# Appendix B LAND EAST OF COLCHESTER ROAD, WELLWICK

## LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## Published Landscape Character Assessments (Extracts)

### December 2023 (revised March 2024)

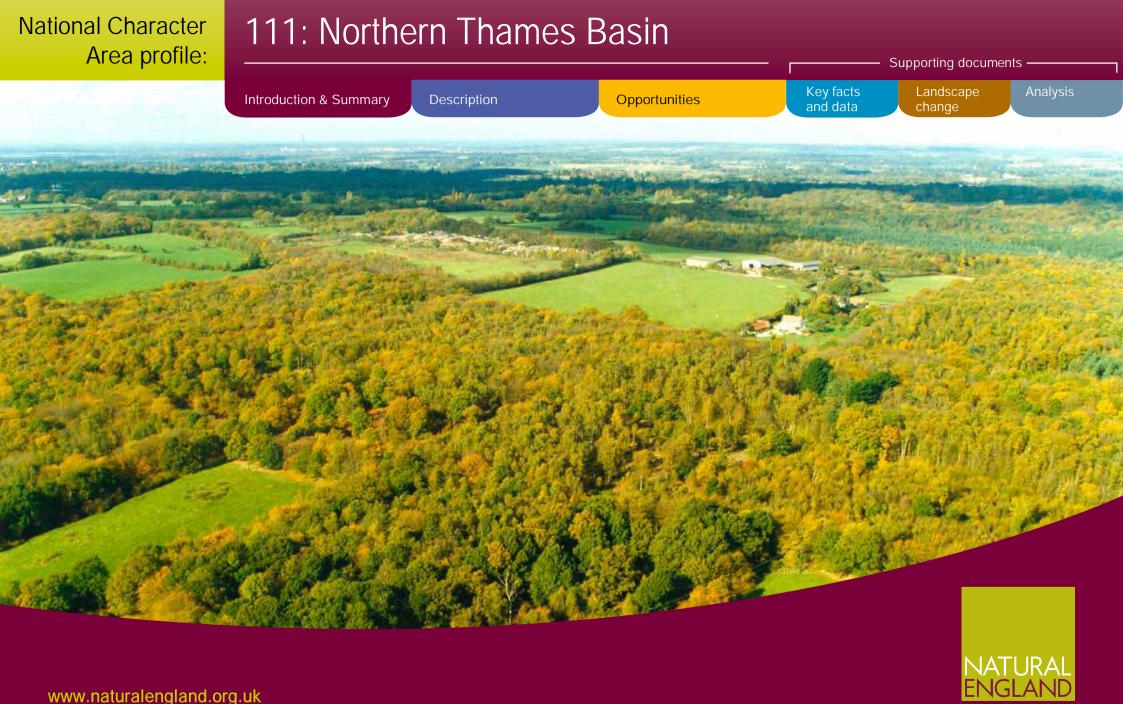
Extracts From:

Natural England – National Character Areas (2013)

East of England Landscape Framework -Landscape East (2010)

Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003)

Tendring District Landscape Character Assessment (2001) – Vol 1 and Vol 2



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## National Character 11 Area profile: \_\_\_\_

# 111: Northern Thames Basin



# Introduction

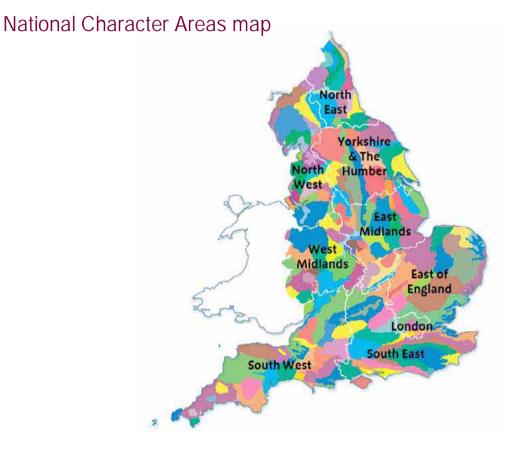
As part of Natural England's responsibilities as set out in the Natural Environment White Paper<sup>1</sup>, Biodiversity 2020<sup>2</sup> and the European Landscape Convention<sup>3</sup>, we are revising profiles for England's 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). These are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment.

NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale, inform the delivery of Nature Improvement Areas and encourage broader partnership working through Local Nature Partnerships. The profiles will also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change.

Each profile includes a description of the natural and cultural features that shape our landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services. Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) are suggested, which draw on this integrated information. The SEOs offer guidance on the critical issues, which could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future.

NCA profiles are working documents which draw on current evidence and knowledge. We will aim to refresh and update them periodically as new information becomes available to us.

