

7.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF UTTLESFORD DISTRICT

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7.1 General

7.1.1 This section of the report provides the detailed ‘profiles’ of Landscape Character Areas within Uttlesford District, structured as follows:

- Location of character area (map)
- Boundaries of character area (map)
- Photograph
- Key characteristics
- Overall character description
- Visual characteristics
- Historic land use
- Ecological features
- Key planning and land management issues
- Sensitivities to change
- Proposed landscape strategy objectives
- Suggested landscape planning guidelines
- Suggested land management guidelines

The profiles should be read as a whole when used to inform decision making. Where Landscape Character Areas fall within two or more adjacent District/Borough areas included in this Study report, the same profile has been included within the respective section. In such instances, a cross-reference is noted in the respective Character Area profile(s). Reference should also be made to other studies for neighbouring authority areas including:

- South Cambridgeshire District/Cambridgeshire County Studies
- Hertfordshire County Landscape Character Assessment Studies

7.1.2 The following Landscape Character Types and Areas have been identified within Uttlesford District (see Figure 7.1), and are described in the following sections:

A - River Valley Landscapes

- A1 - Cam River Valley
- A3 - Stort River Valley
- A5 - Pant River Valley
- A6 - Upper Chelmer River Valley

B - Farmland Plateau Landscapes

- B1 - Ashdon Farmland Plateau
- B2 - Hempstead Farmland Plateau
- B3 - Bumpstead Farmland Plateau
- B7 - Debden Farmland Plateau
- B8 - Thaxted Farmland Plateau
- B10 - Broxted Farmland Plateau
- B11 - Lindsell & Bardfield Farmland Plateau
- B12 - Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau
- B13 - Rayne Farmland Plateau
- B14 - Roding Farmland Plateau
- B15 - Pleshey Farmland Plateau

B16 - Felsted Farmland Plateau

H - Chalk Upland Landscapes

H1 - Elmdon Chalk Upland

H2 - Arkesden Chalk Upland

H3 - Langley Chalk Upland

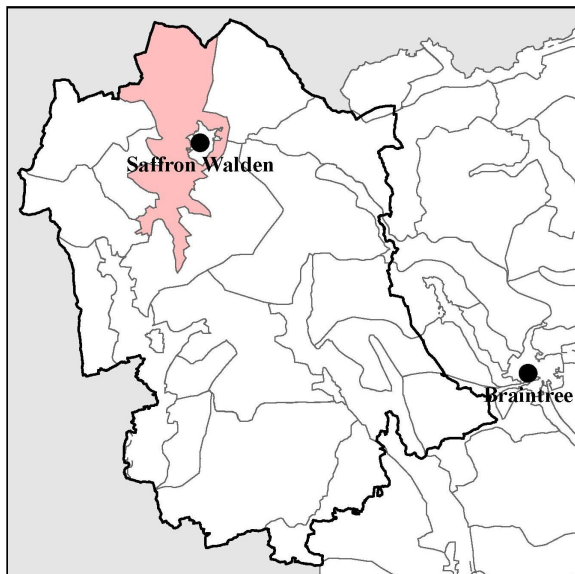
H4 - Berden and Farnham Chalk Upland

7.2 River Valley Landscapes

7.2.1 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Landscape Character Areas:

- V-shaped or u-shaped landform which dissects Boulder Clay/Chalky Till plateau
- Main river valley served by several tributaries
- Flat or gently undulating valley floor
- Intimate character in places
- Wooded character in places

A1 CAM RIVER VALLEY

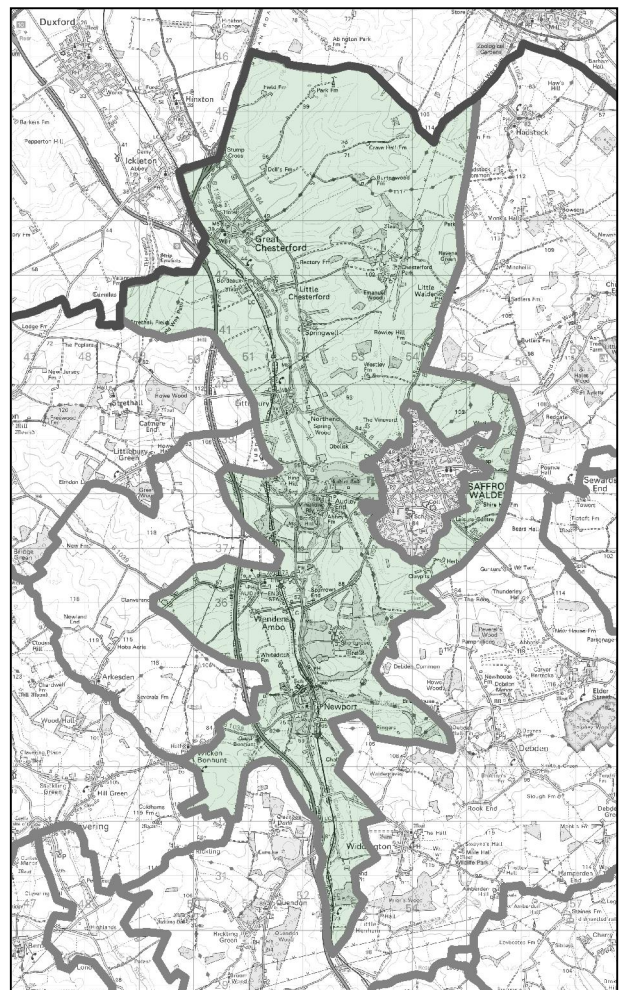


Key Characteristics

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

Overall Character

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



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

Visual Characteristics

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

Historic Land Use

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

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

Ecological Features

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

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

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

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

Sensitivities to Change

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

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

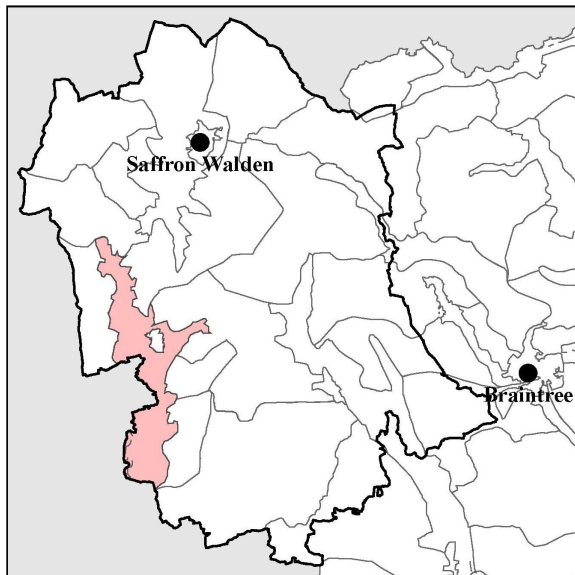
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

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

A3 STORT RIVER VALLEY

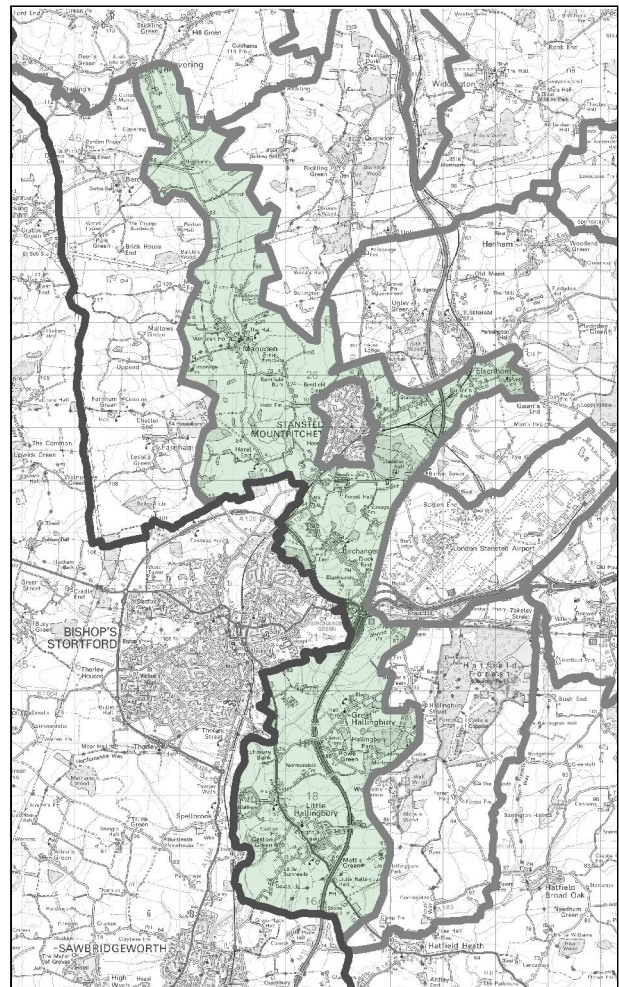


Key Characteristics

- Gently sloping, sometimes steep river valley slopes dominated by arable farmland.
- Small to medium scale field pattern defined by hedgerows, tree belts, woodland blocks in places.
- Location of River Stort well delineated by riverbank trees.
- Continuous views down the valley from higher ground, and at some bridging points.
- The large village of Stansted Mountfitchet, dispersed farmsteads and the smaller villages of Clavering and Maunden.
- Below Stansted Mountfitchet valley slopes still contain arable farmland but countryside character changes to one of busy roads and lanes and more dense settlement.

(Sub-Unit A3a)

- Very narrow valley floor within upper reaches of River Stort.
- Meanders through small linear fields of arable farmland, fringed by wet pasture, and unimproved wet grassland.
- Equestrian riding stables are a frequent feature
- Riverbanks well vegetated with shrubs and trees, creating an intimate character.
- Open views of the river only possible from farmland properties on its banks, at bridging points or fords.
- Some sunken lanes and species-rich embanked verges.



Overall Character

The Stort River Valley possesses a varied character area that changes from a relatively peaceful and rural character in the north, progressing to a busier and more urban character around Stansted Mountfitchet and the Hallingburys in the south. This area is characterised by scattered farmsteads, moats, small lanes and historic buildings that demonstrate the river's historic importance as a site for settlement and industry. The location of Stansted Airport within this Character Area has brought rapid growth to the surrounding villages, and the effects of heavy traffic and aircraft noise are evident particularly near Stansted Mountfitchet and Elsenham. The valley floor is identified as a distinctive sub-unit in itself. It is extremely narrow and heavily wooded in places, and comprises primarily arable farmland right up to river's edge for much of the valley's length. On the lower slopes, in the valley floor and near settlements, pasture and some mixed farming can also be seen. Open and continuous views are frequent along the slopes from higher ground in the northern part of the valley, but become more enclosed south of Stansted Mountfitchet due to urban development and woodland blocks. The valley has a semi-enclosed character due to the density of the hedgerows, copses and tree belts/woodland hangars that frame most views. This is a medium to large scale landscape, with a fairly regular field pattern. Small winding lanes are typical along the valley slopes, often sunk between highly embanked species-rich verges that sometimes contain old oaks. Small villages, dispersed hamlets, and isolated agricultural buildings characterise the settlement pattern over the slopes to the north. Traditional buildings are primarily cream or white colour-washed plaster with thatched roofs, although mellow red brick predominates in some villages like Manuden. Stansted Mountfitchet has a historic core with a large number of vernacular buildings, although it is surrounded by modern infill developments. Villages such as Great and Little Hallingbury have developed around distinctive village greens/commons.

Visual Characteristics

- Long views across the river valley to the opposite slopes are possible from roads and lanes on higher ground in the northern reaches of the valley, and at bridging points.
- Church spires an occasional feature appearing above wooded skylines.
- The church at Manuden is visible across the floodplain pasture from the Harcamlow Way.
- Local views along river floor of wet meadows and tree-lined riverbanks at Gaston Green.
- Views of the river valley are more channelled by trees or development in the central and southern parts near Bishop Stortford and Stansted Airport.
- Stansted Mountfitchet visible across the farmlands from the north.
- Stansted Airport and Tower are visible from eastern river valley slopes.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a network of twisting lanes, often sunken, with irregular fields of pre-18th century origin interspersed with linear greens and a number of former common fields. Historic settlement is largely dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farms, many moated sites and small hamlets, often along linear greens, with clusters of settlement at the Hallingburys. The main historic landscape features include:

- The hillfort of Wallbury Camp, which remains a major visible feature in the landscape.
- Large medieval parks including Hallingbury Hall.
- More regular fields against the borders of the Forest fringe, probably the result of encroachment on the forest itself.
- Numerous small former commons and linear greens.
- Enclosed meadow pasture which survives in the valley floors.
- Stansted Mountfitchet, centred on its castle and medieval market-place.
- A significant proportion of ancient woodland, and many hedgerows of considerable antiquity.
- A number of parks or former parks including Stansted Hall.
- Intricate, twisting and sunken roads of ancient origins.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture interspersed with settlements. However, the area does contain 19 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Little Hallingbury Marsh SSSI comprising diverse wetland habitats along the River Stort.
- Six CWSs largely comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland including: Houghets Wood, Durrell's Wood (75 hectares), Wilkin's Plantation, Hazel End Wood, Digby Wood and Birchanger Wood (200 hectares).
- Twelve CWSs comprising pasture and a variety of grassland and wetland habitats including: Manuden Church Yard, Strip Lynchets, Aubrey Buxton Reserve, Gall End Meadow, The Mount, Stansted Marsh, Parsonage Spring, part of the Flich Way, Rushy Mead, Wallbury Plantation and Marsh, Hallingbury Mill Pastures and Little Hallingbury Church Yard.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential impact of Stansted 2nd runway on degree of tranquillity and visual intrusion of new roads/runway itself.
- Potential for pollution of the river, marshland and ditches from fertilizer and pesticide run-off from the surrounding valley sides and farmland plateau.
- Potential loss of riverside marshland and pastures due to agricultural encroachment.
- Visual intrusion of road traffic in undeveloped floodplain landscape, particularly where the M11 and the B1060 cross the area.
- Potential pressure from urban expansions on the edge of Stansted Mountfitchet.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include hedgerows, tree belts, woodland blocks and copses that frame several views across and out of the area. Potential new development, which may result in the loss of these features, would change the visual character and nature of views within and to the area. Within the valley floor, small linear fields of arable farmland, fringed by wet pasture and unimproved wet grassland are also sensitive to changes in land management. Sunken lanes and species-rich embanked verges are also key landscape features. Strong historic integrity is visible within the settlement pattern in the form of village greens and former commons, isolated farms, many moated sites, smaller hamlets and historic cores containing many vernacular buildings (for example Stansted Mountfitchet). The slopes of the valley are visually sensitive with long panoramic views across and along the floodplain. Views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. Several important wildlife habitats are scattered throughout the area (including 18 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising a mixture of wetland habitats, pasture and ancient woodland). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

Restore - seek to reinforce and/or reinstate historic landscape patterns and features that contribute to sense of place and time depth, by repairing distinctive elements that have been lost or degraded.

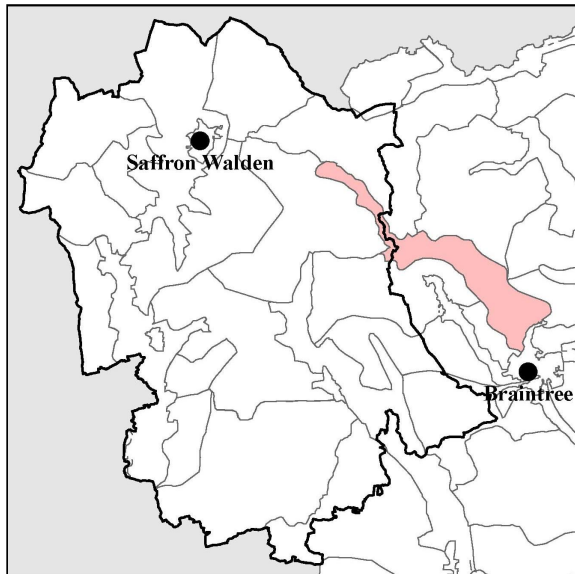
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Consider the landscape pattern and structure of large woodland areas and the role that they have in the composition of views to and from the area.
- Ensure that new riverside planting is designed to enhance landscape character and that species composition reflects local character.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale and that it responds to historic settlement pattern, form and building materials.
- Seek to control and manage pesticide and fertilizer run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Ensure the scale and siting for any new settlement responds to local landscape character.
- Ensure any small-scale development in or on the edges of historic villages is of an appropriate scale, form, and design and uses materials which reflect the local vernacular.
- Develop sustainable local transport solutions to mitigate traffic congestion and reduce demand for new roads.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve the intimate character of the floodplain by appropriate planting of bankside trees.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient woodland as historical landscape and nature conservation features.
- Consider the visual impact of new farm buildings on the valley slopes and encourage the planting of tree groups around visually intrusive buildings.
- Conserve and seek to restore marginal riverside habitat such as marshland and pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands.
- Conserve and restore historic hedgerow pattern and ditch system.
- Manage roadside rubbish behind Stansted Airport (service roads-east side).

