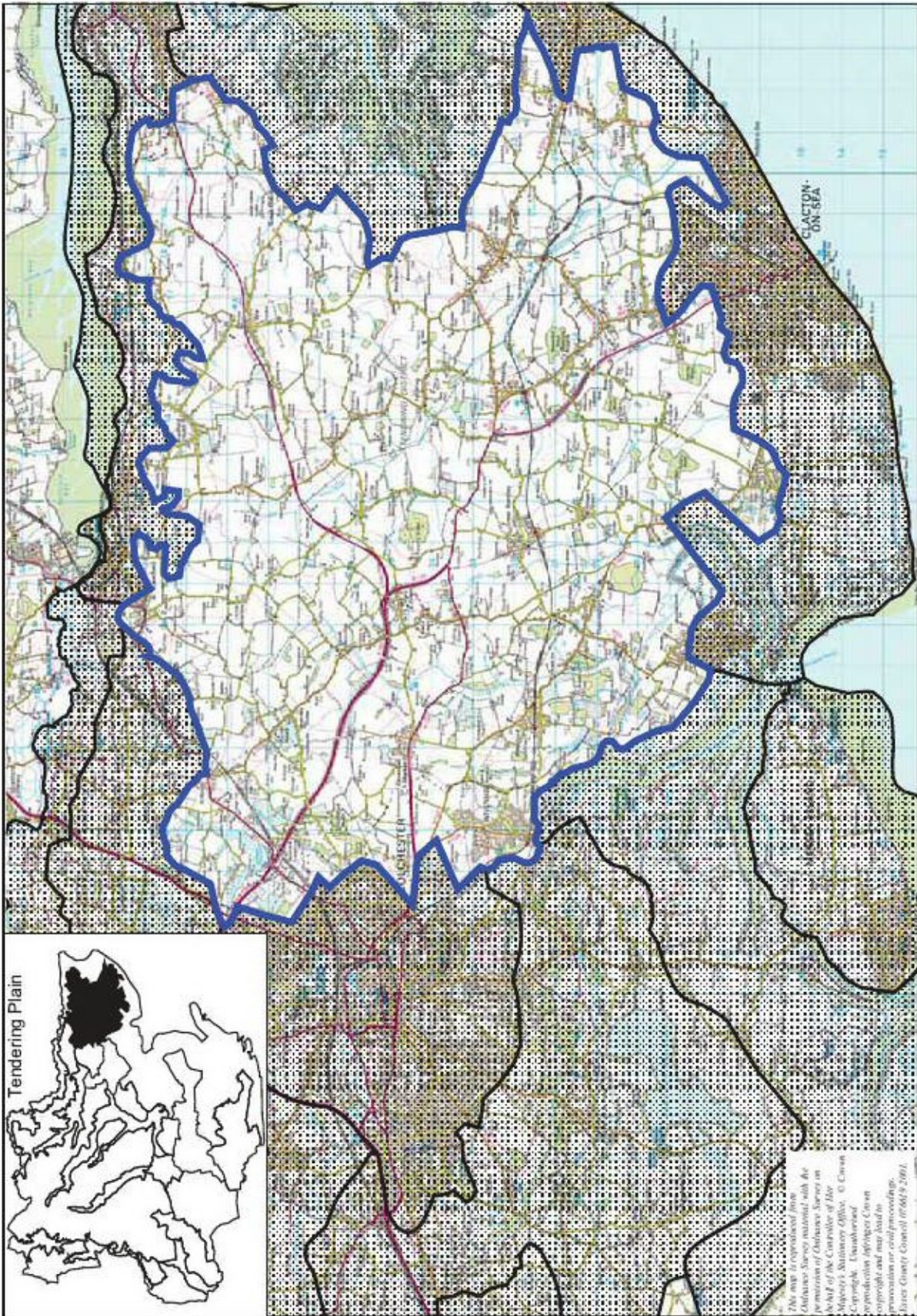


Key Characteristics

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

Overall Character

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



Character Profile

Geology

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

Soils

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

Landform

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

Semi-natural vegetation

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

Pattern of field enclosure

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

Farming pattern

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

Woodland/tree cover

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

Settlement pattern and built form

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

Communications

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

Other landscape features

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

Landscape Condition

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

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Former heathland on sandy soils around Colchester were lost as a result of late enclosure.
- Significant loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees has occurred in parts associated with arable intensification since the Second World War.
- Current and likely ongoing trends for change include pressures for major transportation developments, urban development pressure on the edge of Colchester, and use of the area for large telecommunication masts. Changes in agricultural subsidy regimes may bring possible opportunities for restoration of hedgerows, small woodlands and heathland.