We would like to hear how useful the NCA profiles are to you. You can contact the NCA team by emailing



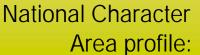
<sup>1</sup> The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra

(2011; URL: www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf) <sup>2</sup> Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL:

www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-11111.pdf) <sup>3</sup> European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe

(2000; URL: http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm)





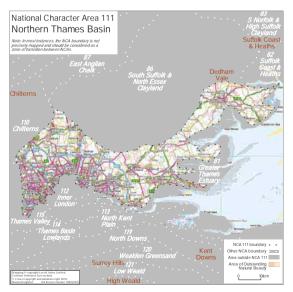


# Sum m ary

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

The Northern Thames Basin is an area rich in geodiversity, archaeology and history and diverse landscapes ranging from the wooded Hertfordshire plateaux and river valleys, to the open landscape and predominantly arable area of the Essex heathlands, with areas of urbanisation mixed in throughout. Urban expansion has been a feature of this area since the 16th century when wealthy merchants who were conducting business in London built homes on its outskirts, mainly 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 the surrounding areas in an hour or less. This has put increased pressure on the area in terms of extra housing developments, schools and other necessities for expanding populations, with a consequential reduction in tranquillity. Tranquil areas can still be found in parts of Hertfordshire and Essex in areas that have a more dispersed settlement pattern broken up by arable land and semi-natural habitats. There are a wide variety of semi-natural habitats in the area and these support many important species. However, the habitats have become fragmented over time and a landscape-scale approach is needed to connect them so that they can be sustained and provide beneficial functions including; increasing pollinating insects, acting as flood defences and water storage areas, preventing soil erosion and helping to improve soil and water quality as well as maintaining the area's sense of place and history. This NCA includes many internationally and nationally designated sites including 72 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (20 of which are designated wholly or in part for their national geological importance), 6 Ramsar sites, 6 Special Protection Areas, 3 Special Areas of Conservation and 2 National Nature Reserves. The

majority of these sites are estuaries and woodlands. The estuaries support migrating and overwintering birds as well as rare or locally important plants and invertebrates. The selected woodlands are ancient and have a long history of management through coppicing and pollarding, which has allowed rich ground flora to develop and also supports rare mosses and deadwood invertebrates.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

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# 111: Northern Thames Basin

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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.



# 111: Northern Thames Basin



### 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 tranquillity 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

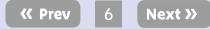


Major transport links include the M25 motorway.

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 northwest 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.





Landscape Typology

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## Lowland Settled Farmlands



### Summary

#### **Overall description:**

This is a settled agricultural landscape, often with a recurring estate character, associated with fertile rolling lowlands, often around the coastal fringe. Location:

Occurs in northeast Norfolk, along the southern coastal fringe of Essex and in the central parts of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

#### Physical environment

#### Landform:

Low-lying, gently rolling topography associated with deposits of glacial sand and gravel, often associated with river valleys and adjoining areas of gently rolling ground.

#### Natural / water features:

Well drained by a network of small streams and rivers.

#### Vegetation and land use

#### Ecological character:

A landscape of productive, free draining soils with little surviving semi-natural habitat. Some patches of ancient woodland survive in areas with wetter gleyed soils.

#### Primary land use :

Predominately arable land use, with occasional damp meadows on lower ground in river valleys. Some mineral extraction (eg. for brick making in Marston vale) and recreational land uses (e.g. golf courses).

#### Tree cover:

Widespread groups of trees and small plantations, with occasional ancient woodlands.



#### Historic features:

Extensive network of hedged and occasionally sunken lanes. There are also numerous small parklands. Brickwork kilns and chimneys are also a distinctive feature in Beds.

#### Enclosure pattern:

Field forms are generally medium sized and sinuous, but rectilinear patterns are also common in places, reflecting more planned, surveyor enclosures.

#### Settlement pattern:

Rural settlement is dense and clustered with a mixture of riverside towns, small nucleated villages/hamlets and many individual farms. There are limited urban fringe influences in this landscape.

To be completed at a later date.

#### Historic development :

A landscape with a mixed historical evolution, including both late enclosures from common field and heath in Norfolk and

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early co-axial field types in Essex & Hertfordshire.

#### Perceptions

#### Tranquility:

Much of this landscape has a deeply rural character with a high degree of tranquillity. However, in areas of mineral extraction, tranquillity is often significantly reduced.

#### Views:

A generally more enclosed landscape, with a complex mosaic of wooded and tree lined vistas, in places giving rise to an intimate character.

Landscape East Landscape Character Types Photo Gallery Glossary Log in

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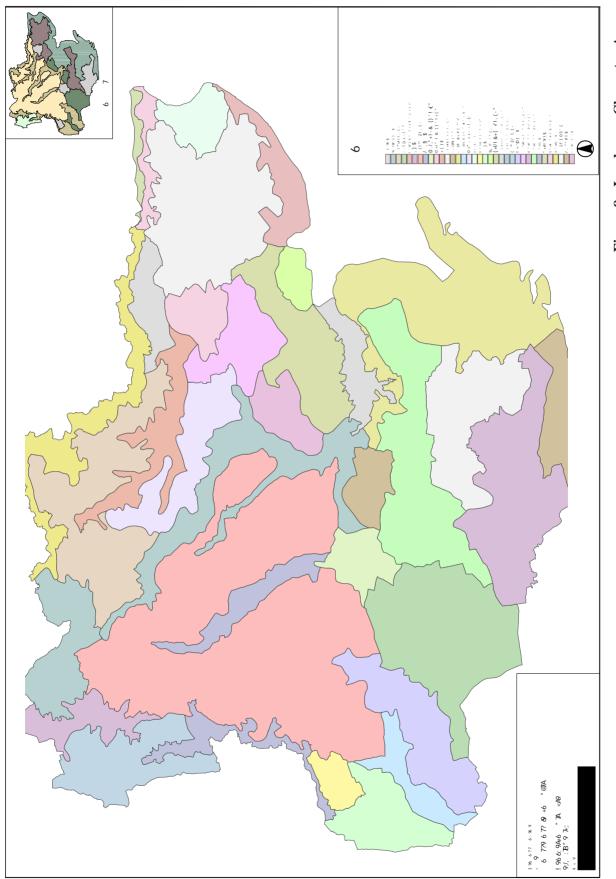
# **Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan Review**

# ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



## **CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES**

Environment Landscape Planning



#### 4.6 London Clay Landscapes (E)

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



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

- Mainly gently undulating or flat landform.
- Heavy clay soils and lighter sandy/loamy soils where sand and gravel deposits overly clay.
- Regular and straight hedged field boundaries the result of both ancient planned landscapes, and late enclosure of former heathlands.
- Pasture and arable farmland.
- Mostly enclosed nature of the landscape.
- 4.6.3 The main hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Elm with occasional Ash, Blackthorn, Field Maple.
- 4.6.4 The London Clay Plateau landscapes comprise four Landscape Character Areas within the study area:
  - South Essex Farmlands (E1)
  - South Colchester Farmlands (E2)
  - Tendring Plain (E3)
  - North Colchester Farmlands (E4)

#### 4.6.7 Tendring Plain (E3)

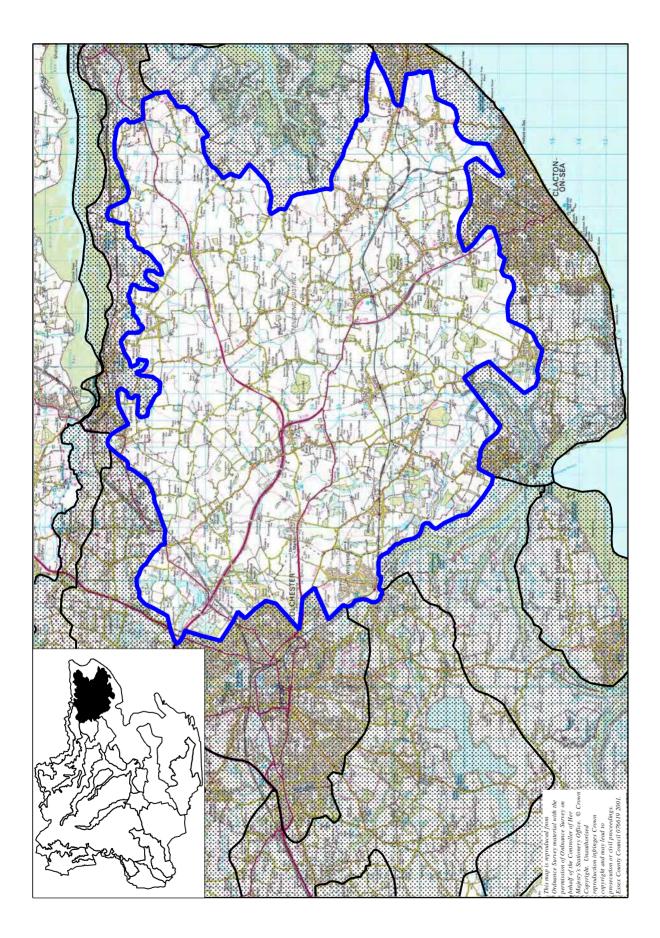


#### Key Characteristics

- 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> <li>Moderate to high intervisibility.</li> <li>Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.</li> <li><i>Possible opportunities to absorb change with new</i></li> <li><i>landscape frameworks of woodland, hedgerows</i></li> <li><i>appropriate to character and restoration of heathland.</i></li> </ul>	М	
2.	Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	Moderate to high intervisibility.	L	
3.	Major transportation developments/improvements	<ul><li>Moderate to high intervisibility.</li><li>Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.</li></ul>	М	
4.	Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	<ul><li>Moderate to high intervisibility.</li><li>Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.</li></ul>	Н	
5.	Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	Moderate to high intervisibility.	Н	
6.	Large scale 'open uses'	<ul> <li>Moderate to high intervisibility.</li> <li>Simple large scale field pattern.</li> <li>Possible opportunities to absorb change with restoration of woodland, hedgerows, heathland.</li> </ul>	L	
7.	Mineral extraction/waste disposal	<ul><li>Moderate to high intervisibility.</li><li>Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.</li></ul>	М	
8.	Incremental small scale developments	Moderate to high intervisibility.	Н	
9.	Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	<ul><li>Moderate to high intervisibility.</li><li>Tranquil areas in the north east and south of the area.</li></ul>	Н	
10.	Decline in traditional countryside management	Condition of hedgerows and woodlands.	М	

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 - 1.4.17

#### 4.7 Coastal Landscapes (F)

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



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

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

- 4.7.3 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Elm, with occasional Elderberry, Blackthorn, Dog rose.
- 4.7.4 The Coastal landscapes comprise ten Landscape Character Areas within the study area:
  - Thames Estuary (F1)
  - Crouch & Roach Farmland (F2)
  - Dengie & Foulness Coast (F3)
  - Blackwater Estuary (F4)
  - North Blackwater Coastal Farmlands (F5)
  - Mersea Island (F6)
  - Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast (F7)
  - Hamford Water (F8)
  - Stour Estuary Slopes (F9)
  - Stour Estuary (F10)