A5 PANT RIVER VALLEY (shared with Braintree District)

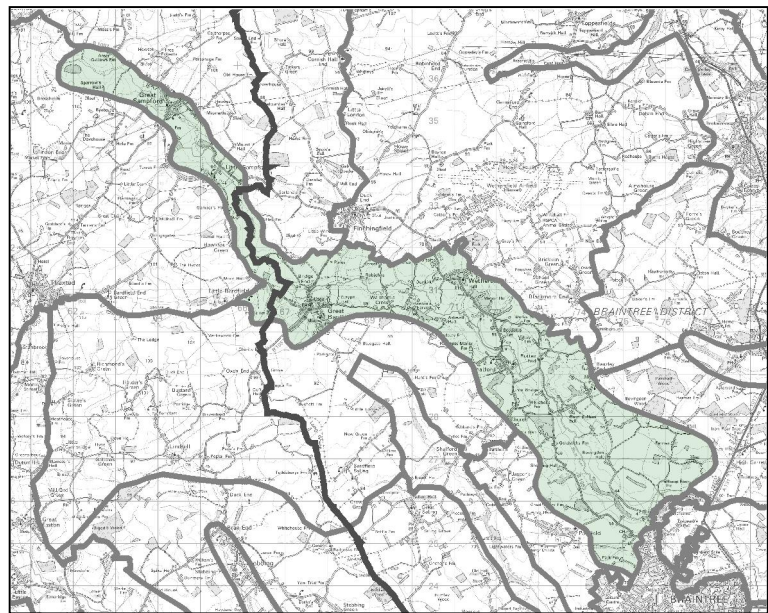


Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley.
- Predominantly arable farmland with well hedged medium to large fields on valley slopes.
- The valley is narrow with undulating valley sides.
- Some linear poplar and willow plantations along the valley floor adjacent to the river.

Overall Character

The head of the River Pant valley is narrow by Little Sampford and widens as the river flows down the valley until it joins the River Blackwater at Braintree. The valley for its whole length is shallow, with undulating valley sides. The valley sides are dominated by medium to large arable fields bounded by low well trimmed hedgerows. Some hedges by the roads are taller with more hedgerow trees. In contrast, the valley floor and lower slopes are dominated by small to medium sized pastoral fields. Some are wet meadows adjacent to the river banks and are associated with wet woodland. In addition, there is a pig farm with its fields sparsely covered in vegetation on the valley slopes between Shalford and Braintree. Hedge banks or grass banks line the roads, especially in the valley. Several small, often linear settlements are located on the valley slopes with a few in the valley such as Shalford. There are a number of local vernacular buildings (timber frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs are common). Upstream from Braintree there is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the river valley with several quiet, rural lanes and footpaths winding through the landscape.



Visual Characteristics

- The church of Shalford adjacent to Shalford Hall and sewage works form a key landmark downstream of the village.
- Generally open views into the gently meandering valley, which are framed in places by small patches of woodland or hedgerow trees.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older. In the valley bottom there are extensive tracts of enclosed meadow. Historically the settlement comprised very dispersed settlement of church/hall complexes, manors, farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along extensive network of linear and triangular greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- Numerous small areas of ancient woodland on the higher ground, and areas of 19th to 20th century woodland or scrub in the valley floor.
- Slight to moderate post-1950s field loss, which largely takes the form of amalgamation of smaller fields in order to provide larger units, however, the overall grain to the landscape remains largely unchanged.
- The significant modern intrusions of the Second World War airfield at Wethersfield.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture within the valley of the River Pant. The area contains 16 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Seven CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Warren Grove, The Willows/Hawkins Harvest, Lady's Hole Alder Coppice, Shalford Park/Levelly Wood, Great Codham Hall Wood, Bovingdon Rows and Oak Wood.
- Eight CWSs with unimproved grassland, wetland and scrub habitats including Bridge End Meadow, Great Bardfield Marsh, Blackmore End to Wethersfield Special Roadside Verge, Beazley End, Sheering Hall Spring, Bocking Special Roadside Verge, part of Oxney Wood and Cow Wood.
- Wethersfield Manor Lake CWS and 'EWT Reserve' with open water habitat.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Clearance of fields and hedgerows for pipeline on the valley slopes between Shalford and Walthams Cross.
- Potential for pollution of the River Pant from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural valley slopes.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods and rush hour.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include low, well-trimmed hedgerows, wet meadows and wet woodland adjacent to the riverbank, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The skyline of the valley slopes are visually sensitive to potential new development, with open views possible along across and along the river corridor. Views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. Historic integrity is relatively strong with extensive tracts of enclosed meadow along the valley floor, a dispersed settlement pattern of church/hall complexes, manors, farms, moated sites and small hamlets and a number of local vernacular buildings (timber-frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs). Several important wildlife habitats are scattered throughout the area (including 16 sites of importance for nature conservation,

comprising a mixture of ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, hedgerows, roadside verges and open water habitats). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

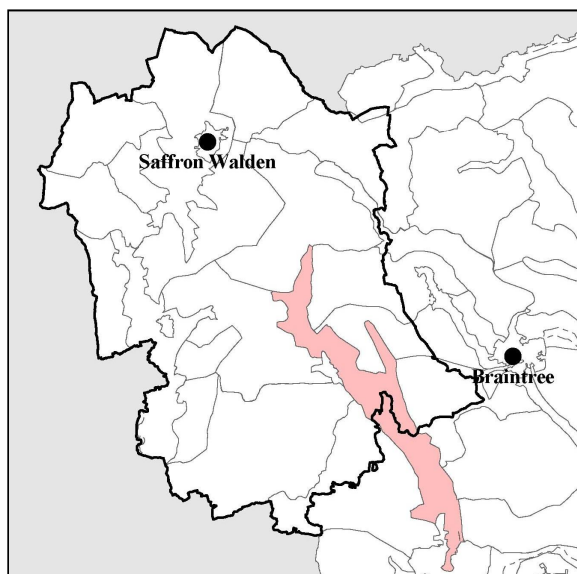
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon valley slopes.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting which is appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

A6 UPPER CHELMER RIVER VALLEY (shared with Chelmsford Borough)

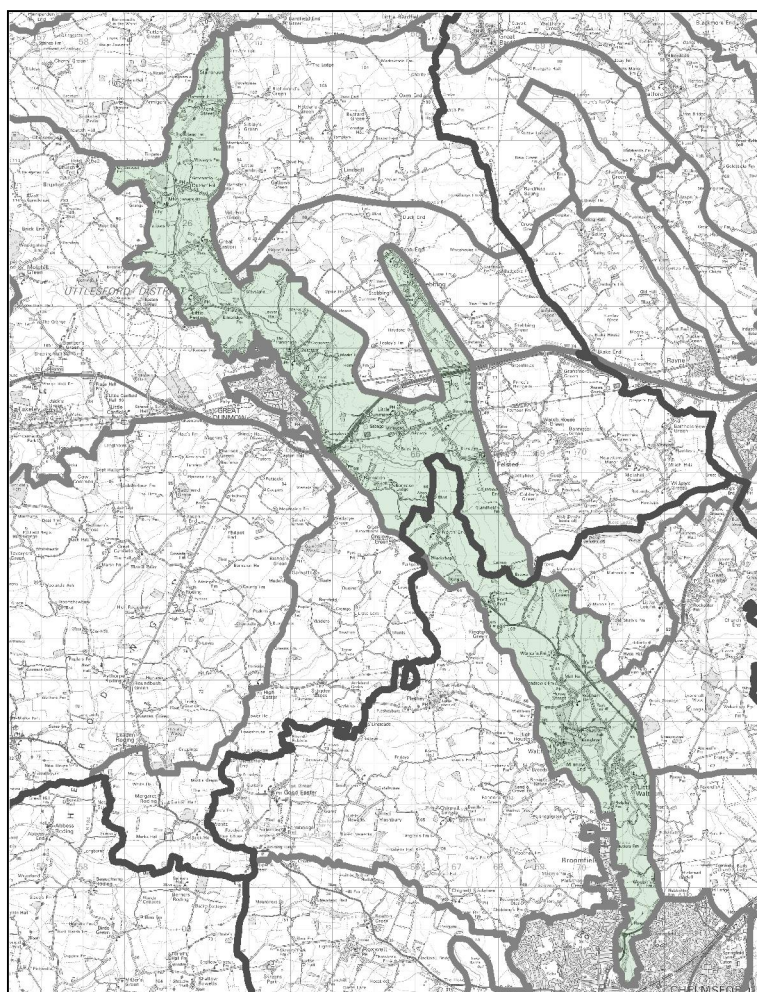


Key Characteristics

- Narrow valley, with a restricted valley floor.
- Small meandering river channel on the left side of the valley close to the rising ground of the valley side.
- Dense riverside trees.
- Arable valley sides with a fairly open character.
- Small linear settlements occupy the upper valley sides or straggle down to a few bridging points.
- Historic watermills and Second World War pillboxes are distinctive features.
- Mostly tranquil away from Great Dunmow, Chelmsford and the A120.

Overall Character

The River Chelmer and its valley stretches from the southern edge of the historic town of Thaxted with its tall church spire and wind mill, southwards to the point at which the river meets the urban edge of Chelmsford. It is a narrow valley within the surrounding gently undulating boulder clay plateau. There are several small tributary streams that form valley sides such as the Stebbing Brook that joins the River Chelmer north of Felsted. The gently undulating valley floor has an enclosed character and restricted views often framed by the many riverside and hedgerow



trees, a string of small wet woodlands and the sloping valley sides. The undulating valley sides which are steep in places, have a more open character with low thick but fragmented hedgerows, scattered hedgerow trees and only occasional woods separating the large arable fields that line the valley sides meeting at the river. The fields to the east of the River Chelmer tend to be larger and more regular in shape. Those to west of the river tend to be smaller pastoral fields or areas of rough pasture or wet meadow in the small floodplain with larger arable fields dominating the valley sides. As the River Chelmer approaches Chelmsford it becomes more sinuous and meanders further from the east valley side. The majority of the settlements excluding Great Dunmow are situated high on the valley sides with very limited modern development. Great Dunmow is located within the western side of the river valley with the urban edge crossing the river and forming a finger of new development on the east side of the valley to the south of the main town. The new development dominates views across the valley south of the town. The river valley is lined by roads running parallel to the valley along the top of the valley sides. There are also a few small narrow lanes that cross the river before joining the road on the opposite valley side. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of local vernacular buildings with timber-frames, bright colour washed walls and thatched roofs. Examples of such houses include a group of 17th century timber-framed houses clustered around the Manor in Little Easton. The motte and ditch of Great Easton castle with the ground so Easton Hall also provides a visible landmark. Barnson Hall and Lodge, Liberty Hall, Chatham Hall and associated deer park also contribute to the character and overall strong sense of place. There is an overall sense of tranquillity within the river valley, with a comprehensive network of public rights of way and narrow lanes winding through the landscape. The river valley permeates Chelmsford introducing an important green corridor of ‘natural’ character into the urban fabric of the town.

Visual Characteristics

- The church tower at Great Easton (St. John and St. Giles), Little Easton (St Mary the Virgin), Little Dunmow (St. Mary the Virgin) and Barnston (St. Andrews) and the spire of the church in Thaxted form landmarks within views into and across the valley slopes.
- Generally open views from the valley sides into the gently meandering valley floodplain, which are framed in places by small patches of woodland.
- Enclosed and framed views along the valley corridor.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by extensive enclosed meadow pastures along the river valley floodplains and pre-18th century generally irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older. Whilst much 20th century development has occurred, particularly in and around Little Waltham, the original medieval pattern of dispersed settlements and scattered farmsteads largely survives, with isolated farms, moated sites, and small hamlets strung out along linear greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- Several areas of Ancient woodlands, particularly in the Ter valley.
- A limited number of small historic parklands.
- Occasional common fields, which has been later enclosed piecemeal by agreement.
- A number of parks or former parks including Easton Lodge at Little Easton, which subsequently became a World War II airfield.
- The line of the Roman road from Chelmsford to Braintree, which effectively bisects the area.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture within the valley of the River Chelmer. The area contains 23 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Nine CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Eseley Wood, Home Wood, Bush Wood, Hoglands Wood/Frederick's Spring, Markshill Wood, Clobbs Wood.
- Three CWSs of woodland habitats to the south.

- Fourteen CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitat including Flich Way and Felsted Fen.
- Twelve CWSs with species-rich hedgerows and copses; and along the River Chelmer and its tributaries including Stebbing Brook.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the River Chelmer and its tributaries from fertilizer and pesticide run-off from agricultural valley slopes and floor.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential residential expansion of villages onto valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agriculture intensification.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include dense riverside trees and a string of small wet woodland on the sloping valley sides, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive, with open and framed cross-valley views and long views along the river corridor potentially affected by new tall or non-screened new development. Views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. Historic integrity is strong, with a largely surviving pattern of medieval dispersed settlements, isolated farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along linear greens, small historic parklands and a number of churches and local vernacular buildings with timber-frames, bright colour-washed walls and thatched roofs. Several important wildlife habitats are scattered throughout the area (including 23 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, species-rich hedgerows and copses). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon valley sides.
- Conserve and enhance cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Protect and enhance the role of the river valley in providing a network of informal open space and nature conservation sites.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Strengthen the recreational role of the woodland resource.

- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the green 'natural' character of the river valley through appropriate management of wildlife habitats.