**TENDRING PLAIN (E3)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION**

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area. <p><i>Possible opportunities to absorb change with new landscape frameworks of woodland, hedgerows appropriate to character and restoration of heathland.</i></p>	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. 	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area. 	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area. 	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. 	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Simple large scale field pattern. <p><i>Possible opportunities to absorb change with restoration of woodland, hedgerows, heathland.</i></p>	L
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area. 	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. 	H
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area. 	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition of hedgerows and woodlands. 	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

November 2001

Tendring District Landscape Character Assessment

Volume One: Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines



Prepared for Tendring District Council by
Land Use Consultants



8B CLACTON AND THE SOKENS CLAY PLATEAU

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently undulating agricultural plateau, drained by the *Holland Brook Valley System*, in the south-east of Tendring.
- Underlain by a solid geology of London Clay which gives rise to slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils and standing water.
- Low, gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees divide arable fields.
- Remnants of ancient oak and sweet chestnut coppice woodland, including Weeleyhall Wood, one of the finest woods in the district.
- Good access provided by the A133, B1033 and B1441 which form a backbone for the ribbon development that dominates the areas around Clacton and Frinton.
- Urban fringe character enhanced by presence of nurseries, caravan parks, paddocks, holiday parks and industrial estates on the edges of Clacton and Frinton.
- Thorpe-le-Soken is a rural settlement, important in medieval times, and has a wealth of historic buildings.

DESCRIPTION

The *North Clacton and the Sokens Clay Plateau* is a gently undulating agricultural plateau, divided in half by Holland Brook, in the south-east of Tendring. Topographical interest is provided by minor undulations as a result of minor tributary streams which flow into Holland Brook. Like the *Tendring and Wix Clay Plateau* it is also underlain by a solid geology of London Clay which gives rise to slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils which support moderate/good agricultural land. Standing water is common as ponds or reservoirs.

The landscape is a rural agricultural landscape composed of fields of various sizes and shapes. It is predominantly an arable landscape with a great sense of space where colours and textures in the fields change through the seasons. Low, gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees enclose the fields and small remnants of ancient woodland provide interesting features in an open arable scene. Weeleyhall Wood is one of the finest woods in the district, a sweet chestnut coppice with oak standards. The importance of this woodland is reflected in its designation as a SSSI.

This area is relatively densely settled as a result of the popularity of seaside resorts of Clacton and Frinton during the early and mid 19th century and the good access provided by the A133, B1033 and B1441. The roads form a backbone for development today and the original village centres are often hidden within newer built development. For example, the village of Great Clacton has been completely subsumed within the suburbs of the 19th century resort of Clacton-on-Sea. Ribbon development along the B1441 has almost totally joined the settlements of Great Clacton, Little Clacton and Weeley while ribbon development along the B1033 has merged Frinton with Kirby Cross. The open cliff tops provide important public open space where the underlying landscape shows through the

urban fabric. Despite the recent development, there are still signs of the historic settlement pattern, for example at Great Holland where the hall and church are set aside from the village where they command views over Holland Haven.

The landscape beyond the main settlements has an urban fringe character, particularly in the south of the area, with the presence of nurseries, caravan parks, paddocks, holiday parks and industrial estates on the edges of Clacton and Frinton. The A133 also has an influence on the landscape, bringing with it embankments cuttings, roundabouts and service areas. There is still a distinct rural gap between Kirby Cross and Thorpe-le-Soken. Thorpe-le-Soken was an important settlement in medieval times and has a wealth of historic buildings. Thorpe Hall grounds are of interest for their early 20th century formal and informal planting and is on English Heritage's register of historic parks and gardens.

EVALUATION

Character: This agricultural plateau landscape is intensively cultivated and influenced by urban fringe land uses. The presence of extensive areas of built development, urban fringe land uses around Clacton and the merging of settlements has masked the rural character of the landscape and the historic settlement pattern. The overall landscape character is **weak**, although could even be considered to be **poor** in some urban fringe locations.