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

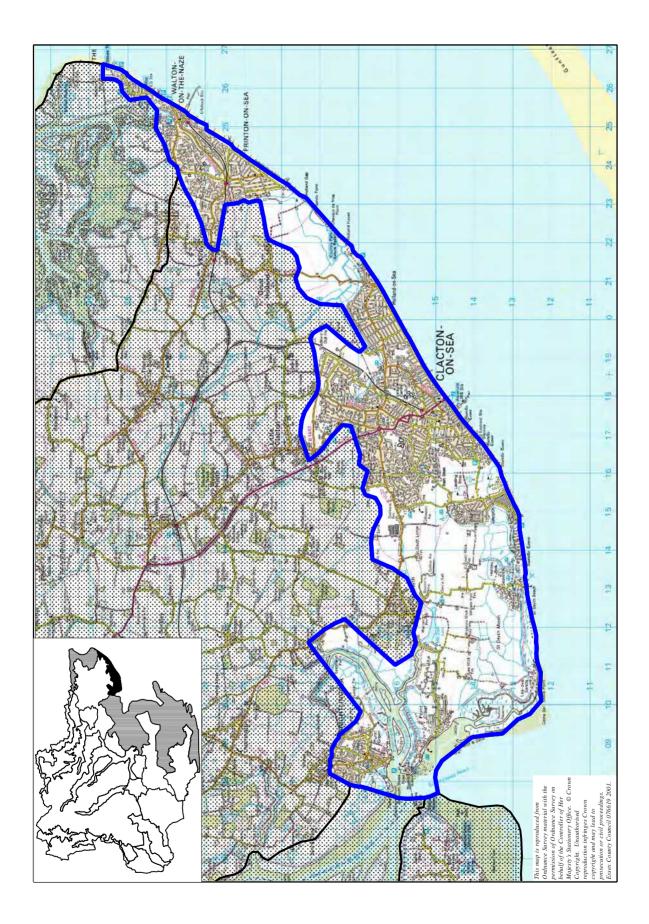


#### Key Characteristics

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

#### **Overall Character**

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



#### **Character** Profile

#### Geology

- London Clay, Sands and Gravels, Brickearths and Alluvium

#### Soils

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

#### Landform/coastal form

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

#### Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, seawall grassland.

#### Pattern of field enclosure

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

#### Farming pattern

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

#### Woodland/tree cover

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

#### Settlement pattern and built form

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

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

#### Communications

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

#### Other landscape features

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

#### Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows are in poor condition.
- The condition of the settlements is mixed.

#### Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Past significant change took place with the major expansion of the seaside towns this century.
- Post the Second World War there has been loss of grazing marsh to arable farmland.
- Current trends include pressure for further urban development, and intensification within the plotland settlements of Jaywick and Point Clear.
- Flood defence is likely to be a future issue. Given the length of developed coastline opportunities for managed realignment, are likely to be limited in this area.

#### BRIGHTLINGSEA - CLACTON - FRINTON COAST (F7) SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

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

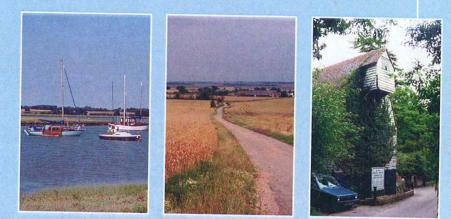
Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15-1.4.17

# Tendring District Landscape Character Assessment

Volume One: Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Guidelines

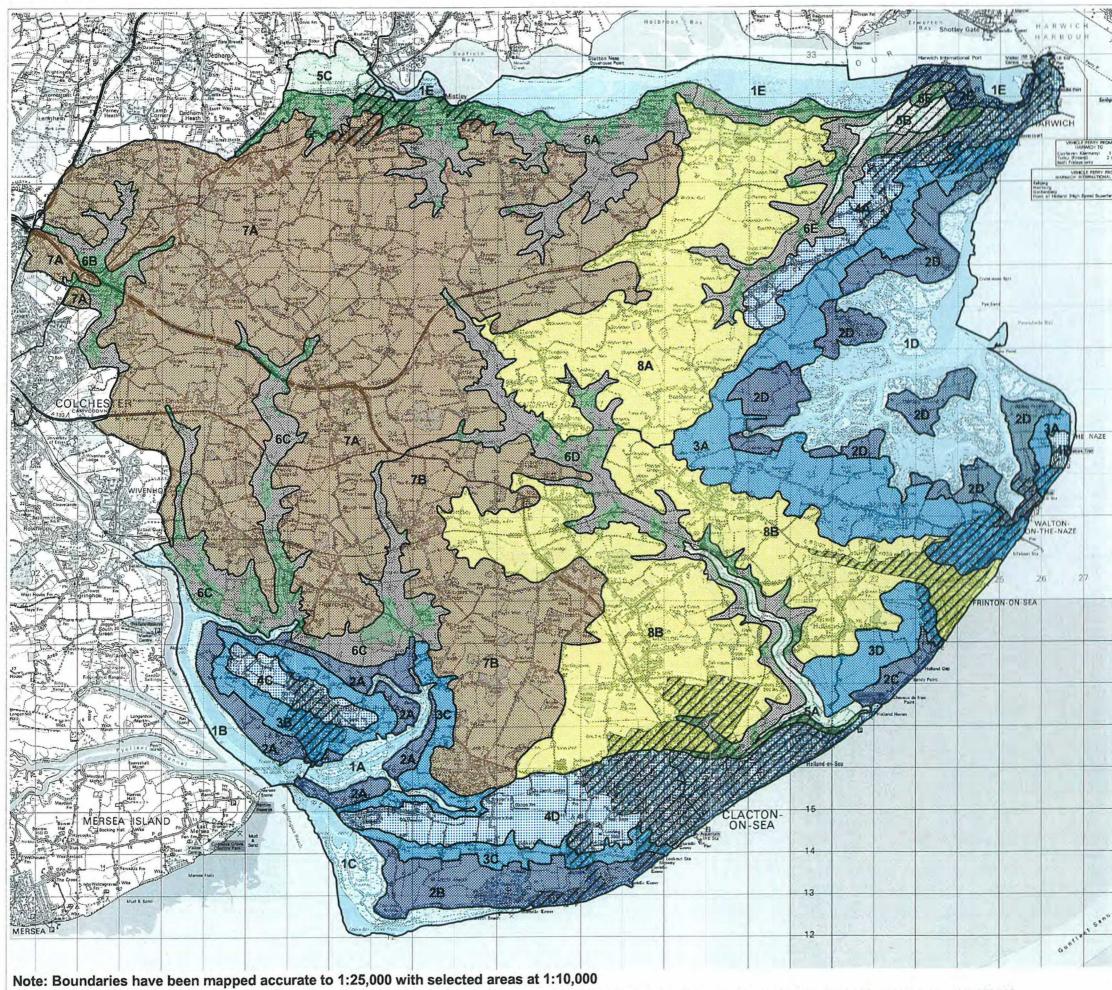
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Prepared for Tendring District Council by Land Use Consultants