7.3 Farmland Plateau Landscapes

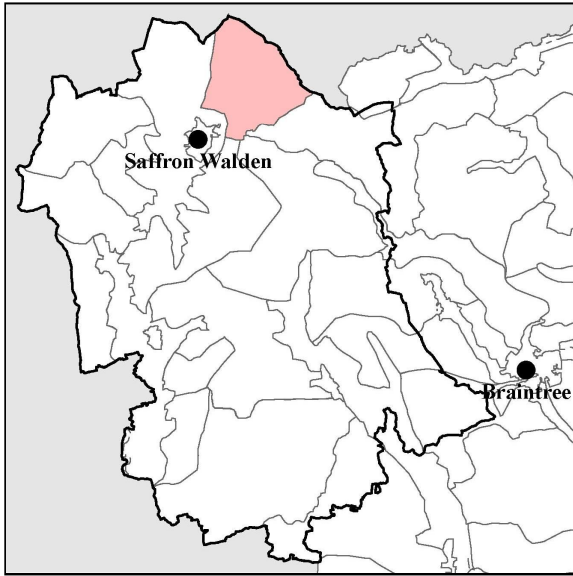
7.3.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

- Elevated gently rolling Boulder Clay/Chalky Till plateau landscape which is incised by river valleys
- Network of winding lanes and minor roads
- Medium to large-scale enclosed predominantly arable fields
- Long distance views across valleys from certain locations
- Well wooded in places (with several areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland)

7.3.2 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Landscape Character Areas:

- B1 - Ashdon Farmland Plateau
- B2 - Hempstead Farmland Plateau
- B3 - Bumpstead Farmland Plateau
- B7 - Debden Farmland Plateau
- B8 - Thaxted Farmland Plateau
- B10 - Broxted Farmland Plateau
- B11 - Lindsell & Bardfield Farmland Plateau
- B12 - Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau
- B13 - Rayne Farmland Plateau
- B14 - Roding Farmland Plateau
- B15 - Pleshey Farmland Plateau
- B16 - Felsted Farmland Plateau

B1 ASHDON FARMLAND PLATEAU

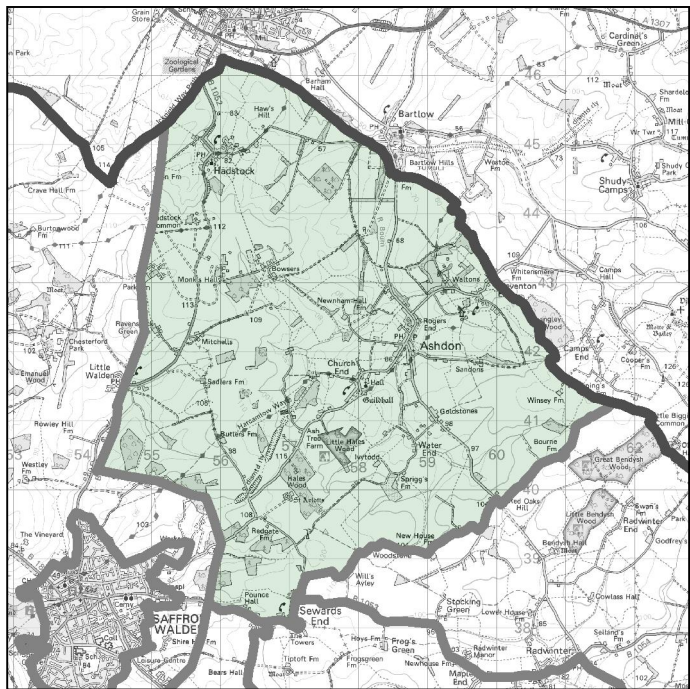


Key Characteristics

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

Overall Character

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



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

Visual Characteristics

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

Historic Land Use

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

Ecological Features

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

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

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

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

Sensitivities to Change

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

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

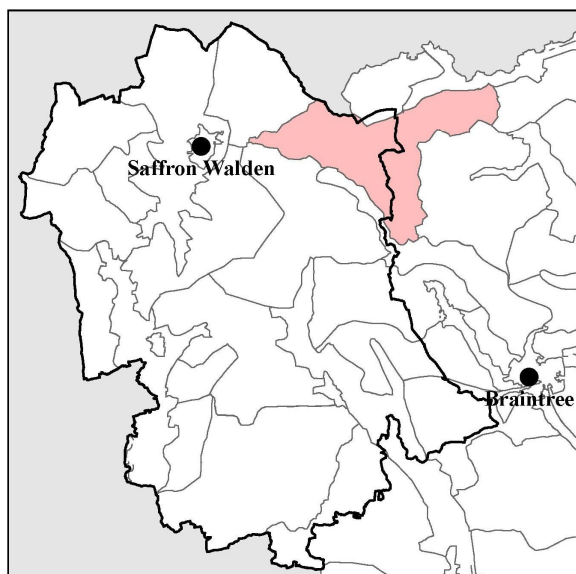
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

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

B2 HEMPSTEAD FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Braintree District)

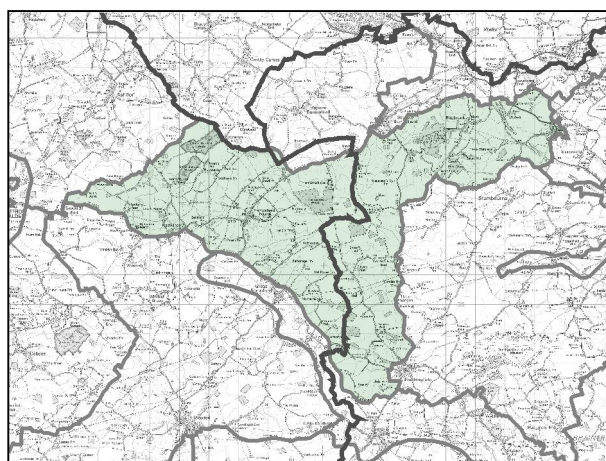


Key Characteristics

- Rolling arable farmland and hills surrounding steep valleys with small streams.
- Settlements located in the valleys.
- Number of interesting and colourful vernacular buildings within small linear settlements.
- Overall strong sense of tranquillity and sense of place.

Overall Character

This character area encompasses rolling hills and valleys predominantly covered by medium scale arable fields stretching from Steeple Bumpstead in the north, Ridgewell in the east, edge of Finchingfield in the south and Radwinter in the west. Small copses of woodland occasionally punctuate fields. The woodland areas are either deciduous or mixed with coniferous trees and irregular in shape. A lot of the woodland in the area is located in close proximity to roads and buildings. Boundaries of fields are generally delineated by low well maintained hedges or tree belts. The tree belts combined with the woodlands in places create an enclosed feel to the landscape with trees lining the horizon. Several small, often linear settlements are located in the valleys such as Cornish Hall End, Hempstead, Finkley Green and Stocking Green. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of local vernacular buildings with timber frames, colour wash and red tiled roofs. These are often found in the small villages and hamlets or as isolated farmsteads on the tops of the rolling hills. There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area, with a network of quiet rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.



Visual Characteristics

- The key landmarks are the churches with towers or spires within views into and across the valleys.
- The farmsteads provide landmarks on the top of the rolling hills.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a mixture of pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and former common fields, usually enclosed in the 18th century by piecemeal agreement. In the valley bottom there are extensive tracts of enclosed meadow. Substantial pockets of woodland survive, as does the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages focussed on greens and commons, and scattered farmsteads in an irregular field and woodland pattern. The main historic landscape features include:

- A number of ancient woodlands on the higher ground, and in the valley floors are areas of 19th to 20th century woodland or scrub.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss, creating some areas of large, but still irregular, fields. Interestingly, those fields most affected are the former common fields which are hence being restored to their original dimensions.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 30 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Eighteen CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Great and Little Bendysh Wood, Holbrook Wood, Burntfield Grove, Wilderness Grove, Tilekiln Grove, Roundlay Grove, Oak Wood, Homestead Grove, Hempstead Wood, Lakehouse Grove, Oldhall Wood, Maze Plantation, Moyns Park, Park Wood, Three Chimneys Wood, Great Howe Wood and Long Almonds Grove.
- Twelve CWSs with unimproved grassland and wetland habitats including: Radwinter Manor Place, Plough Meadow, Cowless Hall Meadow, Haylocks Fen, Hempstead Church Meadow, Wincelow Pasture, Great Sampford Sand Pit, Little Sampford – Maynards, Sampford Hall Wood, Mounthall Wood, Howe Farm Meadow and Martin's Farm Meadow.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the streams and rivers located in the bottom of the river valleys.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include small copses of woodland and low, well-maintained hedges or tree belts (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The skyline along the rolling hills is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a historic and scattered or dispersed settlement pattern, which is sensitive to potential large-scale development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 30 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, semi-natural grassland and wetland habitats), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

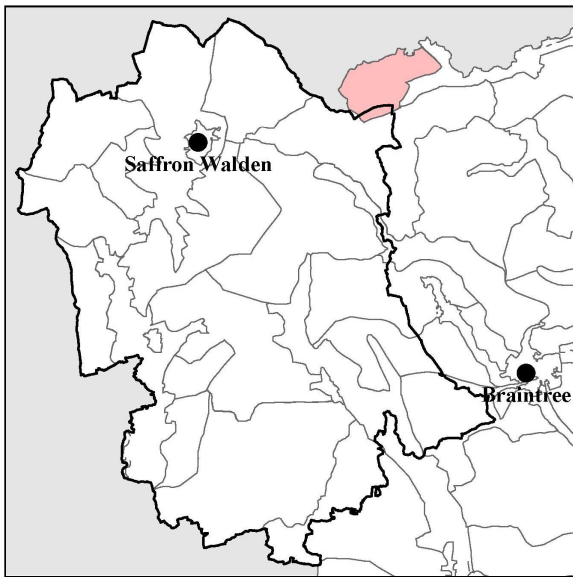
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and into the valleys.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Develop strategies for managing and monitoring traffic on minor roads.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

B3 BUMPSTEAD FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Braintree District)

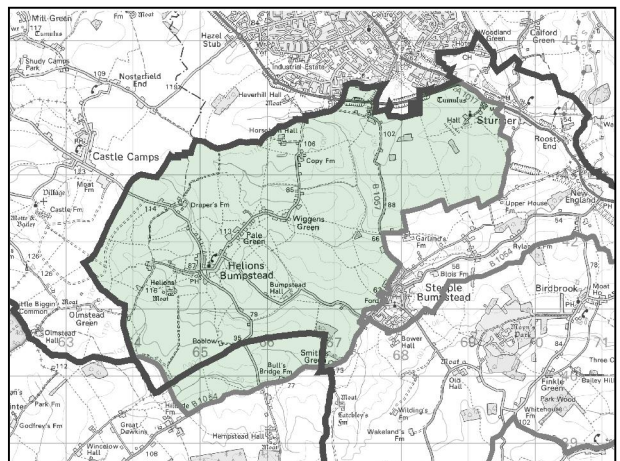


Key Characteristics

- Medium to large scale arable fields bounded by hedges with trees and ditches.
- Rolling hills and deep narrow valleys.
- Dissected by narrow rural lanes lined with hedges or ditches.
- Small villages, hamlets with a wealth of historic buildings.
- Tranquil character.

Overall Character

The Character Area stretches from Haverhill in the north, Sturmer in the east, South Green in the south and Castle Camps in the west. It encompasses rolling hills and valleys covered by medium to large scale arable fields with scattered isolated farmsteads and dwellings, creating a medium scale landscape. The fields overlie pebbly clay drifts over Bagshot Beds which lead to acidic fertile soils ideal for arable use. Deciduous hedges with trees, interspersed with small copses, delineate the fields. The hedgerow condition varies from low well managed to gappy hedgerows with trees. However there are no large areas of woodland within the area. Rural roads and public rights of way cross this open rural landscape. The area is in general very tranquil and peaceful away from Haverhill and its bypass. Helions Bumpstead forms the main settlement and is nestled in a valley. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of the timber framed cottages with colour washed walls with either red tiled or thatched roofs that occur in the villages or as isolated dwellings.



Visual Characteristics

- Panoramic views in all directions.
- Key landmarks are the village churches and towers on tops of hills and Haverhill industrial estates.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a complex mix of pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and common arable

field enclosed by agreement. The latter type of field had largely been enclosed by the mid-19th century, and is more concentrated in the eastern half of the area. Historically the settlement was very dispersed, consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small hamlets. The main historic landscape features include:

- Small areas of ancient woodland, scattered along the ridge.
- Ancient enclosed meadows in the tributaries of the River Stour.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss, rising to high on a number of farms.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture adjacent to the urban area of Haverhill. The area contains 5 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Four CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats: Balance Wood, Garlands Wood, Greatley Wood and Bex Grove.
- Bumpstead Hall Road Verge CWS of unimproved grassland habitats.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Decline in traditional countryside management, e.g. gappy hedgerows.
- Encroachment of Haverhill industrial estates on views.
- Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams that flow through the area from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include deciduous hedgerow trees, interspersed with small copses, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline of the tops of areas of rolling hills is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern (consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small hamlets) which is sensitive to potential large-scale development. The area also contains several patches of ancient woodland, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate – to high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

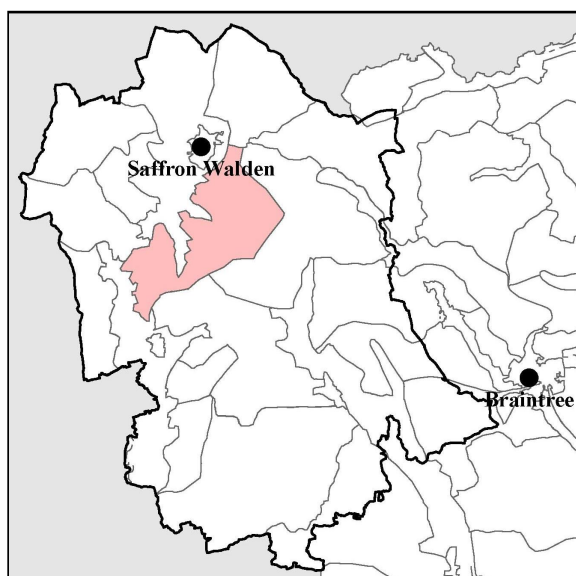
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Ensure new built development is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve panoramic views.
- Screen visual detractors, e.g. Haverhill industrial estates.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

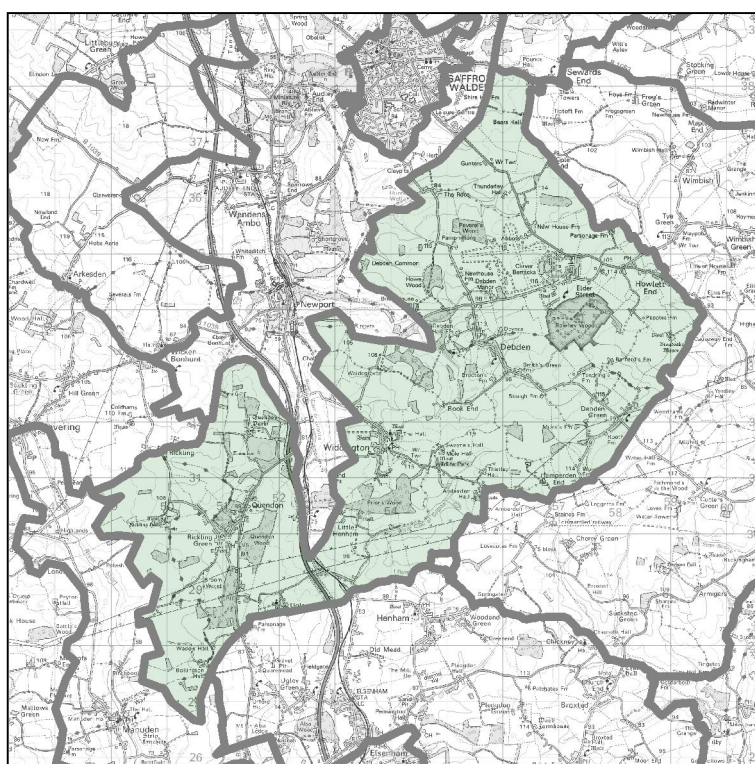
- Conserve and manage field boundaries, and strengthen where necessary through planting native species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage woodland/ancient woodland/trees.
- Conserve and manage ecological habitats.
- Develop strategies to monitor and manage traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.

B7 DEBDEN FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

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



Overall Character

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

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

Visual Characteristics

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

Historic Land Use

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

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

Ecological Features

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

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

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

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

Sensitivities to Change

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

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

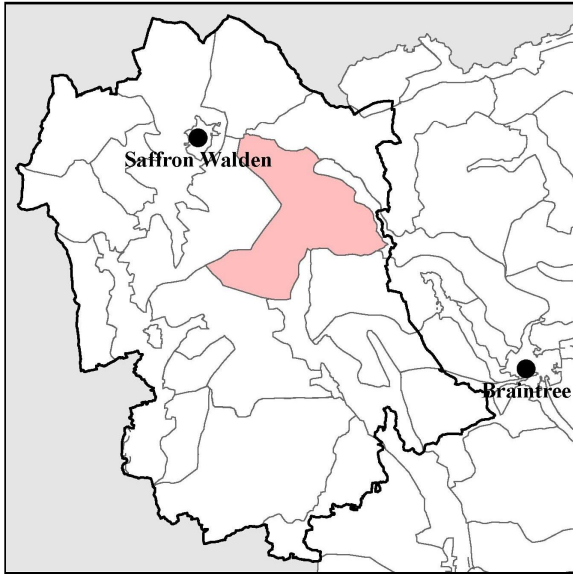
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

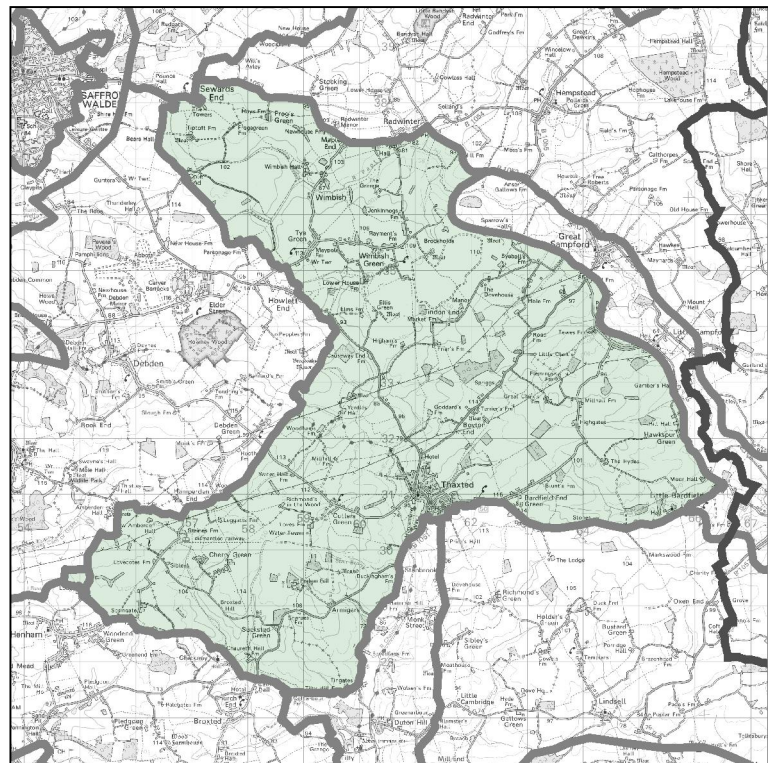
- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character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

B8 THAXTED FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling plateau, almost flat in some areas, incised by the River Pant and the River Chelmer.
- Broken hedgerows evident; absence of hedgerows due to agricultural intensification.
- Expansive views on open roads at higher elevations.
- Settlements dispersed across the landscape.
- Rich architectural detail in the historic market town of Thaxted, with vernacular of colour washed plaster, half timber, thatch, and pegtile roofs and some decorative pargetting.
- Stansted flight paths have severely altered tranquillity in this area.