Condition: The loss of landscape features such as unimproved pastures, village greens, hedgerows and ancient woodlands as a result of agricultural intensification, built development and Dutch elm disease means that landscape diversity and condition has been **declining** over many years. Within the urban fringe surrounding Clacton, development has frequently severed parcels of agricultural land and these marginal areas remain unmanaged/neglected or have been converted to amenity uses such as horse paddocks.

Change

- Loss of elms in the past reducing sense of intimacy and enclosure.
- Loss of ancient deciduous woodland and general shrinking of the woodland resource.
- Neglect of traditional woodland and tree management such as coppicing and pollarding.
- Spread of invasive exotic species such as Sycamore and Rhododendron, displacing native species in the woodlands.
- Loss of traditional permanent pastures and now, absence of grazing animals to manage areas of grassland.
- Loss of village greens.
- Hedgerow loss associated with agricultural intensification and built development.
- Road improvements including signage, line painting and widening which threaten the intimate rural character of the historic lanes.
- Decline and dereliction of historic buildings e.g. Great Holland Mill.
- Light pollution - effects on the night sky.

- Ribbon development along roads between settlements resulting in the merging of adjacent settlements into one continuous 'suburb' and loss of individual settlement identity.
- Severance of agricultural land on the urban fringe of land held for future development, no longer being actively managed.
- Introduction of typical urban fringe land uses, such as horse paddocks.

Sensitivity

The landscape is visually sensitive as a result of its open and rural character and long views. However, the woodlands and gently undulating topography provide some opportunities to integrate development. Sensitive features include the remaining ancient woodlands, village greens, historic lanes and hedgerow oaks. Areas of particular sensitivity to built development are those on the edge of the plateau towards the *Hamford Coastal Slopes (3A)*, *St. Osyth Coastal Slopes* and overlooking the *Holland Valley System (6D)*.

STRATEGY

Condition	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Declining	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		Character		

Landscape Management Strategy

The *Clacton and the Sokens Clay Plateau* is one of the most densely developed rural landscapes in Tendring and has also suffered decline of landscape features. The strategy for this plateau landscape should be to **strengthen** and **enhance** the character of the individual villages and the rural wooded character of the landscape. There are particular opportunities to **enhance** the urban fringe around Frinton and Clacton through the creation of a new landscape character. The management strategy includes the following guidelines:

- Conserve all ancient woodland sites, and promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and reintroduction of coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodlands.
- Increase extent of native deciduous woodland using natural regeneration or locally occurring native species to enhance the wooded character of the landscape. The aim should be to link existing sites.
- Conserve hedgerows as important wildlife habitats and landscape features and promote management of hedgerows as coppice, with oak standards left to form future timber trees. Consider opportunities for reinstatement of hedges, particularly where they have been lost from highly visible locations e.g. along roadsides.

- Consider opportunities for the creation of meadows or permanent pasture to restore grassland habitats lost through agricultural intensification, for example the creation of grassland field margins.
- Maintain the historic leafy lanes with their ancient oaks and unimproved roadside verges. Resist road improvements or widening that would threaten their rural character.
- Conserve the open cliff tops along the coastline - protecting the cliffs for their nature conservation interest, natural vegetation cover, public open space and views.
- Conserve views to historic features, for example Great Holland church tower.
- Consider the impact of any development on the margins of the plateau landscape – where it would have the potential to be highly visible on the adjacent character areas of the *Hamford Coastal Slopes (3A)*, *St. Osyth Coastal Slopes* and overlooking the *Holland Valley System (6D)*.
- Particular care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements – these have the potential to be highly visible in this open landscape. This also applies for large scale rural buildings e.g. for agriculture.
- Use of full cut-off lights and sensitively designed lighting schemes can reduce the impact of light pollution on night skies.
- Restrict further ribbon development and consider opportunities to strengthen and enhance the landscape setting to the villages through planting and enhancing, or creating new, village greens, which could help to maintain the individual character of individual settlements.
- Strengthen the landscape character around existing urban settlements (Clacton and Frinton). Ensure that development does not result in further severance and fragmentation of agricultural land and promote positive land management for remaining open areas.
- There are considerable opportunities for woodland creation in urban fringe areas to create new character and provide screening.