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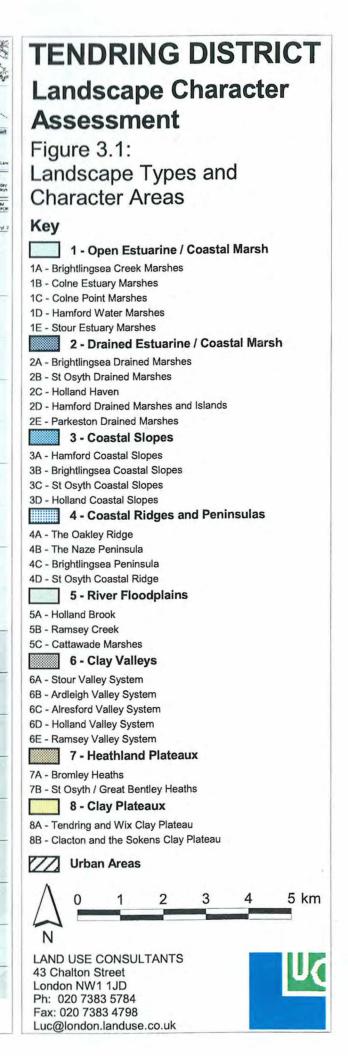
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# 7. HEATHLAND PLATEAUX

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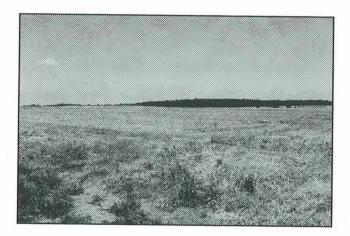
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7A Bromley Heaths



7B St Osyth/Great Bentley Heaths

## 7 HEATHLAND PLATEAUX

### Introduction

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The Heathland Plateaux are the large scale, flat agricultural plateaux, generally above 25m AOD, covering a large part of the western half of the Tendring District. Their extent is defined by the glacial loams and gravels that create acid soils giving them a heathy character and identifying them as separate landscape type from the *Clay Plateaux* to the east of the district.

### **Physical Influences**

During the Ice Age, some 450,000 years ago, the Anglian ice sheet did not reach as far south as Tendring. However, glacial outwash deposited glacial loams, gravels and sands across much of the west of the district. These sandy deposits, which are found over the greater part of the higher ground as far as Tendring, have an influence on the soils and vegetation, resulting in remnant heathland communities in this area. The 1777 Chapman and Andre map illustrates the former distribution of heaths across this area. In contrast the deeper, loamy soils have been intensively cultivated.

There is one	e designation	relating to	the physical	landscape:
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Site Name	Character Area	Significance	Designation	Description
Ardleigh Gravel Pit	7A	National	SSSI	Exposed deposits belonging to the early Thames gravels containing rare plant macrofossils and evidence of an Early Middle Pleistocene age.

### Human Influences

The deep, stoneless, coarse loamy soils of the *Heathland Plateaux* have been intensively cultivated. Saxon estates were major landholdings with control of large tracts of land. The introduction of the medieval manorial system with large areas of common land being enclosed by the lords of the manors caused a major change in the landscape. The manorial parks, of which the heaths formed part, are now gone, but some of the woods and boundaries have survived. This period also saw the growing influence of religious orders with many parishes containing monastic landholdings, for example St Osyth's Priory and Wix Abbey, both established in the 12th century. During the 16th century brick became fashionable, fired using the fine London Clays of Tendring. This period saw a flourish of rebuilding including many churches and halls.