Overall Character

This character area of glacial boulder clay extends from Swards End at its northwest to Little Bardfield in the southeast, then through Thaxted down to Sucksted Green in the south. A plateau of broad, gently undulating arable farmland, with irregular field patterns bounded by hedgerows that are often broken or gappy, and deciduous tree cover that gives distant structure to the landscape. Small irrigation reservoirs are common. There are many ancient woodlands scattered across this landscape. Settlement is mostly dispersed with frequent small villages and hamlets and only one locally important town, historic Thaxted, which is notable for its wealth of vernacular architecture. Two visually prominent pylon routes cross the countryside east to west in close proximity north of Thaxted. Vehicular access is good, with several B roads crossing the area. A good network of path and tracks

give pedestrian access. Harcamlow Way National Trail crosses the area west of Thaxted. The landscape scale of this character area varies from medium to small, with open views from lanes and roads contrasted with the more enclosed and smaller-scale views in village lanes or in river valleys. The local vernacular architecture is rich and varied: colour-washed plaster or half timbered, with thatch or peg-tile roofs. Swards End has some modern village extension which, although it does not stand out in the local surroundings, neither does it contribute to the local vernacular. Similar modern development behind Thaxted has no visual link with the local landscape character. The texture of this landscape is varied, with trees, fields and hedges, buildings and water all contributing to its visual interest. It is a place that feels long settled, and its history is still apparent. The tranquillity of this area is moderate to strong away from roads, but the impact of Stansted flights overhead has had a major impact

Visual Characteristics

- Visible cultural heritage with many halls, moated manors and outstanding ancient town of Thaxted
- Open and closed landscape views, tending to be more panoramic on the higher, more exposed upper plateau levels.
- Spire of Thaxted church, windmill at Thaxted and occasional water towers are local landmarks.
- Double lines of pylons that cross the countryside southwest to northeast above Thaxted are locally prominent.

Historic Land Use

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

- Thaxted-Hadstock Roman road, which bisects the Character Area.
- Medieval town of Thaxted.
- Twisting and often partially sunken roads.
- Medieval parks associated with Thaxted.
- A number of areas of ancient woodland.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 20 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- West Wood, Little Sampford SSSI, comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats.
- Eight CWSs with a variety of woodland habitats including: part of Harrisons Wood, Bush Croft, Bow Croft Wood, Alrey Wood 1 and 2, Browns Wood, Home Wood and Harts Grove.
- Eleven CWSs with a variety of grassland and wetland habitats including: Reedings Grove, Wimbish lanes, Ellis Green, Howlett Lane, Friars Farm Meadow, Debden Green, Cutlers Green, Chickney Hall, Chickney Lane, Willis's Spring and Thaxted Churchyard.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

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

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the landscape pattern of small patches of ancient woodland scattered across the landscape, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline of higher, more exposed upper plateau levels is visually sensitive to new development, which may interrupt views across, to and from the plateau. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern (with isolated farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along linear greens) and rich architectural detail in Thaxted. This pattern is sensitive to potential large-scale development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 30 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, scrub and grassland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

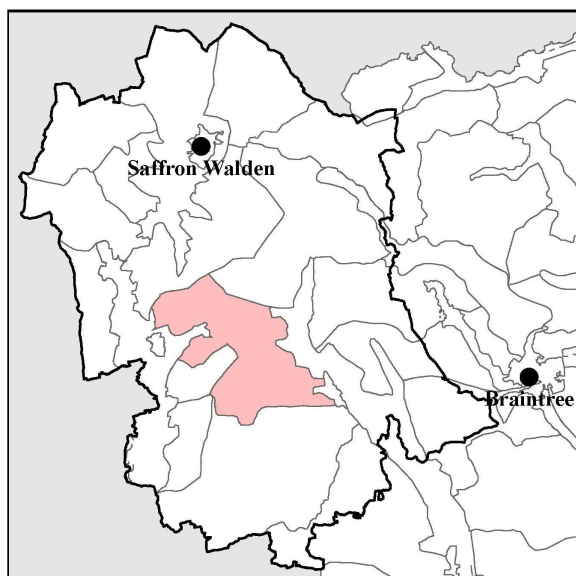
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve the open views.
- Conserve the traditional dispersed settlement pattern and generally undeveloped character.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that it is of an appropriate scale, form, design and materials and uses colours that respond to landscape setting and landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings.
- Conserve open views to historic buildings and local landmarks such as Thaxted church, which is visible from other adjacent character areas as well.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

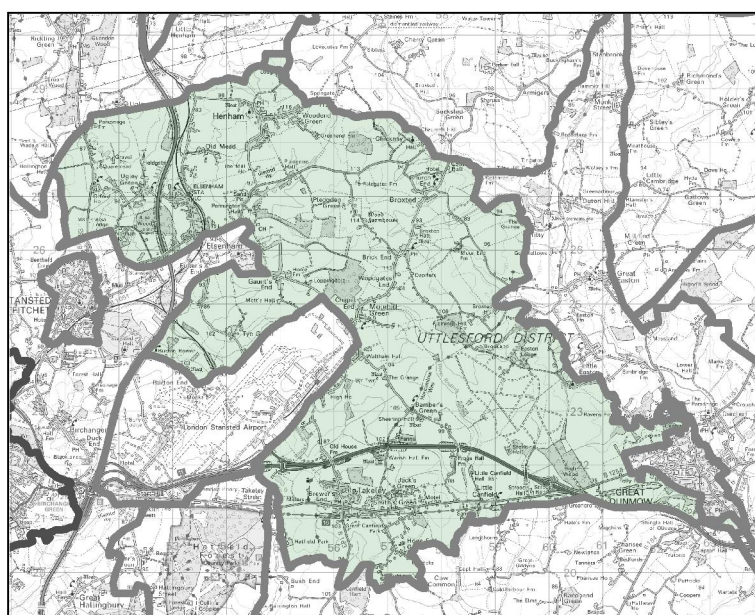
- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character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

B10 BROXTED FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating farmland on glacial till plateau, dissected by River Roding.
- Large open landscape with tree cover appearing as blocks on the horizon or as scattered trees along field boundaries, with intermittent hedgerows.
- Higher ground where plateau broadens and flattens is expansive and full of big sky views.
- Dispersed settlements and few villages of any size.
- Some sunken lanes.
- Moats, halls and historic farmsteads scattered over the area.



Overall Character

This character area is in the glacial till plateau farmland, bisected by the river Roding. It lies between the upper Chelmer and upper Stort river valleys, and stretches from Henham and Ugley Greens eastwards to Molehill Green and the rural fringe to the west of Great Dunmow. Stansted Airport juts into the area at the southwest, and the southern limits reach Puttock's End, below Takeley. This gently undulating arable farmland is in the southern reaches of the boulder clay; the farms are large and the landscape is open, with few trees except in blocks or near settlements. Hedgerows are intermittent and field pattern is delineated mainly by ditches or grass tracks, occasionally with trees or scrub. Rough grassland and pasture for horses can be seen near settlements, bounded by post-and-rail fencing. Tree cover appears in blocks of mixed deciduous types and is often seen as a distant framework on the horizon, or appears to link into a continuous backdrop. The river Roding winds its way southwards from Molehill Green in the centre of the area. Settlement pattern is varied; the village of Henham is a

nucleated settlement while Takeley and Broxted are linear. Most settlements are hamlets or farmsteads scattered over the plateau or along the lanes. The ancient market town of Great Dunmow, to the east of this character area, is the largest in the vicinity. Vernacular buildings are pale colour-washed plaster, many with pargetting, and thatched roofs. Farm buildings are sometimes red brick with black-stained weatherboarding. The historic past is also visible in the many moats, halls and ancient woodland spread over this countryside. New residential development outside Henham is more suburban; with little link to local building materials or vernacular style. This is also apparent in the villages around Takeley. Stansted Airport is a major influence on the character of the southwestern part of this area. Though screened by trees and shrubs, its buildings and tower can be seen in long views. The access roads and perimeter roads have brought an urban feel with them. The sound of aircraft is almost constant. The A120 and the B1256 cut across the southern part of this area, and a small piece of the M11 crosses the northwest corner. Water towers, telegraph poles and telecommunications masts are sometimes seen on the horizon. In spite of the proximity of the airport and major roads in the south and west, there still remain only winding lanes and minor roads for access to the scattered farmsteads. Many of these lanes are sunken, with verges of varying widths, sometimes tree-lined, and often quite peaceful. Many footpaths including the Harcamlow Way cross the area. The texture of the landscape is influenced by the topography and the contrasts with trees, fields and local building materials. Away from the Stansted flight path tranquillity is moderate to strong.

Visual Characteristics

- Churches set on hills are visible in long views.
- Telecommunications masts occasionally visible.
- Stansted Airport and tower visible in long views from many locations within the character area.
- From several locations in the north and east of the character area, panoramic views across the Chelmer Valley slopes and views to Great Dunmow.
- Commercial premises growing around airport.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, interspersed with linear greens and a number of former common fields. Historic settlement is largely dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farms, many moated sites and small hamlets, often along linear greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- A significant proportion of ancient woodland, and many hedgerows which are also of considerable antiquity.
- Intricate, twisting and sunken roads, of ancient origins.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. However, the area does contain 17 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Elsenham Woods SSSI and part of High Wood SSSI comprising ancient woodland habitats.
- Halls Quarry SSSI comprising a variety of grassland and scrub habitats.
- Five CWSs with a variety of ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Harland Wood, Lady Wood, Middlefield Wood, Prior's Wood and Hoglands Wood.
- Nine CWSs with a variety of grassland, woodland and wetland habitats including: Palegate Meadow, Broxted, Pledgdon Green, Elsenham Hall Fields, part of Wilkinson's Plantation, Turners Spring, Molehill Green Meadow, Stansted Sewage Works and Fen and Little Easton Airfield.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character
- Pressure from visually intrusive expansion due to Stansted Airport.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive
- Pressure to use quick screening ability of conifer plantings which are out of character with this landscape.
- Pressure for new development from Stansted Airport second runway.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include blocks of mixed deciduous woodland (visible on the horizon) and scattered trees within field boundaries (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open nature of the skyline of higher areas of plateau is visually sensitive, with new development potentially visible within expansive views across the plateau. Sunken, often tree-lined lanes are also sensitive to new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and several visible moats and halls (the pattern of which is sensitive to change or new development). There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 14 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, grassland and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate to- high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

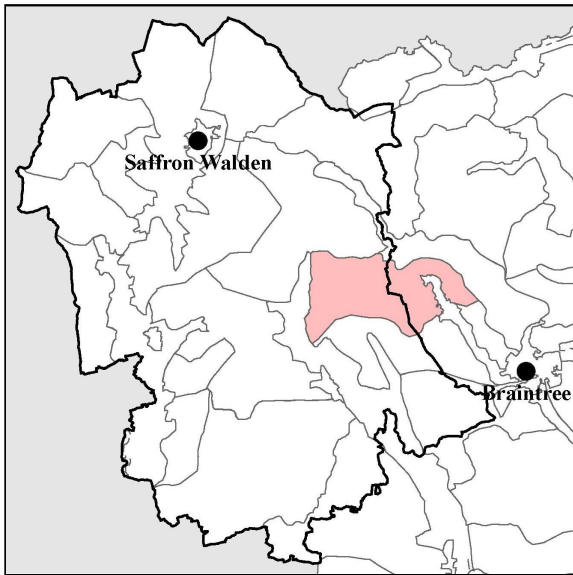
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve the rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that use of materials, and especially colour, is appropriate to the local landscape character; such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as deciduous tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings; avoid coniferous screen planting.
- New farm buildings such as sheds should be sensitively located within the landscape to respect local character and avoid the skyline.
- Small-scale development should be carefully sited in relation to existing farm buildings.
- Encourage sensitive conversion of barns which respects traditional materials, built fabric and landscape character.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

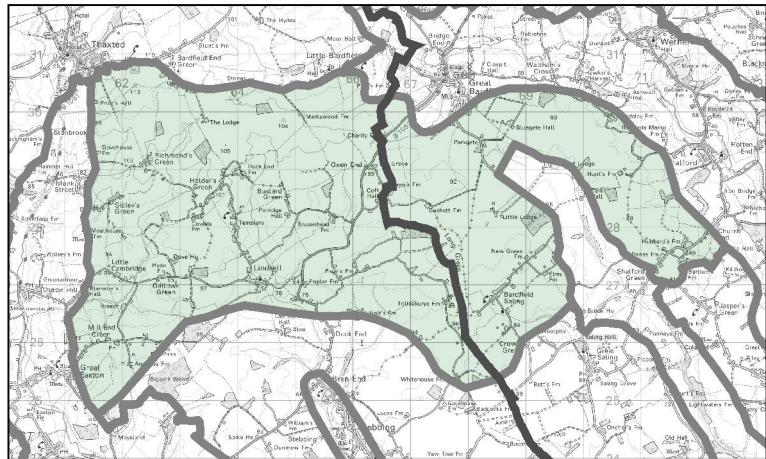
- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Conserve and manage ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.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

B11 LINDSELL & BARDFIELD FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Braintree District)



Key Characteristics

- Glacial Till farmland plateau in Central Essex farmlands.
- Open, broadly rolling plateau, dissected by Pods Brook and Stebbing Brook.
- Mainly arable farmland with many shelterbelts forming dark backdrop to many views.
- Shelterbelts often thickly planted containing a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees
- Horse pasture visible near settlements.
- Linear settlement pattern along roads and lanes, or scattered farmsteads; there are no major villages, although Lindsell has an historic church.
- Vernacular architecture pale cream or white-washed plaster with thatched roofs, some half-timbered buildings.
- Tall species-rich hedgerows along many lanes; some hornbeam coppice visible.