Tendring District Replacement Local Plan

Tendring Landscape
Character Assessment
Volume Two

Tendring
District Council



8B CLACTON AND THE SOKENS

Gently undulating agricultural plateau, drained by the *Holland Brook Valley System*, in the south-east of Tendring.



Underlain by a solid geology of London Clay which gives rise to slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils and standing water.

Low, gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees divide arable fields.



Remnants of ancient oak and sweet chestnut coppice woodland, including Weeleyhall Wood, one of the finest woods within the district.

Good access provided by the A133, B1033 and B1441 which form a backbone for the ribbon development that dominates the areas around Clacton and Frinton.



Urban fringe character enhanced by presence of nurseries, caravan parks, paddocks, holiday parks and industrial estates on the edges of Clacton and Frinton.

Thorpe-le-Soken is a rural settlement, important in medieval times, and has a wealth of historic buildings.

SETTLEMENT CHARACTER



Extract from Chapman and Andre 1777



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This area is densely settled as a result of the popularity of seaside resorts of Clacton and Frinton during the early and mid 19th century and the good access provided by the A133, B1033 and B1441. The roads form the backbone for development today and the original village centres are often hidden within built development, for example Great Clacton. Ribbon development along the B1441 has almost joined the settlements of Great Clacton, Little Clacton and Weeley while ribbon development along the B1033 has merged Frinton with Kirby Cross. The landscape has a distinct urban fringe character with large scale modern residential estates on the edges of Clacton, Frinton and Walton as well as nurseries, caravan parks, paddocks, holiday parks and industrial estates. Despite the recent development, there are still signs of the historic settlement pattern, for example at Great Holland.

BUILT CHARACTER



The Saxon settlements of the Bovills and the Engaines (Gidea Hall and Bovill's Hall) stand in close proximity on the ancient road to Little Clacton. These, and other manorial halls in the area, are agricultural settlements and often have large agricultural outbuildings of local interest which incorporate red brick, black clapboard with red clay tile roofs in their design. They tend to be long and low lying and simple in design. The rural villages contain cottages and larger houses, set directly onto the street. They are often plastered and painted light colours or partially clad in weatherboard. The roofs are typically steeply pitched, sometimes mansard, and traditionally clay tiled. The roofscape is enlivened by dormer windows and chimneys. These older properties are often surrounded by inter-war and post-war development, either as ribbon development or in large residential estates, where mass produced materials bear little relation to local character. Thorpe-le-Soken was an important settlement in medieval times and has a wealth of historic buildings.



Vernacular
architecture.



Agricultural buildings are long
and low.

GUIDANCE

This area has been densely settled and the underlying rural character eroded by modern suburbs and linear development. The strategy should be to conserve the low density settlement pattern in rural areas, maintain the distinctive identity of individual settlements, and enhance the character of the urban fringe. There may be some opportunity for development adjacent to existing settlements in line with the following guidance:

General

- The strategic gaps between adjacent settlements such as Clacton-on-Sea and Little Clacton, Kirby-le-Soken and Frinton, and Great Holland and Kirby Cross are important to maintain their individual identities.
- Native planting proposals should form an integral part of any development proposal to help integrate the buildings into the landscape. There are considerable opportunities for new woodlands to enhance the character of the urban fringe around Clacton.
- Any development on the urban fringe should seek to enhance landscape character by promoting positive landscape management - it should not result in the severance/neglect of agricultural land.
- The plateau edges frequently form a skyline/setting for low lying areas and are very sensitive to built development.
- The historic settlement pattern included small villages set around greens - this could provide a template for new residential areas.
- Important views should be considered when designing the location and layout of new built development - these include views to and from the rural, agricultural hinterland and views to important landmarks.
- Employment sites should be well located in relation to existing settlements. Redundant agricultural buildings may provide an opportunity for re use to accommodate new business and employment sites.

Local References

- Red brick, coloured plaster and weatherboard (black or white) form the finished face of residential dwellings. Weatherboarding is common on agricultural buildings.
- Roofs are typically steeply pitched and tiled in clay effect tiles of muted colours. Simple dormer windows and chimneys help to enliven the roofscape.
- Roofs of agricultural barns and other large, low buildings are critical to the appearance of the building.