Enclosure of the open medieval fields and common lands by the Enclosure Acts of the late 18th century brought the ancient system of common cultivation to an end. The introduction of crop rotation and the improvement of farm implements increased productivity. The latter half of the 18th century was a time of high opportunity for millers and there was a rapid increase in windmills on the windswept plateau. By this stage brick was in general use although timber boarding was used on domestic buildings as a cheaper alternative. Greenhouses, orchards, copses and shelter belts are features of the productive landscape today and remnant heaths are now only identifiable by hedgerow vegetation and place names.

Site Name/ SM Number	Character Area	Significance	Designation	Description
133	7A	National	SAM	Settlement site NNE of Lawford House
194	7A	National	SAM	Site of Old St Mary's Church
199	7A	National	SAM	Crop mark site south of Ardleigh
32444	7A	National	SAM	World War 2 bombing decoy WRI Spinnels Farm
24	7B	National	SAM	St Osyth Priory (uninhabited portions) and gatehouse

The landscape type includes the following Scheduled Ancient Monuments:

### **Ecological Designations**

Site Name	Character Area	Significance	Designation	Description
Bullock Wood	7A	National	SINC, SSSI	An ancient coppice-with- standards woodland is recognised for its nationally rare lowland hazel (Corylus avellana) - sessile oak (Quercus patraea) stand type.
Cockaynes Wood	7A	Regional	SINC	Containing sweet chestnut ( <i>Castanea sativa</i> ) and pedunculate oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> ) and having a sparse ground flora, this site is a popular public recreation site
Paleagate Wood	7A	Regional	SINC	A woodland dominated by sweet chestnut ( <i>Castanea sativa</i> ). honeysuckle ( <i>Lonicera</i> <i>periclymenum</i> ) and bluebell ( <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> ) are amongst the ground flora.
Park Wood	7A	Regional	SINC	A small fragment of neglected ancient oak and sweet chestnut coppice. Only a narrow strip of woodland remains after much removed for extension of an orchard
Money Wood	7A	Regional	SINC	An ancient woodland of coppice- with-standards. It has been extensively storm damaged.

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Crestland Wood	7A	Regional	SINC	An ancient woodland site now containing both deciduous and coniferous species.
Hockley Wood	7A	Regional	SINC	A large semi natural coppice- with-standards ancient woodland mature standard trees include alder (Alnus glutinosa) and ash (Fraxinus excelsior).
Little Bentleyhall Wood	7A	Regional	SINC	An ancient woodland dominated by pedunculate oak standards.
Crockleford Heath Special Roadside Verges	7A	Regional	SINC	Three linear grassland habitats of generally strong floristic and habitat interest.
Special Roadside Verges		Regional	SINC	Grassland verges with interesting flora reflecting the acidic soil base.
Manor House Meadow	7A	Regional	SINC	An area of species-rich dry grassland rare within Tendring.
Riddles Wood	7B	National	SSSI	Best examples in Essex of chestnut coppice with rich and varied ground flora.
High Barn Wood	7B	Regional	SINC	An ancient woodland of sweet chestnut ( <i>Castanea sativa</i> ) and pedunculate oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> ).
Shair Wood	7B	Regional	SINC	An ancient woodland dominated by sweet chestnut ( <i>Castanea</i> <i>sativa</i> ) coppice and pedunculate oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> ) standards.
Milton Wood	7B	Regional	SINC	Severely storm damaged, the remaining canopy comprises pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) and sweet chestnut (Castanea sativa).
	7B	Regional	SINC	A small woodland dominated by pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) and sweet chestnut (Castanea sativa).
Simplebirch and Bowshots Wood	7B	Regional	SINC	Adjoining woodlands comprising mainly pedunculate oak (Quercus robur) and sweet chestnut (Castanea sativa).

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High Grove	7B	Regional	SINC	A small wood where sweet chestnut ( <i>Castanea sativa</i> ), ash ( <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ), hornbeam ( <i>Carpinus betulus</i> ) and silver birch ( <i>Betula pendula</i> ) are dominant.
Maldon Wood	7B	Regional	SINC	An ancient woodland almost entirely dominated by sweet chestnut ( <i>Castanea sativa</i> ) and standards of pedunculate oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> ).
Dines Farm Special Roadside Verge	7B	Regional	SINC	A grassland verge afforded special designation due to the floristic content, including nationally rare species.
Aingers Green Special Roadside Verges	7B	Regional	SINC	Grassland verges with interesting acidic-soil flora.
St Osyth Parkland	7B	Regional	SINC	A mosaic parkland of marshy and semi-improved neutral grassland, woodland, scrub and ponds.

### Settlement Form and Pattern

The Heathland Plateaux are typically characterised by scattered halls/churches, rural farms and villages. The pattern of halls/churches indicates an ancient settlement pattern, and the feudal system. Agricultural barns are distinctive landscape features in this area and often form landmarks. Many villages evolved from the manors. Other villages developed as farmsteads settled on the edges of greens, commons and heaths. Subsequent loss of heaths and infilling of village greens has progressively altered the character of these settlements, but their names often give a clue as to the origin of the settlement.

### Landscape Character Areas

- 7A Bromley Heaths
- 7B St Osyth/Great Bentley Heaths

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# **7B ST OSYTH/GREAT BENTLEY HEATHS**

### **KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

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- Southern extension of the Bromley Heaths encompassing Great Bentley and St Osyth.
- Highly productive open plateau of arable fields divided by low, gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow oaks.
- Ancient woodlands form backdrop to views and are typically sweet chestnut coppice with oak standards.
- The underlying sandy/acidic soils result in characteristic vegetation now largely restricted to the hedgerows and roadside verges which often contain gorse and bracken.
- Ancient settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, hamlets and villages, the villages traditionally focussed around a village green, heath or common.
- Network of narrow lanes connects the scattered farms and villages, some with important roadside trees or verges.
- Church towers are important landmark features.