Overall Character

This character area is located above three river valleys, the Chelmer, the Pant, and the Blackwater and Brain River Valley (A10-Braintree district). Pods Brook (A12) and Stebbing Brook (A6) also drain through this plateau area. Bounded on the north by the Thaxted-Great Bardfield road, its southern boundary lies along the plateau edge marked by lanes and footpaths above Stebbing (see B13). It is gently rolling, open countryside, covered by medium to large arable fields. Regular field patterns are delineated by a variety of vegetation but the overall character of the area is formed by the constant backdrop of trees, sometimes as dense shelterbelts, and sometimes interspersed between field boundaries, along with gappy hedgerows. Hedges are usually hawthorn and it is used in a variety of ways: as low field dividers, as tall screens along lanes, as gappy remnants of pre-enclosure and as mature specimens in isolation or grouped together, especially near settlements. Shelterbelts appear as

dark blocks on the ridges, possibly owing to the mix of conifers they sometimes contain. Mature trees also dot the field pattern: in hedgerows, along ditches, or in isolation in a field. Some Scots Pine is also planted along lanes. Patches of ancient woodland have woven themselves along with newer planting into the field pattern. In spite of the tree cover, the landscape appears very open; the field pattern is medium to large scale and there are no villages of any size. Settlement pattern is linear or dispersed. Large farms with many buildings vary in condition from utilitarian to carefully restored historic structures. Roads bound the area but narrow winding lanes and tracks are the main access routes. The B1057 cuts the area in half. The vernacular architecture is colour-washed plaster, usually white or cream, with thatched roofs and occasionally red brick and flintwork. Newer residential development appears suburban, and can look out of character on a country lane, as outside Lindsell. The texture of this character area is as varied as the topography, but the general impression is of a landscape that offers changing interest with views that may progress from open to closed to open again, depending on the location. It has a sense of isolation despite its proximity to Stansted Airport, and retains a moderate to strong sense of tranquillity.

Visual Characteristics

- Views across farmland plateau from roads and public rights of way are usually open, but often framed or limited by tree belts or high hedges.
- Attractive views across the Chelmer valley slopes can be gained from the western edges of the area
- Thaxted visible from higher ground in north of the area.
- The ancient church at Lindsell is enclosed by trees and therefore not visible from a distance.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by predominately pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, relatively small in size in the southern half of the area and getting larger to the north. There is also the occasional common field which had been later enclosed piecemeal by agreement. Historically the settlement comprised dispersed or polyfocal settlement strung out along an extensive network of linear and triangular greens, the latter located at road junctions. In addition there were isolated farms set within their own lands. The main historic landscape features include:

- Twisting and often partially sunken roads, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older.
- A number of small parks and some ancient woodland.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable. The area contains 14 sites of nature conservation value. These include

- Seven CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Marks Wood Thaxted, Avesey Wood, Gallows Wood, Lubberhedges Wood, Lodge Wood, Hart Wood, Small part of Shalford Park /Levelly Wood.
- Seven CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats Sweetings Meadow, Bustard green, Lindsell - Daisyley Road, Duck End, part of Bran End Meadows, Parsonage Farm Meadow and Reding Spring.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

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

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the landscape pattern of small patches of ancient woodland scattered across the landscape, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Several high areas of plateau have a very open skyline, which is visually sensitive to new development that may interrupt views across, to and from the plateau. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and a network of narrow lanes (several of which are partially sunken). There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 14 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

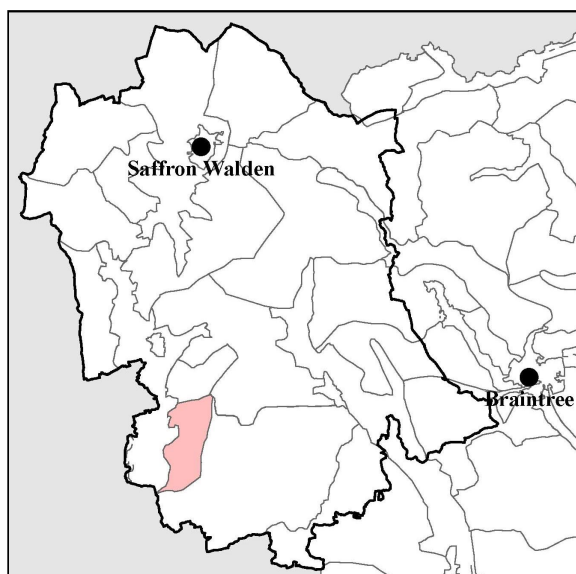
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

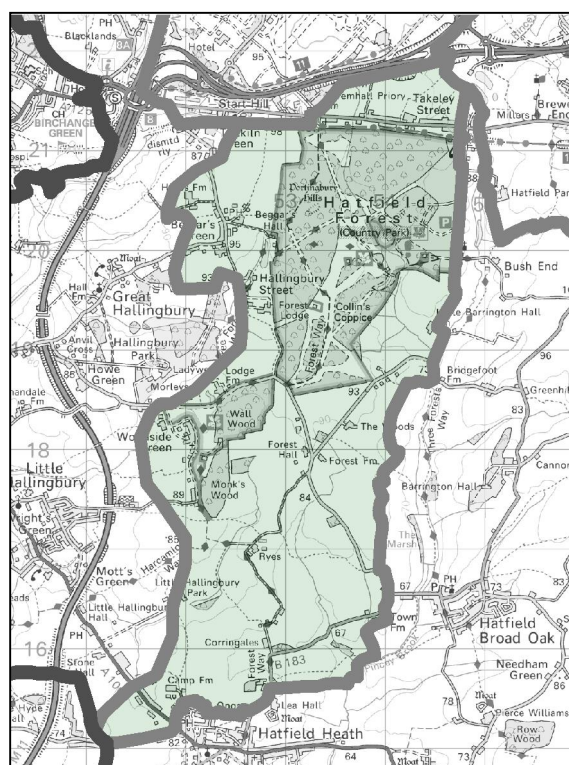
- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Enhance existing landscape character by avoidance of further conifer planting along roads.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats.

B12 HATFIELD FOREST FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating arable farmland that forms part of the glacial till and Central Essex Farmland.
- Hatfield Forest, an important area of ancient woodland, forms the distinctive character of this landscape.
- The forest area is intimate and enclosed, while the arable farmland to the south has a much more open character, although framed by distant woodland.
- Field pattern is a mixture of irregular in the forest and semi-regular to regular outside the forest.
- Settlement pattern is dispersed through the forest alongside wooded greens and lanes, while to the south the farmsteads are quite scattered. Modern housing is also found throughout the forest, usually well integrated within their own grounds and enclosed by woodland.
- Harcamlow Way and Forest Way cross the area
- The proximity of Stansted Airport affects the tranquillity of the area.



Overall Character

This character area is enclosed by Stansted Airport to the north, Pincey Brook to the south and east, and the Stort river valley slopes to the west. The northern part of this area contains the protected ancient woodland of Hatfield Forest. Here there are dispersed farmsteads that nestle in woodland clearings that also contain wood pasture and grazing cattle. At Bush End the ancient pollarded hornbeams in the wood pasture are a particular feature. Outside the forest boundaries the open field pattern of agricultural intensification is visible and farms are few. Even though the land is open the link with the forest landscape can still be seen in the way dense woodland frames views to the north.

The Pincey Brook, which joins the river Stort further south, is extremely narrow in this character area, although its floodplain extends well into the area. Public access to the river is limited to the Forest Way National Trail. It is visible only on the footpath, or at bridging points. The field pattern is irregular in the forest, but further south the open fields are typical of post enclosure, regular patterns in which hedgerows have been reduced or removed. Horse pasture is visible near the settlements, as are areas of unimproved grassland. Field boundaries are ditches or grassy tracks, with intermittent hedgerows visible in some fields. Access in this countryside is limited to two main lanes through the forest and a few other minor lanes crossing the farmland. The A 1060 and the B183 skirt the edges, while the M11 can be heard on the eastern fringes. The Harcamlow Way, Forest Way and many lesser footpaths form a comprehensive network over the plateau. No large structures intrude on the horizons here, as the forest backdrop screens and frames most views. The scale of this landscape is small to medium. The texture is richly varied by the mix of deciduous woodland, pasture, streams and arable fields as well as by the vernacular architecture of half-timbered, brick and colour-washed plaster. The more contemporary housing in Hatfield Forest is usually well screened and has not significantly altered the character of the area, although the access lanes have to carry quite heavy traffic. Stansted Airport, while not visually intrusive, has affected the tranquillity of the area, though, at times, the former very strong sense of tranquillity can be found.

Visual Characteristics

- Church spire at Hatfield Broad Oak visible from the open farmland in the south.
- Intimate small-scale views of Hatfield Forest from across village greens or clearings in the woodland.
- More open farmland in the south is framed by a woodland backdrop to the north.
- Ancient coppiced hornbeams are a feature in the wood pasture at Bush End.
- Historic farmsteads surround wooded village greens in Hatfield Forest or are sparsely scattered through the woodland itself.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by Hatfield Forest, an important survival of a medieval forest, comprising a mixture of wood pasture, coppice woods, pollards, timber trees, a warren, lodge and lake. Settlement is largely dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farmsteads, a large number of moated sites, and scattered roadside and greenside settlement, with clusters of settlement at Hatfield Heath, Hatfield Broad Oak, the Hallingburys and the Canfields. The main historic landscape features include:

- Hatfield Forest, an important survival of a medieval forest, comprising a mixture of wood pasture, coppice woods, pollards, timber trees, a warren, lodge and lake.
- Portingbury Hills hillfort.
- More regular fields at the forest fringes, probably the result of encroachment on the forest itself.
- The large medieval parks of Hallingbury Hall and New Barrington Hall.
- A network of twisting lanes, often sunken roads.
- A number of areas of ancient woodland, in addition to Hatfield Forest.
- Enclosed meadow pasture, which survives in the valley floors.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is comprised predominantly of woodland and arable land. The area contains the following sites of nature conservation value:

- Hatfield Forest SSSI and NNR, comprising a variety of woodland, woodland pasture and grassland habitats.
- CWS at Hatfield Broad Oak comprising woodland habitats.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Noise and air pollution issues from proximity to Stansted Airport.
- Pressure for more infrastructure to support expansion proposals for Stansted Airport that will affect the Forest.
- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from expansion of adjacent settlements (Hatfield Heath, Great Hallingbury and Little Hallingbury).
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings which may be visually intrusive.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the intimate and enclosed Hatfield Forest (where dispersed farmsteads nestle in woodland clearings that also contain wood pasture and grazing cattle). This area, which also has strong historic integrity, is sensitive to changes in land management and also to potential new development. Other sensitive historic visible features include Portingbury Hills hillfort, Hallingbury Hall and New Barrington Hall (large Medieval Parks), enclosed meadow pasture in the valley floors and a network of twisting, often sunken lanes. The pattern of historic farmsteads, surrounding wooded village greens, within Hatfield Forest, is also sensitive to change or new development. The Forest (which is a SSSI and NNR) and woodland habitats at Hatfield Broad Oak provide important habitats for nature conservation. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

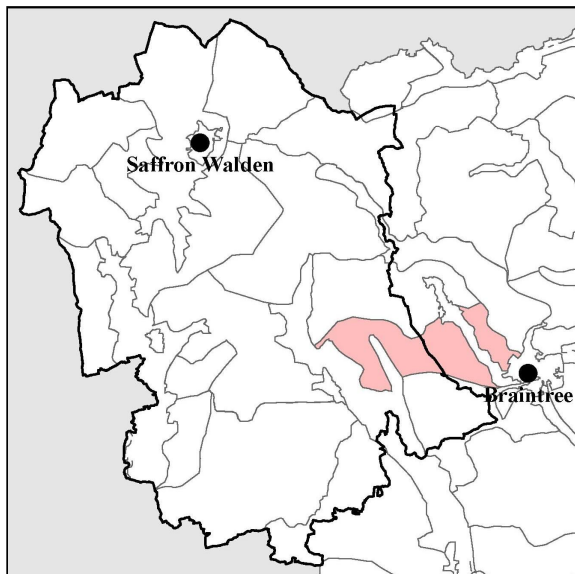
Conserve - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

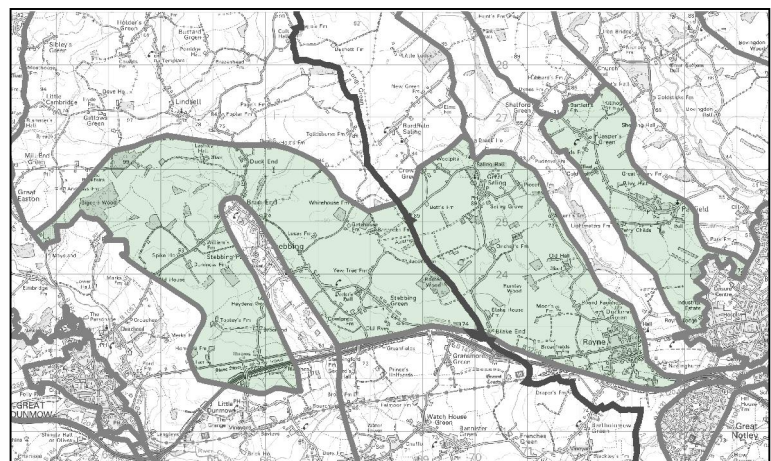
- Conserve the landscape setting of existing traditional dispersed settlement pattern and generally undeveloped character.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that use of materials, and especially colour, is appropriate to the local landscape character; such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings.
- Conserve open views to historic buildings and local landmarks.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Strengthen and enhance existing hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites (as is currently being done by the National Trust in parts of the Hatfield Forest, where they manage traditional woodland coppice and wood pasture).
- Conserve historic and or sunken lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials which are in keeping with the local vernacular and landscape character.

B13 RAYNE FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Braintree District)**Key Characteristics**

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium and large arable fields, marked by sinuous fragmented hedgerows and ditches.
- Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with a few small hamlets.
- A concentration of isolated farmsteads, some with moats.
- A comprehensive network of rural lanes and Public Rights of Way.

**Overall Character**

The Rayne Farmland Plateau is an area of gently rolling hills with wide flat tops and valleys covered by predominantly medium to large arable fields interspersed with small grass paddocks and pasture used for grazing horses. The farmland plateau is located west of Braintree with its southern boundary abutting the A120. The area is cut into by two small narrow river valleys with small narrow meandering streams which exaggerate the landscape slopes. Away from the valleys, there are long distance wide views over the large fields with the field boundaries generally delineated by hedges, which are often gappy and fragmented. The hedgerows vary in height from low well trimmed to tall with lots of hedgerow trees across the whole area. Some of the fields were only bound by ditches creating a very open view. On the valley slopes the fields are smaller and the views more channelled by the topography of the land and the higher density of trees. The valley floors are dominated by wet meadows marshes and woodland which create constrained views. In the open view south west of Sebbing lies Andrew's Field airstrip with a large grey hanger and several light aircraft adjacent to the grass runway. Several small, often linear settlement are scattered across the landscape concentrated in the eastern and western extents of the area dominated by 20th century brick houses. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of occasional local vernacular buildings with timber-frames, colour

wash and thatched roofs and isolated farmsteads, some of which have moats. There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the area away from the A120 and Braintree with a comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways winding through the landscape.