3A HAMFORD COASTAL SLOPES

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently sloping land encircling, and forming the setting of, the open marshes of Hamford Water.
- Low, scrubby and intermittent hedgerows divide regimented fields typical of late enclosure.
- Scattered farmsteads and manorial halls form a dispersed settlement pattern.
- Kirby-le-Soken is an historic settlement, located along the southern edge of Hamford Water.
- Outskirts of Harwich and Frinton continue to expand onto the coastal slopes overlooking Hamford Water.
- Panoramic views over Hamford Water towards Harwich.

DESCRIPTION

The *Hamford Coastal Slopes* is the gently sloping land encircling, and forming the setting of, the open marshes of Hamford Water. The boundary of the area is defined by the crest of the slope and is a visual boundary. Small streams flow between fields to drain into Hamford Water and in flatter areas standing water has accumulated forming ponds. The underlying geology of London Clay gives rise to heavy, waterlogged soils which have been improved and intensively cultivated.

The landscape is dominated by large scale, regimented fields that indicate late enclosure and enhance the smooth-sweeping landform and perspective of the slopes that encircle Hamford Water. The fields are predominantly arable and divided by low, scrubby and intermittent hedgerows. However, there are diverse roadside verges, for example at Beaumont Bridge. Tree cover is restricted to shelter belts and small mixed copses close to farms - belts of poplar are distinctive features.

The pattern of dispersed farms along the coastal slopes is distinctive. These farms are often on the sites of old manor halls dating to the time when grazing rights were owned by the inland manors abutting the marshlands. Examples of such halls are Old Moze Hall, New Moze Hall, Landemere Hall, Birch Hall and Kirby Hall. Kirby-le-Soken is an historic settlement, located along the southern edge of Hamford Water. During the Saxon period three villages - Kirby, Thorpe and Walton - were granted special privileges of tenure and given the suffix 'Le Soken'. Kirby was the most important of these and contains some important buildings including Kirby Hall and its church whose tower is a landmark. Quay Lane leads down to Kirby Quay on Walton Backwater from where grain and coal would have been transported by water before the railway was brought to Tendring. The outskirts of Harwich and Frinton continue to expand onto the coastal slopes overlooking Hamford Water. Roads, e.g. Landemere Road, tend to follow the contours of the coastal slopes providing magnificent views over Hamford Water to Harwich and Felixstowe, both by day and night.

EVALUATION

Character: The *Hamford Coastal Slopes* exhibits characteristics typical of the *Coastal Slopes* landscape type. This includes the smooth concave landform, rural agricultural landscape with manor halls and open panoramic view across Hamford Water. The gently shelving slopes provide a cohesive visual unit that form an important setting to the Hamford Water marshes (1D and 2D). Overall character is considered to be **strong**.

Condition: The *Hamford Coastal Slopes* is an intensively cultivated landscape. Despite the severe loss of elms in the 1960s and intensification of agriculture, landscape condition can generally be described as **good**.

Change

- Any changes in the landscape on the coastal slopes have the potential to be highly visible from Hamford Water.
- Expansion of residential built development onto the highly visible coastal slopes on the outskirts of Harwich and Frinton.
- Loss of elms in the past reducing sense of intimacy and enclosure.
- Pressure for further intensification of agricultural land including field expansion, hedgerow loss and the impact of agricultural run-off into the adjacent marshes.
- Habitat loss through built development.

Sensitivity

This landscape character area is highly sensitive to any change as a result of its visibility and its importance as a setting for Hamford Water. It is particularly sensitive to built development that would affect the open views and sense of remoteness. An area of particular sensitivity is the crest of the slope which forms the skyline from Hamford Water.

STRATEGY

Condition	Good	Strengthen	Conserve & Strengthen	Conserve
	Declining	Strengthen & Enhance	Conserve & Enhance	Conserve & Restore
	Poor	Creation	Restore & Enhance	Restore
		Weak	Moderate	Strong
		Character		

Landscape Management Strategy

The *Hamford Coastal Slopes* forms a rural setting for Hamford Water. The overall landscape strategy for this sensitive rural landscape should be to **conserve** the existing rural character and panoramic views over Hamford Water. The management strategy includes the following guidance:

- Conserve the rural, tranquil character as a setting for Hamford Water by resisting further encroachment of built development into the setting of Hamford Water, including on the skyline at the crest of slopes.
- Conserve the remaining hedgerows and copses and encourage management for wildlife. Seek opportunities for enhancement of the hedgerow network and replanting of hedgerow trees.
- Conserve the rural character by resisting introduction of urbanising elements such as lit approach roads or large areas of tarmac.
- Conserve the panoramic views across Hamford Water.
- Restrict use of pesticides and herbicides in areas that would result in polluting run-off into the adjacent marshes.
- Ensure expansion of built development does not intrude onto the highly sensitive crests of slopes where it would be conspicuous on the skyline or restrict important views.