### DESCRIPTION

The St Osyth/Great Bentley Heaths is a southern extension of the Bromley Heaths encompassing Great Bentley and Osyth. Like the Bromley Heaths it is also underlain by a solid geology of London Clay and capped by a veneer of glacial loam and the deep, coarse, loamy brown soils support good agricultural land.

The flat, open plateau is dominated by large scale, geometric fields indicative of late enclosure. These productive arable fields are divided by low, gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow oaks. The colour and texture of the agricultural landscape changes with the seasons resulting in a dynamic landscape. Although much woodland cover has been lost over the years as a result of agricultural intensification, a number of ancient woodlands break the monotony of the intensively cultivated landscape. Maldon Wood and Riddles Wood are sweet chestnut coppice with oak standards, but also including species such as hornbeam, birch, ash and wild service tree. The ground flora is typical of acidic woodland soil comprising species such as wood sage, foxglove, bracken and bluebells that carpet the woodland floor in spring. The sandy nature of the soil is also visible in the hedgerows and roadside verges which often contain gorse and bracken. Some of these roadside verges have been identified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) for their unusual acidic soil flora.

Groups of circular cropmarks unique to north-east Essex, and thought to be henges, are located at Little Bentley and Great Bentley indicating early settlement in this area. The low density, rural settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, hamlets and villages is an ancient one. The villages are traditionally focussed around a village green, heath or common although many of these have been infilled by inter-war smallholdings or more recent housing so that their structure is no longer visible. Great Bentley is a notable exception in that it has retained its village green and today boasts the largest village green in England. A number of former heaths including Weeley Heath, St Osyth Heath, South Heath and Angel Heath have been converted to smallholdings or fields. For example, Angel Heath is now the settlement of Ainger's Green. A network of narrow lanes connects the scattered farms and villages. Many of these are ancient, were previously grazed, and have important roadside trees or verges. This is an exposed and windswept plateau where the sky dominates in any view. As a result, landscape character is greatly affected by the state of the sky and communication towers, pylons and other vertical structures stand out as prominent elements. Its elevation allows good views from the edge of the plateau over surrounding landscapes, for example from Ainger's Green towards Brightlingsea and the coast. Church towers are important landmark features.

### EVALUATION

**Character:** This area has distinctive character field patterns, settlement character and vegetation types. However, the loss of landscape features such as heaths and commons, unimproved pastures, village greens, hedgerows and ancient woodlands as a result of agricultural intensification, development and Dutch elm disease means that landscape character of this area has been eroded. Overall, character is considered to be **moderate**.

**Condition:** This agricultural plateau landscape is intensively cultivated and well maintained, although the condition of the hedgerows and woodland has been declining through the loss of elm, reduction in need of stock proof field boundaries and lack of management of hedgerows and woodland. Landscape condition is therefore in **decline**.

### Change

- Loss of ancient and other deciduous woodland as a result of conversion to agricultural use.
- Neglect of traditional woodland management such as coppicing plus invasion of species in some of the ancient coppice woodlands leading to a decline in habitat quality.
- Loss of acid grassland and heath habitat and areas of common land.
- Infilling of village greens and former heaths with built development leading to loss of settlement structure, communal areas and village focus.
- Hedgerow loss associated with expansion of fields and agricultural intensification.
- Road improvements including signage, line painting and widening which threaten the intimate rural character of the historic lanes.
- Light pollution impact on the night landscape.

### Sensitivity

The plateau landscape is visually sensitive as a result of its open and rural character and long views. The remaining ancient woodlands, heaths, ancient lanes with diverse roadside verges, village greens and hedgerow oaks are particularly sensitive landscape features. Areas with high sensitivity to built development are those on the edge of the plateau overlooking the St Osyth Coastal Slopes (3C), the Alresford Valley System (6C) and the Holland Valley System (6D).

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### STRATEGY

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

### Landscape Management Strategy

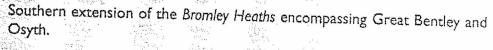
The landscape strategy for this the rural landscape of the St. Osyth/Great Bentley Heaths is to **conserve** the rural character and historic elements of the landscape and to **enhance** woodland cover, hedgerow condition and heathland character. The management strategy includes the following guidance:

- Consider the regeneration and management of heathland and acid grassland on former heathland areas.
- Enhance the wooded character of the landscape by promoting the planting of new woodlands or extending existing woodlands. Woodland creation should be through natural regeneration or using species typical of the area including oak, sweet chestnut, ash, hazel and birch.
- Conserve all ancient woodland sites, and promote appropriate management through natural regeneration, control of non-native species and reintroduction coppicing as a management tool for neglected woodlands.
- Promote management of hedgerows as coppice, particularly elm hedges which would be attacked by Dutch Elm Disease if left to grow. Oak and ash standards should be left to form future timber trees.
- Maintain the historic lanes with their ancient oaks and unimproved roadside verges. Resist road improvements or widening would threaten their rural character and biodiversity interest.
- Conserve the historic dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads, and the identity of individual settlements. Concrete kerbs, bright upward lighting and ornamental landscape planting all have an urbanising impact on the rural landscape.
- Service facilities, factories or employment sites that use local materials and informal native planting are likely to have less impact on landscape character.
- Ensure expansion of built development does not intrude onto the highly sensitive crests of slopes where development would be conspicuous on the skyline or restrict important views.