Visual Characteristics

- The circular tower of Barfield Saling Church and the Andrew's Field airstrip form the key landmarks within the views across the farmland plateau.
- The views on the tops of the hills are generally open to panoramic depending on the heights and density of the surrounding trees and hedgerows.
- Views along the valley corridors are generally constrained or channelled depending on the frequency and density of trees.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, interspersed by what is categorised as 'mixed origin' fields. Historically the settlement comprised dispersed or polycentric settlement with isolated farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along linear greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- A number of small parks and some ancient woodland.
- Extensive enclosed meadow pastures along both river valleys.
- Occasional common fields, which have been later enclosed by agreement.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture with pockets of parkland. The area contains 19 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Twelve CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including part of Oxney Wood, Panfield Wood, Mouslin Wood Stebbing, Ridley Wood, Dow Wood/Four Corner Spinney, Bigod's Wood, Hick's Plantation, Homeley Wood, Broxted Wood, Blackbush Wood, Blackbush Wood and Golden Grove.
- Seven CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats part of Pods Brook Complex, Hall Farm Meadows, Whitehouse Spring, Brick Kiln Farm Pastures, part of Bran End Meadows, Nick's Hole and Stebbing Green.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams crossing the farmland from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the open farmland, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential residential expansion of villages, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include many small woods and copses and a mosaic of wet meadows, marshes and woodland along the valley floors, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. The skyline of the valley slopes is also sensitive to new development, which may be visible within views across and along the valleys. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern (with isolated farms, moated sites and small hamlets strung out along linear greens, several of which are visible today) and extensive enclosed meadow pastures along both river valleys. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 19 sites

of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate to- high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

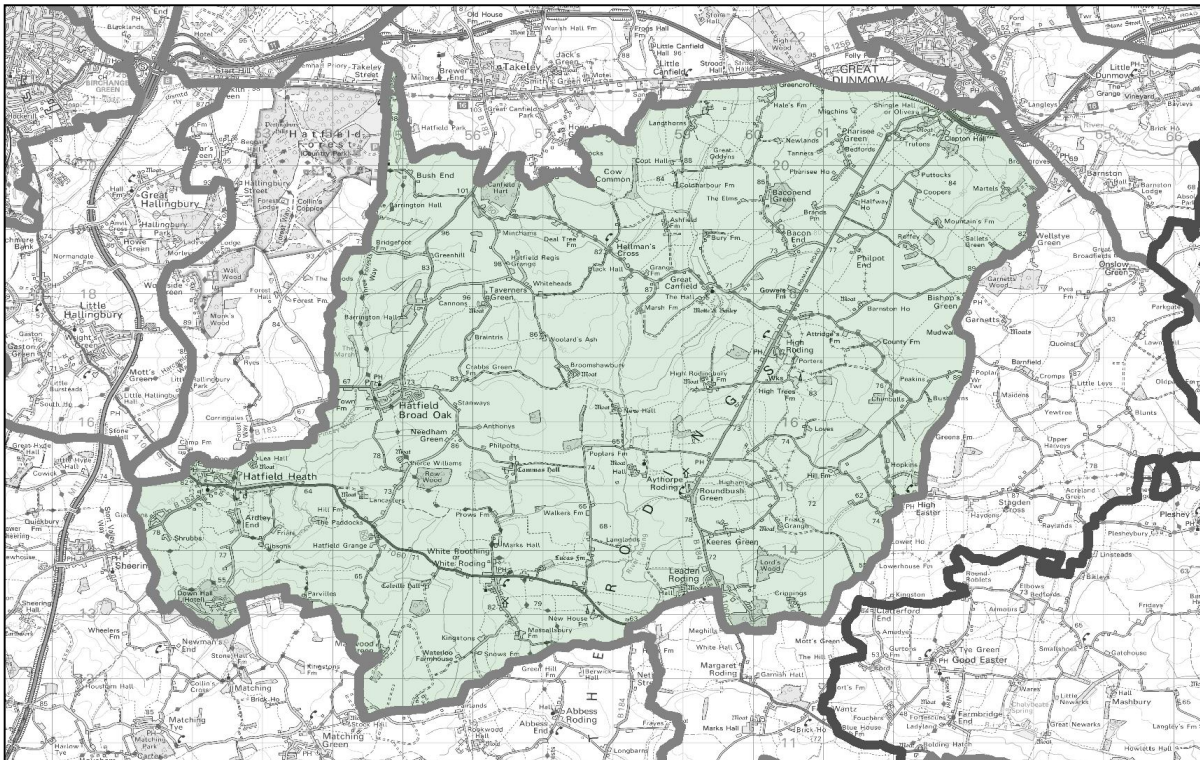
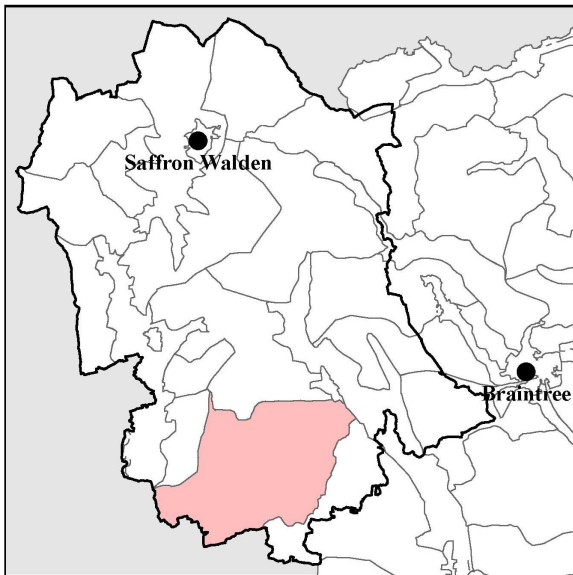
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon the farmland plateau.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across the farmland.
- Ensure new development within the farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

B14 RODING FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

- Raised farmland plateau dissected by Pincey Brook in the west.
- A mixture of medium to large semi irregular arable fields.
- Large open views contrast with enclosed wooded character of other villages and some lanes.
- Many historic features in the landscape including a motte and bailey mound at Great Canfield.
- Ancient churches at Hatfield Heath, Bush End, the Roding villages.
- Hedgerows a feature of the field pattern.

- Settlement pattern consists of several small to large villages, scattered hamlets and regularly dispersed farmsteads scattered over the plateau.

Overall Character

This character area is defined by the gently undulating glacial till plateau dissected by Pincey Brook in the west, and is comprised of countryside south of Great Dunmow and Takley, just west of High Easter to the east, and most, but not all, the Roding villages to the south. It is a landscape of wide-open views, especially on the higher ground surrounding High Roding, contrasted with the more enclosed, channelled views near settlements. Along the lanes, mature trees are often visible in the hedgerows and in the verges. Poplars are a feature of the windbreaks in this area, and the smaller, irregular field patterns near old settlements give way to larger, more regular fields on the higher plateau. Tree cover appears in woodland blocks and knits together with the hedgerows to form quite a wooded skyline. There are many irregular patches of ancient woodland. Fields tend to be delineated by hedgerows, which, even if they are gappy at times, are more a feature here than in the adjacent Broxted Plateau Farmland (B11). The fields here are mainly arable, but pasture for horses is a feature near settlements, where riding schools can be found. The Rodings are in an area with a long history of settlement and this cultural history is still visible in the many moated farms, halls, ancient churches, some windmills and the motte & bailey castle mound at Great Canfield. Vernacular building style is colour-washed plaster with thatched or peg tile roofs, but mellow red brick dominates in some places, like Hatfield Broad Oak. Agricultural buildings appear in large clusters, in many materials from corrugated metal to black-stained weatherboarding. Village greens are a feature of the area, and the large common at Hatfield Heath, part of the Green Belt, visually enhances the village. Though the settlements are regularly dispersed their scale is small, and this makes the area feel more remote than it actually is, given the proximity of Stansted Airport to the north. Roads ring the area but internally it is winding lanes and tracks that give access to most farmsteads. A comprehensive network of public rights of way crisscrosses this countryside, including the Three Forests Way national trail. The texture of this landscape is layered in all seasons, from smooth green fields in spring to summer's golden grain, then the coarse stubble after harvest, all framed by the changing deciduous woodland and hedgerows. It is an area with moderate to strong tranquillity.

Visual Characteristics

- Long-distance views of Great Dunmow possible from higher ground.
- Windmill at White Roding a local landmark.
- Hatfield Heath functioning mill.
- Long distance views of the church at High Roding and High Easter across the high plateau.
- Open, spacious feel to high plateau area.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, although on a micro-scale there is evidence of pre-18th century co-axial sinuous fields within the individual farms. The settlement is largely dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farmsteads, a large number of moated sites, and scattered roadside and greenside settlement, with clusters of settlement at Hatfield Heath, Hatfield Broad Oak, and the Canfields. The overall grain of the landscape is very irregular, with numerous small twisting roads and lanes linking the settlement and the many small tributary valleys. This area includes much of an ancient Saxon territory known as the *hrodinas*, which stretched from High Roding in the north down to Beauchamp Roding in the south.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 21 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Ten CWS sites comprising a variety of ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Roffey Wood, High Rodingbury Wood, Dobs Wood, Poplars Wood, Bromshawbury Wood, Cammasshall Wood, Row Wood, Downhall Wood, Colvillehall Wood and Man Wood.
- Eleven CWSs comprising a variety of grassland, wetland and heathland habitats including: Runnel's Hey, Canfield End Church, Canfield End Pastures, Canfield Thrift, Fitzjohn Marsh, Bury Spring, Aythorpe Roding, Aythorpe Roding Churchyard, Barrington Hall, Hatfield heath and Matching Airfield Grasslands.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Potential loss of species rich riverside grassland and marshland due to intensive agricultural practice.
- Potential for pollution of the Pincey Brook from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from higher farmland areas.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character and visually intrusive.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings that may be visually intrusive.
- Potential for visually intrusive leisure development (such as golf courses/polo clubs).

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include mature trees within hedgerows and woodland blocks (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open nature of the skyline of several areas of the plateau is visually sensitive, with new development potentially visible within expansive views across the plateau. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, with many visible historic features, including many moated farms, halls, churches, some windmills and the motte and bailey castle mound at Great Canfield. The clustered pattern of historic settlement at Hatfield Heath, Hatfield Broad Oak and the Canfields is also sensitive to change or new development. Also, the large common at Hatfield Heath is sensitive to changes in land management. There are several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 21 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, grassland, wetland and heathland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate to- high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

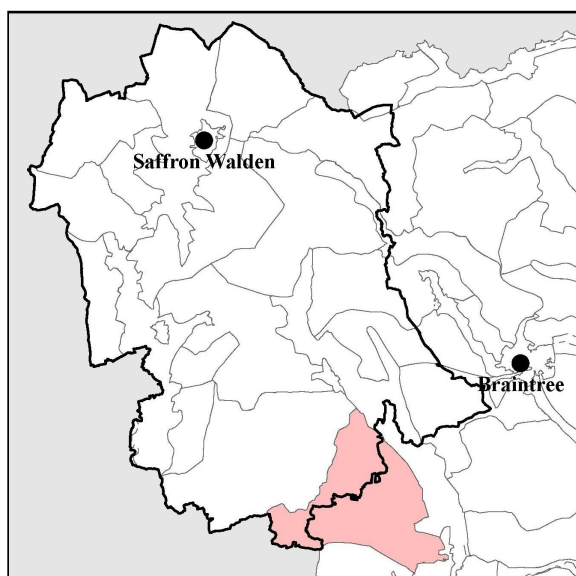
- Conserve the rural character of the area.
- Conserve the undeveloped nature of the floodplain of Pincey Brook.
- Seek opportunities for habitat restoration along the floodplain of Pincey Brook.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that use of materials, and especially colour, is appropriate to the local landscape character; such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.

- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings.
- Conserve open views to historic buildings and local landmarks like churches.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Conserve and manage wet meadows within the floodplain.
- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials which are in keeping with the local vernacular and landscape character.

B15 PLESHEY FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Chelmsford Borough)

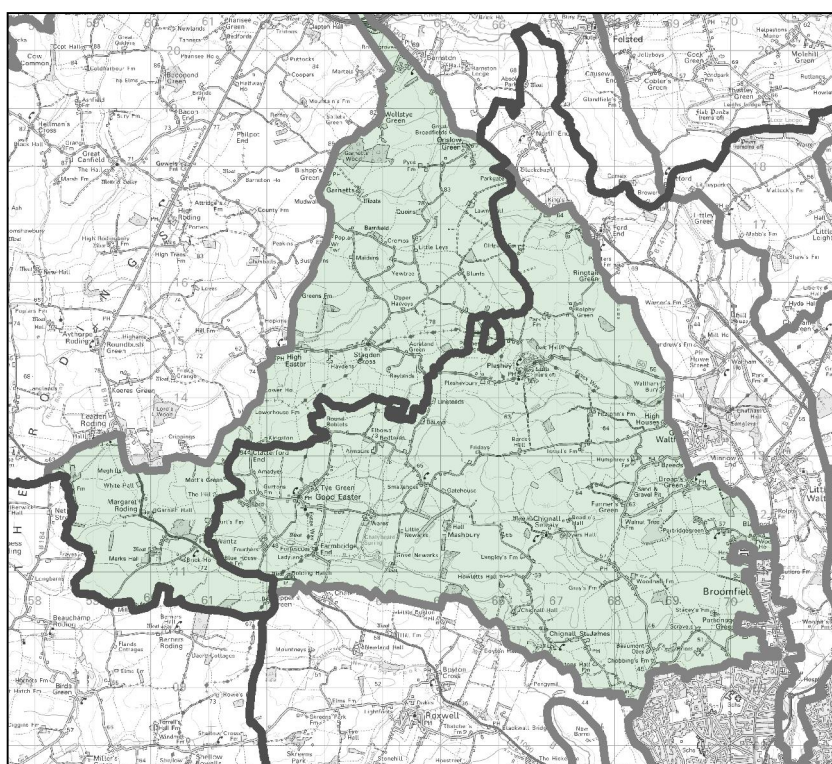


Key Characteristics

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches.
- Small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and occasionally ponds.
- Comprehensive network of narrow, winding lanes.
- Tranquil character.

Overall Character

Pleshey Farmland Plateau is located south of Barnston near Great Dunmow where it stretches to the edge of



Chelmsford. The area's eastern boundary along the A130 abuts the River Chelmer and its valley and to the west the boundary follows narrow country lanes from Barnston to west of Leaden Roding. The area is characterised by the extensive area of gently undulating farmland on the boulder clay plateau dissected by several small streams and their valleys. Irregular medium sized arable fields bound by hedgerows and ditches dominate the farmland. The condition of the hedgerows varies across the area with some thick and continuous, some fragmented and gappy and others with mature hedgerow trees. Amongst the arable land are small pockets of deciduous copses and small woods which when added to hedgerow trees and tall hedgerows in some areas form more intimate landscapes. These areas are found particularly in the south west of the area around Mashbury and Good Easter in the lower lying

areas surrounding the River Can and its tributaries. On the higher land in the middle and to the east there are fewer trees or woodland pockets providing more open views across the patchwork of fields. In addition to the arable farmland there are clusters of smaller fields and paddocks with improved grassland and bounded by wooden or white tape fencing. These are generally located around the hamlets or farmsteads and are used to graze horses. Other medium sized pastoral fields are located in the lower regions of the area around Mashbury and Good Easter in the floodplains of the watercourses. Throughout the area are scattered ponds, lakes and reservoirs. There is a concentration of these to the south east of the area. Some of these water bodies are the result of filling disused sand and gravel pits with water. Local vernacular buildings are found dispersed across the area concentrating in the hamlets and small villages that are scattered throughout the area. These buildings are generally colour washed with tiled or thatched roofs. There are several large halls in the area including Mashbury Hall and Pleshey Grange. Trees generally screen settlements and isolated dwellings from the surrounding open farmland. There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area with several quiet, rural lanes winding through the landscape.

Visual Characteristics.

- The key landmarks within the Pleshey Farmland are the water tower northwest of Greenstreet and the spires or towers of the churches at Pleshey, High Easter and Good Easter from the surrounding farmland.
- The views within the area vary from open views over the arable farmland on the highest land to the enclosed views in the valleys in the south of the area.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by small irregular fields of ancient origin across the area, with pockets of sinuous co-axial fields. Historic dispersed settlement pattern, often originally focussed on greens, with scattered farmsteads survives. The main historic landscape features include:

- Small roads and green lanes linking settlements, many of which have survived.
- A few, small woods of ancient origin surviving.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 16 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Seven CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Margaret Roding Wood, Garnetts Wood, Crows Wood.
- Four small areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland further south.
- Nine CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats including Leaden Roding Marsh/Longstead Lane, Barnston/High Easter - Onslow Green, part of Hounslow Green and six CWS sites further south.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams that cross the arable farmland from fertilizer and pesticide run-off from the fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher areas, which could be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.
- Increase noise disturbance in the northern part of the area from airplanes taking off and landing at Stansted Airport if the airport expands.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include sinuous hedgerows and ditches and small pockets of deciduous woodland, (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. In association with this, the overall sense of tranquillity within the area is sensitive to change. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and several large halls (including Mashbury Hall and Pleshey Grange). There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 16 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

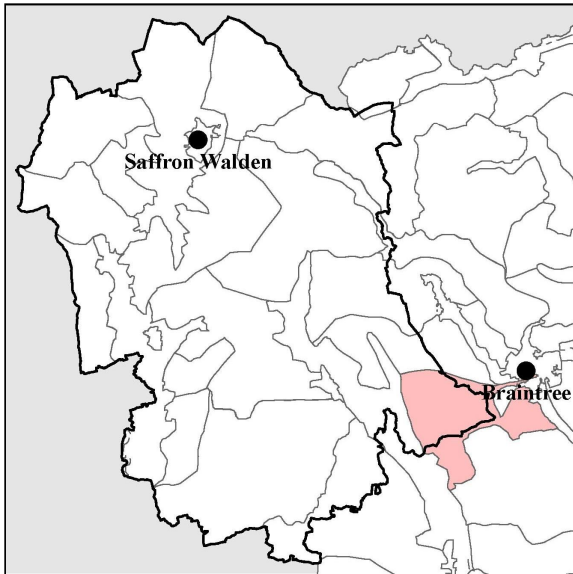
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon the surrounding farmland.
- Maintain the mixture of open and enclosed views across the hills and valleys.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting species which are appropriate to local landscape character such as blackthorn.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

B16 FELSTED FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Braintree District and Chelmsford Borough)

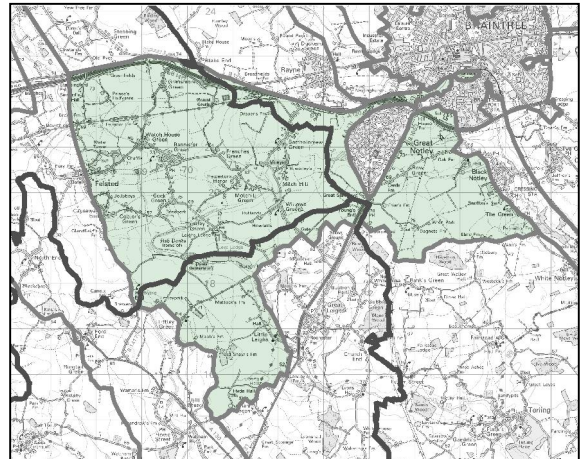


Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating farmland.
- Network of narrow, winding lanes.
- Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- The farmland is predominantly arable with field boundaries delineated by fragmented hedgerows.