3A HAMFORD COASTAL SLOPES

Gently sloping land encircling, and forming a setting to, the open marshes of Hamford Water.



Dominated by large scale, regimented fields typical of late enclosure divided by low, scrubby and intermittent hedgerows.

Scattered farms and manorial halls form a dispersed settlement pattern.

Kirby-le-Soken is an historic settlement, located along the southern edge of Hamford Water.

Outskirts of Harwich and Frinton continue to expand onto the coastal slopes overlooking Hamford Water.



Panoramic views over Hamford Water.

SETTLEMENT CHARACTER



Extract from Chapman and Andre 1777



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The Hamford Coastal Slopes character area exhibits an ancient pattern of settlement of isolated scattered farmsteads. The farmsteads are often on the site of ancient manors or villas and located at the foot of the coastal slopes, accessed by small informal tracks from the ridgetop roads. Kirby-le-Soken is a linear settlement on the ridge-top and one of the three 'le Soken's' granted special privileges in 1509. It is a rural village, identifiable by its church tower, with connections to Kirby Quay and the former granary.

BUILT CHARACTER



The isolated halls and farmsteads are built in a great diversity of styles, but they are usually constructed from brick and illustrate some good examples of early brick architecture. The agricultural outbuildings are typically constructed from brick and weatherboarding and would have had clay tile roofs, although many have been replaced by modern buildings and cheaper materials. The village buildings of Kirby-le-Soken tend to be short terraces of cottages on the roadside and large houses set back from the road. Rural terraces are typically one and half storey cottages with dormer windows. Red brick or plastered brick are the dominant materials and gables are prominent. Roofs are usually clay tiled.



Isolated Halls



Terraced cottages

GUIDANCE

The overall strategy should be to maintain this area as a rural landscape forming the setting to Hamford Water. The existing ancient settlement pattern of scattered isolated farmsteads and a distinct ridge top linear village should be conserved. The highly visible slope crests and skyline are particularly sensitive to further built development.

General

- The ancient scattered rural settlement pattern would be disrupted by further mass built development.
- Encroachment of residential development of Frinton or Harwich onto these coastal slopes has the potential to be highly visible, and impact on the special remote character of Hamford Water.
- The skyline and rural wooded ridge tops are particularly sensitive to development, particularly of tall structures which would have a major visual impact.
- Floodlighting is also an important concern - with the potential for light pollution to affect the 'dark skies' around Hamford Water.
- Care should be taken when siting any new building, including agricultural buildings - native planting proposals should form an integral part of any plan to integrate the building into the landscape.
- The character and identity of the linear village of Kirby-le-Soken should be maintained. Incremental ribbon development would erode the rural village setting and result in a merger with the adjacent settlements of Kirby Cross and Walton.
- The character and pattern of existing rural lanes and informal tracks connecting the scattered isolated farms and halls should be conserved. Any new development should be accessed from existing roads. Upgrading of rural lanes and introduction of urbanising elements such as concrete kerbs and lighting will not be appropriate.

Local References

- Red brick, black weatherboarding and muted clay tiles are traditional materials for the construction of rural and agricultural buildings.
- Bright coloured bricks or roof tiles are not suitable in this highly visible rural location.

FIGURES

- Figure 1 Location map
- Figure 2 Site context aerial photo
- Figure 3 Policy & designations map
- Figure 4 Landform elevation map
- Figure 5 Landscape character map
- Figure 6 Zone of theoretical visibility map
- Figure 7 Viewpoint photo locations map (close vicinity of site)
- Figure 8 Viewpoint photo locations map (more distant locations)

Figures are provided as A3 landscape pages (these may be presented as separate pdf documents).

PHOTO SHEETS

	photo sheets
Viewpoint photos	1 to 8

Photos are provided as A3 landscape pages (these may be presented as separate pdf documents).