- 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.
- Opportunities exist for creation of some innovative landscapes and architecture provided they fit with the scale of the landscape, utilise local materials and planting species and maintain the scattered rural settlement pattern.
- Use of full cut-off lights and sensitively designed lighting schemes can reduce the impact of light pollution on the rural environment and night skies.
- Conserve/maintain views to important landmarks such as manorial halls and church towers and conserve the setting of these features.

# 7B ST OSYTH / GREAT BENTLEY HEATHS





Highly productive open plateau of arable fields divided by low, gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow oaks.

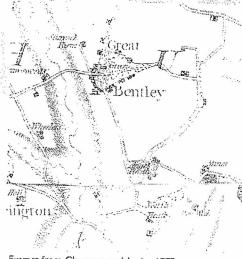
Ancient woodlands form backdrop to views and are typically sweet chestnut coppice with oak standards.

Sandy nature of the soil is visible in the hedgerows and roadside verges which often contain gorse and bracken.

Traditional rural settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, hamlets and villages, the villages traditionally focussed around a village green, heath or common, but including more recent linear development.

Network of narrow lanes connects the scattered farms and villages, some with important roadside trees or verges.

## SETTLEMENT CHARACTER



Extract from Chapman and Andre 1777

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The settlement pattern is an ancient pattern of isolated farms, hamlets and villages. Scattered farmsteads are often large and have extensive outbuildings. The rural villages are usually set around a village green. Great Bentley is reputed to have the largest village green in England, but Aingers Green has lost its historic village green as a result of housing infill. St Osyth would have been the earliest settlement in this area, possibly dating back to the 8th century. It is essentially a small medieval town associated with the powerful Priory of St Osyth. The medieval village was probably clustered around a village green which then developed into a market place. The former market place has since been mostly infilled by buildings. St Osyth Heath, by contrast, is a rural hamlet of scattered rural settlement on a former isolated heath. A similar pattern of development is evident at Row Heath and South Heath. More modern development has extended some villages and there are in addition more recent bungalow developments along the rural lanes.

# BUILT CHARACTER

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St Osyth's Priory is probably the oldest building in the area with some parts dating back to the early 12th century. The lack of building stone in this part of Essex means that the Priory buildings have mostly been built in brick. It has an impressive 15th century gatehouse exhibiting a good example of Essex 'flushwork', which uses split flints to infill the freestone decoration. The gatehouse is set back from the road behind 'The Bury', an historic village green. The churches, many of which date back to the 12-14th centuries, are the next oldest built elements and are constructed from flint, ashlar stone, timber and brick. The rural farmsteads are often constructed from red brick and ornate in their design. The agricultural outbuildings are typically red brick and black clapboard with red clay tile roofs. They are long and low and of a simple design, their roofs highly visible in the landscape.

The rural hamlets and villages contain cottages, typically of a simple design and set directly onto the street. They are often plastered and painted or clad in weatherboard. The roofs are typically steeply pitched and traditionally clay tiled and the roofscape is enlivened by dormer windows and chimneys.

Settlement around village greens.



Colour render is typical.

### GUIDANCE

The St Osyth/Great Bentley Heaths has maintained an ancient rural settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads with distinct villages set around greens, and loose scattered development on areas of former heath. The strategy should be to conserve this distinct settlement character. This pattern should provide the framework for accommodating any further development. The plateau edges are particularly sensitive to development.

#### General

- The large scale open landscape means that particular care must be taken in the siting and design. Any new development, even of single farm buildings has the potential to be highly visible over long distances,
- The plateau edges frequently form a skyline. Any built development in these locations could be higly visible
- Maintain the historic dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets, scattered farmsteads and distinct rural villages. Further incremental linear development along roads would disrupt this pattern. The identity of individual villages
- Church towers frequently form prominent landmark features within this open landscape and views to these features should be conserved.
- Care should be taken in the siting of communication masts or other vertical elements isolated elements may act as landmark features but several can lead to a cluttered skyline.
- New buildings should be constructed in such as way that they blend with the landscape in scale, colour and design. In this area the presence of large blocks of native woodland suggests that new woodland creation may be appropriate to help integrate buildings into the landscape.
- Areas of new residential development should generally be closely related to existing settlements there may be opportunities to restore or re-create village greens as a focus for development.
- The loose pattern of settlement around village greens or former areas of heathland, such as at St. Osyth should be maintained. Infill and extensions would create a different compact character.
- New employment sites must be well located in relation to existing settlements. Redundant agricultural buildings may offer opportunities for re use as employment sites.
- Opportunities exist for innovative architecture provided it fits with the scale of the landscape, responds to local landform and utilises local materials.

### Local References

- Plastered and pastel painted finishes and weatherboard are particularly characteristic in the coastal locations.
- Roofs are typically steeply pitched and finished in clay effect tiles of muted colours. Simple dormer windows and chimneys add vernacular interest to the roofscape.
- Roofs of agricultural barns and other low buildings are critical to their appearance. Features of interest, such as louvred panels, can add detail to farm buildings.