Overall Character

The Felsted Farmland Plateau extends from the A120 in the north to Black Notley in the east, Chatham Green in the south and Felsted in the west. The farmland is gently undulating with a patchwork of irregular medium to large fields. Their boundaries are enclosed by either thick but intermittent hedgerows, or just marked by grassy banks and ditches. In long views scattered small woods and copses and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The farmland surrounding the villages of Mole Hill Green, Bannister Green and Watch House Green is composed of smaller irregular predominantly pastoral grass fields. The area is fairly densely populated with villages straggling along the roads to coalesce with each other. The farmsteads also form clusters of buildings. There is a comprehensive network of narrow winding rural lanes around which the settlement pattern is based. Many of the roads surrounded by fields tend to be surrounded by raised banks or hedges. Interest and variety is added to the area through the presence of local vernacular buildings with colour washed walls and red tiled or thatched roofs. The area has a strong sense of place and away from the key settlements and the A120 and A131 is relatively tranquil.



Visual Characteristics

- The views are open to panoramic across the farmland. The variation in the nature of the view is dictated by the trees.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, relatively small in size in the southern half of the area and getting larger to the north. Historically the settlement comprised dispersed or polyfocal settlement strung out along an extensive network of linear and triangular greens, the latter located at road junctions. In addition there were isolated farms set within their own lands.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains one site of nature conservation value - Flich Way CWS comprising unimproved grassland and hedgerow habitats. Other ecological features include:

- Patches of ancient woodland at Margaret Roding Wood, Nightingale Wood, Garnetts Wood and Barnston Lays.
- Species rich hedgerows and ditches bounding the arable and pastoral fields.
- Small deciduous woodlands and copses scattered across the area.
- Tree/scrub-lined stream corridors.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the streams and ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and residential dwellings on the edge of the settlements, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.
- Increased traffic on the minor roads when the Essex Showground is open.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include many small woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. In association with this, the overall sense of tranquillity within the area is sensitive to change. Overall, this character area has low – to moderate sensitivity to change.

Landscape Strategy Option

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

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

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Ensure that new build is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of semi-natural woodland as important landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

7.4 Chalk Uplands Landscapes

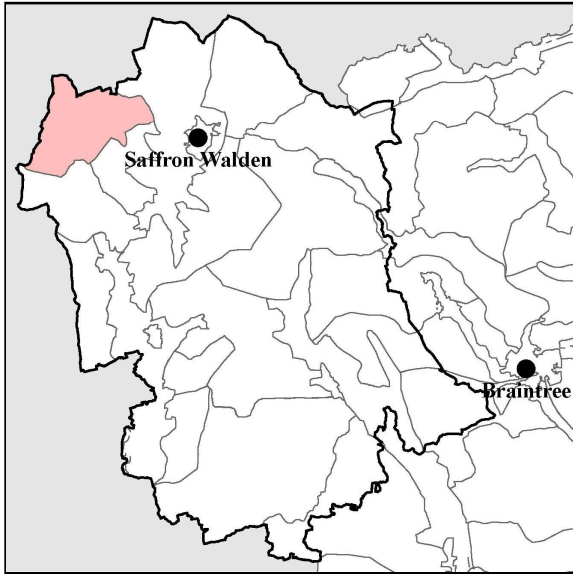
7.4.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

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

7.4.2 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Landscape Character Areas:

- H1 - Elmdon Chalk Upland
- H2 - Arkesden Chalk Upland
- H3 - Langley Chalk Upland
- H4 - Berden and Farnham Chalk Upland

H1 ELMDON CHALK UPLAND

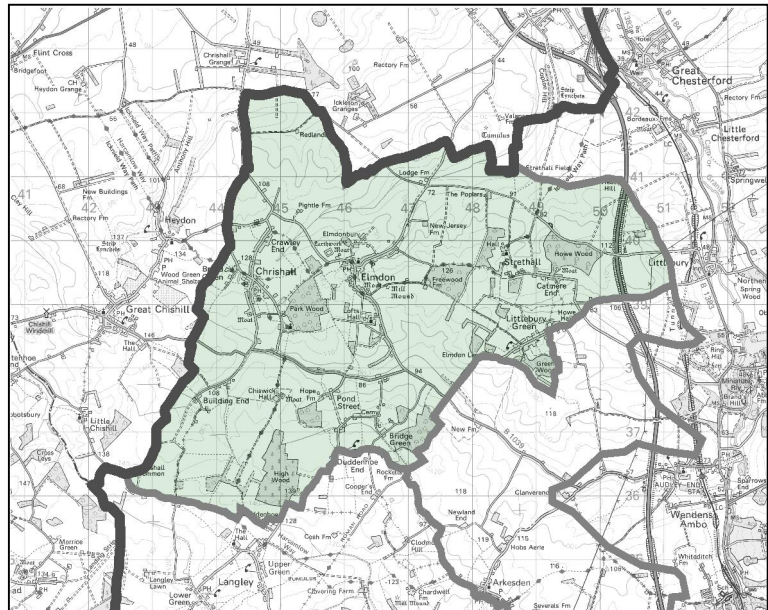


Key Characteristics

- Rolling chalk upland landscape of broad ridges and panoramic vistas that contrasts with winding sunken lanes and intimate tree-enclosed villages.
- Sense of space and openness with large scale rectilinear field pattern on the uplands.
- Scattered manors and moats and dispersed historic settlements.
- Rich cultural heritage of vernacular architecture.

Overall Character

This character area encompasses part of the East Anglian Chalk Ridge. It includes the village of Elmdon, located below the chalk scarp in the high country in the north of the area. The character area also extends westwards to Chrishall and just west of Littlebury in the Cam Valley (A1). It is a landscape of big sky and seemingly continuous views on the higher ground, but it is also a landscape of transition, where undulating chalklands meet the claylands. Isolated white farmhouses on the hilltops north of Elmdon can be seen from the open roads that cross the slopes and the overall impression is one of openness, with few trees and little visible settlement. A sewage works just outside the village is well integrated with linear windbreak trees. South and east of Elmdon, mature trees line the winding lanes, and remnant elms in hedgerow boundaries can be seen. There are many blocks of ancient woodland. Drainage ditches, grassy tracks and broken hedgerows define field boundaries, which are usually straight. Sometimes post and wire or post and rail fences define the fields. The pattern is more organic and irregular on the lower slopes and around settlements. Land is used mainly for arable farming, although there is some pasture near villages, particularly for horses (Chrishall and Pond Street). Vehicular access around this area is limited to the B1039 and a few lanes. The most historic of public footpaths, the ancient Icknield Way, crosses east to west along the upland chalk ridge and the



Harcamlow Way runs from Chrishall southwards towards Langley. There is also a network of public footpaths that link villages, but overall there are fewer public footpaths than in other character areas, due possibly to the poor soils and historic lack of early settlement in the chalk uplands. This countryside has a rich cultural heritage, and villages like Elmdon have exemplary historic buildings. Pale colour-washed and timber-framed houses with thatched roofs are the local vernacular in the whole area. There is an unusual thatched-roof church between Pond Street and Duddenhoe End. The texture of this countryside is varied, from the smooth pale chalk slopes to the patchwork of darker woodlands and varied colourful vernacular buildings scattered across the landscape. This is a landscape well cared for, with a strong sense of place. There is a strong sense of tranquillity away from the B roads.

Visual Characteristics

- Sweeping vistas of cultivated rolling arable land punctuated by blocks of trees on the hilltops or broken low thorn hedges along ditches or field boundaries.
- Dramatic exposed chalk scarp on steep upland fields with few trees.
- Distinctive elevated broad flat-topped ridges.
- Large to very large-scale arable field pattern.
- Historic houses are common throughout the area.
- Settlements pattern around a village green is characteristic of the area.
- Vast open isolated plateau landscape gives way to more populated pockets of settlement in valleys.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by large common-fields developed here, of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex, some of which were enclosed by agreement in the early post-medieval period, the remainder being enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, partially as a function of the parliamentary enclosure act. On the higher land the landscape is more typical of Essex than Cambridgeshire with winding lanes, dispersed hamlets and greens and ancient woodlands. Medieval parklands are also a notable historic feature of the landscape.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture with narrow bands of woodland. The area contains the following sites of nature conservation value:

- CWSs comprising small areas of scattered ancient woodland including High Wood (481 ha), Park Wood, Free Wood, Strethall Wood, Howe Wood, Felsted Croft Grove, Ann's Wood, Lee Wood north and south, Wilford's Wood, Ash grove, Green Wood, Daw's Grove, Rockell's Wood, Mead Bushes Wood and Bottom Roughway Wood.
- CWSs comprising road verges and pasture including: Canes Walk, Strethall Wood, Catmere End, Cups/bush pasture groves, Building Ends Meadows, Chrishall Parish Meadow, Littlebury and Strethall road, Littlebury Green Road and Langley Upper green.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character
- Pressure from visually intrusive expansion at Church End.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Potential for new development at the northern edge of the plateau which would be visually intrusive to views within this character area.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include winding sunken lanes, blocks of ancient woodland and remnant elms, drainage ditches and grassy tracks, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline on the ridges of this upland landscape is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the fields. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is also a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting several visible historic buildings and Medieval parklands. The area also contains several patches of ancient woodland, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Several important habitats for wildlife and biodiversity are scattered throughout the area (including several County Wildlife sites). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

Restore - seek to reinforce and/or reinstate historic landscape patterns and features that contribute to sense of place and time depth, by repairing distinctive elements that have been lost or degraded.

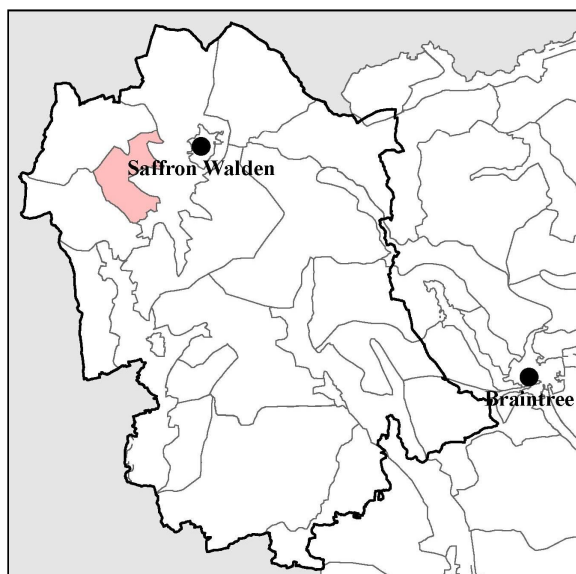
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted to emphasize the existing landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve and restore important areas of unimproved grassland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Enhance landscape character by planting new beech hangers on carefully sited knolls, hill-tops and scarps to form focal points to reinforce local chalklands landscape.
- Strengthen and enhance species-rich grassland and verges on thin chalk soils to promote plant diversity.
- Manage existing shelterbelts and restock to encourage young tree growth.
- Plant and site carefully new mixed woodlands and shelterbelts to enclose vast tracts of farmland and emphasise landform.
- Enhance footpath routes with carefully sited woodlands at selected locations to frame views and enhance biodiversity.

H2 ARKESDEN CHALK UPLAND

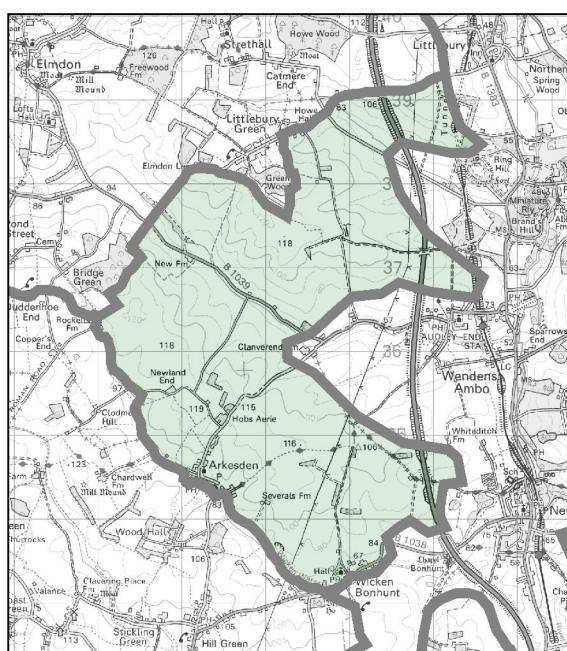


Key Characteristics

- Open, wide views from the higher ground.
- Few trees or blocks of woodland, except near farmsteads or the village of Arkesden.
- Wicken Water valley bottom is wooded and enclosed.
- Sound of water from weirs and fords.

Overall Character

This character area is comprised of the chalk upland that rises west of the Cam valley slopes. Bounded by Wicken Water on the south and west, and cut in half by the B1039, this is a relatively isolated farmland with few pedestrian or vehicular access lanes. This is not a populated area; Arkesden in the southwest is the only notable village, and the farmsteads are widely dispersed. It is a large-scale landscape of rolling arable fields, almost flat in some places on the higher ground in the northeast. The field pattern is regular, almost linear in places, with sporadic tree cover. Pylons cross the landscape from the southeast. There are fringing shelterbelts and scattered trees in places, with pockets of scrubby vegetation. Ditches and grassy tracks edge the fields, with some broken hedgerows. There are no patches of remnant ancient woodland, but there are some tree plantations. Long views are possible from the open lanes, which are almost straight, and public footpaths are few. The Harcamlow Way National Trail and Duddenhoe Lane (track) do provide some public access. Pasture for horses is visible, near settlements. Pylons cross the countryside in the southwest. Smaller, more organic field shapes are seen nearer to Arkesden itself, where the landscape character changes to reflect the Wicken Water valley floor. Here the scale is more intimate, with channelled views out through trees to the sloping countryside. There is the sound of water rippling over weirs, and, where it flows through the village, individual small bridges provide access to houses along the stream. This pretty village of colour-washed plaster and thatched roofed buildings has an historic flint and brick church that sits dramatically on a rise over the village green. Any incremental new housing is discreet



and consistent with the surroundings. The texture of this landscape is varied and interesting. Although a very short stretch of the M11 crosses the area in the northeast, Arkesden character area, tucked away above the western Cam valley slopes, has a very strong sense of place and tranquillity..

Visual Characteristics

- Characteristic settlement with a village green.
- Church at Arkesdon visible from higher ground.
- Colour-washed and brick-and-flint vernacular buildings.
- Panoramic views on the higher ground in the northeast of the area give way to more intimate wooded landscapes on the Wicken Water valley floor.
- Pylons dominate views in the southeast corner of the area.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by large common-fields developed here, of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex, some of which were enclosed by agreement in the early post-medieval period, the remainder being enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, partially as a function of the parliamentary enclosure act. On the higher land the landscape is more typical of Essex than Cambridgeshire with winding lanes, dispersed hamlets and greens and ancient woodlands. Historic landscape features also include linear settlement patterns, and river valleys marked by enclosed meadows.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains CWSs including Arkesden Chalk Pit, Wicken Bonhunt Churchyard and Wicken Bonhunt Verge.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Pressure for telecommunication masts, especially along the M11 that may be visually intrusive in this open landscape.
- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements (Wicken Bonhunt) which may be detrimental to landscape character.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Potential for pollution of Debden Water from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley sides and farmland plateau areas.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include scattered trees, ditches and grassy tracks at the edges of fields, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline on the ridges of this upland landscape, is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the fields. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is also a series of winding lanes, dispersed hamlets and greens and ancient woodland, with enclosed meadow within the valley floor. Overall this character area has moderate – to high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

Restore - seek to reinforce and/or reinstate historic landscape patterns and features that contribute to sense of place and time depth, by repairing distinctive elements that have been lost or degraded.

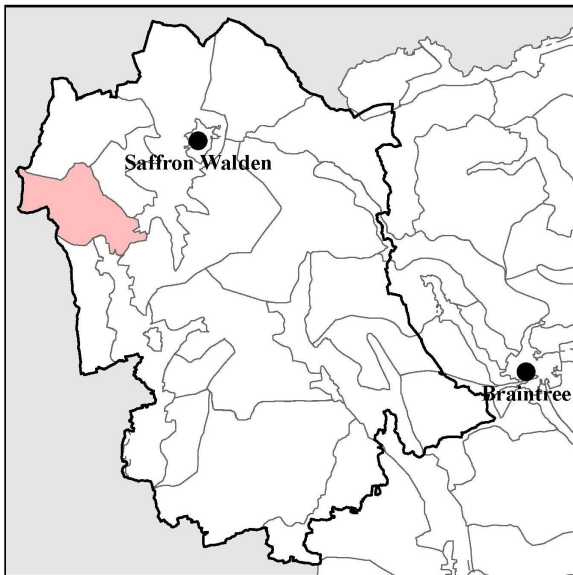
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

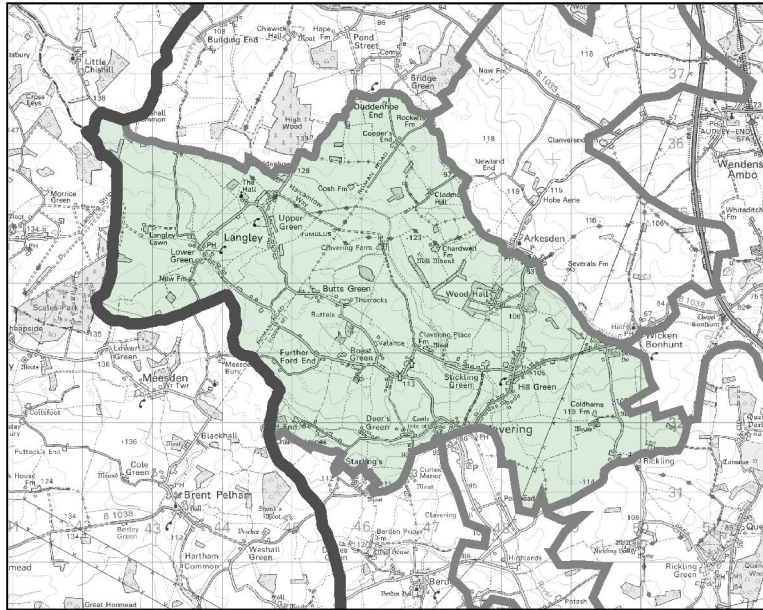
- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted to emphasize the existing landscape character.
- Plant and site carefully new mixed woodlands and shelterbelts to enclose tracts of farmland and emphasise landform.
- Enhance landscape character by planting new beech hangers on suitable carefully sited knolls, hill-tops and scarps to form focal points to reinforce local chalklands landscape.
- Enhance footpath routes with carefully sited woodlands at selected locations to frame views and enhance biodiversity.
- Conserve and restore important areas of unimproved grassland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Strengthen and enhance species-rich grassland and verges on thin chalk soils to promote plant diversity.
- Conserve and seek to restore marginal riverside habitat such as marshland and pasture, reed beds and off –stream wetlands.

H3 LANGLEY CHALK UPLAND



Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling plateau landform broad ridges eroded by valleys with small narrow streams.
- Sound of water from weirs and fords.
- Thickly wooded valley bottoms and along streams.
- Many small settlements along water courses - few on the higher ground.
- Distinctive settlement pattern around village greens, with many villages and hamlets identifying them in their names (ex: Stickling Green, Upper Green, Deer's Green, etc.).
- Area of striking contrasts - small-scale intimate and wooded versus expansive, large scale and somewhat isolated at higher elevations.
- The line of the ancient Roman Road traverses the area southwest to northeast.
- Scattering of ancient mounds, a castle and moated dwellings.
- River Stort rises near Langley.



Overall Character

This character area has Wicken Water on its eastern edge, the River Stort and Langley on its western side, Duddenhoe End to the north and Clavering at the mid-point of its southern boundary. It is a landscape of contrasts; intimate, small scale and populated in the valleys then expansive, open and thinly populated on the plateau ground. The high ground near Langley is rolling plateau with big farms, some grazing and rough grassland, and vast arable fields. It has medium to large regular to semi-irregular field patterns with broken hedgerows and some trees on the field boundaries. Woodland is often seen as a dense block on the horizon or lining the valleys below - it forms a distant background

enclosure for the open views. There are many lanes crossing the area and vehicular access is good. From the open roads there are views of fields bounded by ditches or grassy tracks and scattered farmsteads. The upland around Langley is less manicured than around Elmdon (H1) to the north, but this does not visibly detract from its character and the sense of isolation here. Chalk is not visible on the slopes but the chalky boulder clay looks fertile and productive, carpeted with many tints and tones of green in spring. Pylons and a phone mast are visible in the Clavering area, but in general, only telegraph poles, hedgerows or trees line the horizons. There are three patches of ancient woodland (see below). Descending into the valley areas the landscape character changes; particularly in the Stort valley leading to Clavering. Here are tree-lined sunken lanes, the sound of rushing water from weirs and fords, and an intimacy created by woods and tall hedges. In some of the small hamlets it is not uncommon to have to cross small individual bridges to reach the houses on the riverbanks, as at Mill End. A distinctive characteristic of this area is also the naming of village or hamlets after the village green that they cluster round: Stickling Green, Roast Green and Butts Green are a few examples. There is a rich heritage of vernacular buildings; colour-washed plaster with thatched roofs is common, as is mellow old red brick. Dispersed across the whole area are ancient burial mounds, moats, and motte & bailey castle sites. A comprehensive network of public footpaths also crosses the area, including the line of the ancient Roman Road. There are also some interesting old farm outbuildings. The texture of the whole character area ranges from rough to smooth and takes in many nuances in-between. The countryside is as varied as the elements that make it up: watery fords, shady lanes, hollows, grassy tracks, open upland and large rolling fields, big sky, ancient buildings, village greens and roadside verges. The landscape has a strong sense of place and is very peaceful away from the traffic noise of the busier B roads that cross it.

Visual Characteristics

- Historic houses/farmsteads are visible throughout the area.
- Settlements clustered around a village green are a characteristic of the area.
- Vast open isolated plateau landscape gives way to more populated pockets of settlement in valleys.
- Intimate nature of wooded stream banks and sunken lanes.
- Church at Langley visible across fields locally.
- Some new build commercial structures in keeping with local vernacular architecture of weatherboarding and brick (outside Langley).

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by large irregular fields of pre-18th century origin, interspersed with patches of pre-18th century unenclosed commons. The original medieval settlement pattern of widely dispersed along numerous linear greens and stream valleys largely survives, although there has been a degree of coalescing creating linear villages along roads. The river valleys marked by enclosed meadows.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 8 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Scotch Wood (c.31 ha), comprising ancient woodland habitats.
- Seven CWSs comprising pasture and road verges including: Cooper's End, Cooper's End Meadow, Beckett's Paddock, Green Man Meadows, Stickling Green, Mill Farm, Scott's Pasture and part of Oxbury Wood.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential visual intrusion from pressure for more phone masts.
- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.

- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character (Butts Green, Roast Green).
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include dense blocks of woodland on the horizon, or within the valleys, tall hedges and tree-lined sunken lanes (for example within the Stort Valley), which are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline on the ridges of this upland landscape is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is a sense of historic integrity or continuity, resulting from a largely intact historic settlement pattern (widely dispersed and arranged along numerous linear greens and stream valleys) and enclosed meadows within the valley floors. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

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

Restore - seek to reinforce and/or reinstate historic landscape patterns and features that contribute to sense of place and time depth, by repairing distinctive elements that have been lost or degraded.

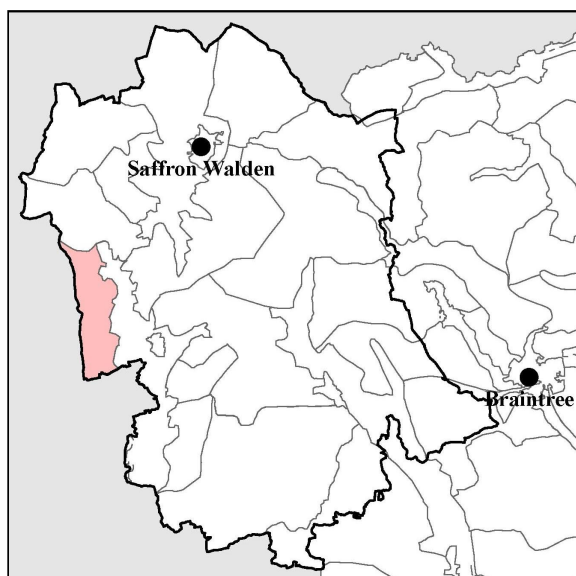
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted to emphasize the existing landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve and restore important areas of unimproved grassland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Enhance landscape character by planting new beech hangers on suitable carefully sited knolls, hill-tops and scarps to form focal points to reinforce local chalklands landscape.
- Strengthen and enhance species-rich grassland and verges on thin chalk soils to promote plant diversity.
- Manage existing shelterbelts and restock to encourage young tree growth.
- Plant and site carefully new mixed woodlands and shelterbelts to enclose vast tracts of farmland and emphasise landform.
- Enhance ancient footpath routes like the Roman Road with carefully sited woodlands at selected locations to frame views and enhance biodiversity.

H4 BERDEN AND FARNHAM CHALK UPLAND

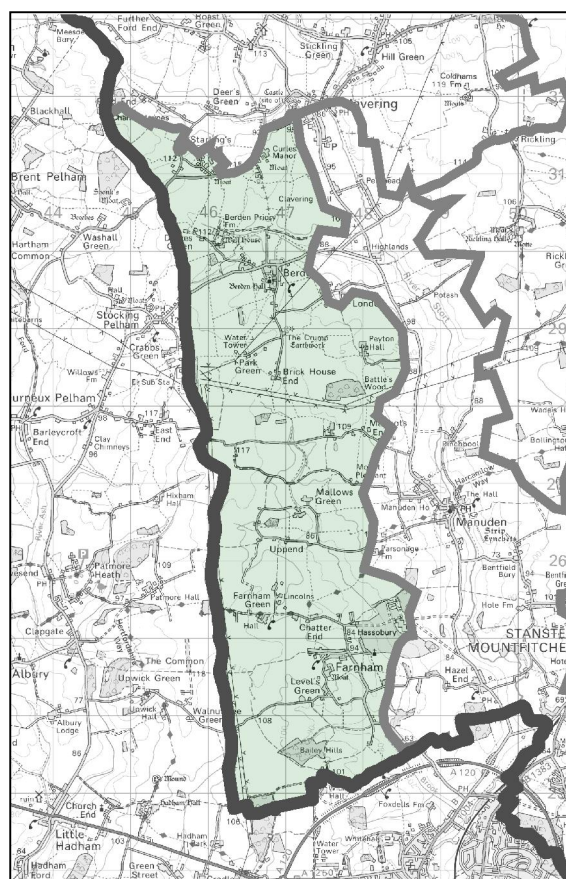


Key Characteristics

- Broad undulating upland slopes that flatten at the highest elevations.
- Distinctly elevated, open, arable fields.
- Field patterns mainly regular, with large farms and becoming smaller and more organic in shape in the valleys and around villages.
- Scrubby, often fragmented hedgerows or scattered tree groups, with distant blocks of trees framing views, particularly towards the middle and southern part of the area, where it is dissected by Bourn Brook.
- A complex array of pylons leading to electricity substation near Berden dominates views in the high plateau.
- Few roads; sense of emptiness and openness.

Overall Character

This character area extends from Ford End in the north to the environs of Farnham in the south. The county boundary with Hertfordshire lies in the west and the Stort Valley to the east. Around Berden the upland ridges are broad and almost flat, moving southwards the slopes become more rolling and wooded. It is an extremely varied character area, with the open wide vistas on the higher ground contrasting with the more intimate feel of the steep slopes descending to the Bourn Brook. The field pattern varies in the same way - rather large and regular in the northern and middle part of the area, becoming more irregular and smaller in scale towards the south. Mostly arable farmland on this chalky boulder clay, there is some pasture for horses, particularly near villages. Occasionally post- and-rail fences enclose fields, as well as the more typical fragmented hedgerows and scrub-lined ditches. Rural lanes running east to west divide the area almost in thirds, with some areas quite inaccessible except



via private tracks. This adds to its sense of remoteness. There are quite a few pedestrian footpaths crisscrossing the area, and a double row of pylons dominates the skyline on the plateau outside Berden, where there is also a highly visible national grid electricity station. Tree blocks provide a certain sense of enclosure in the centre of the area, and this more intimate sense increases approaching the steep slopes near the Bourn Brook. There are five patches of ancient woodland scattered across the area (see below). Several springs scattered over the area as well. The changing undulations of the landform characterize this area, and the sense of moving up and down, in and out from closed to open, expansive views. Infrequent settlements offer variety and interest with their colour-washed plaster buildings and the occasional red brick outbuildings. Farm buildings vary from medium to large. The texture of this landscape changes with the landform; moving from smooth expansive fields to winding lanes to steeply sloping mature woodland. Away from the A11, which can be heard in the distance on the western fringes, it has places of great tranquillity.

Visual Characteristics

- Dramatic views of steeply sloping fields and small church above Bourne Brook.
- Highly visible double row of pylons and electricity generating station outside Berden.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, with a number of small areas of pre-18th century unenclosed common. The settlement pattern is very widely dispersed, comprising isolated farms and a few hamlets. Hassobury Park, outside Farnham, forms a conspicuous landscape block within the area.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 10 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Battles Wood CWS (c. 100ha), comprising ancient woodland.
- Bailey's Wood CWS (c. 100 ha) comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland.
- Three small CWSs comprising part of Oxbury Wood, Ley Wood and part of Bloodhounds Wood.
- Five small CWSs comprising unimproved grassland and wetland habitats including: Arnold's Spring, Pelham Centre Meadow, Park Green, Farnham Green, Farnham Churchyard.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the Bourne Brook from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley side and farmland plateau areas.
- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Potential for new development at the northern edge of the plateau which would be visually intrusive to views within this character area.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include small patches of woodland (some of which are ancient) and several springs, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline on the ridges of this upland landscape is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new

development. There is a sense of historic integrity or continuity, resulting from a widely dispersed historic settlement pattern and enclosed meadows within the valley of the River Stort. Overall, this character area has moderate to-high sensitivity to change.

Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

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

Restore - seek to reinforce and/or reinstate historic landscape patterns and features that contribute to sense of place and time depth, by repairing distinctive elements that have been lost or degraded.

Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

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

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted to emphasize the existing landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve and restore important areas of unimproved grassland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Strengthen and enhance species-rich grassland and verges on thin chalk soils to promote plant diversity.

