

Topic Paper

Ecological Sites on and adjacent to New Settlement/Neighbourhood Proposals

May 2017

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify the sites designated for their ecological importance within and adjoining the new settlement/neighbourhood sites. The information will identify whether there is a need for further survey work.

The paper looks at the following development sites:-

- North Uttlesford, Great Chesterford
- North east of Elsenham
- Land north and east of Takeley (Greater Priors Green)
- Little Easton (Easton Park)
- Little Dunmow (Chelmer Mead)
- West of Braintree, Stebbing (Boxted Wood and Andrewsfield Garden Village)

There are no International Designations within the District. The Council will undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment which will assess the impact of policies on international sites in adjoining authorities.

The following sites are identified from the following sources

- SSSI – Natural England - <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>
- Local Wildlife Sites (County Wildlife Sites) including Ancient Woodlands and Special Verges. A district wide assessment was undertaken by Essex Wildlife Trust in 1994 and a partial resurvey by Essex Ecology Services Ltd, concentrating on the West Anglian railway route between Bishop's Stortford and Great Chesterford and the A120 corridor between Bishop's Stortford and the district boundary near Rayne, Braintree was undertaken in 2007. The date a site was surveyed is indicated. It is noted if according to Essex Wildlife Trust, a site is in Positive Conservation Management.
- Protected Lanes – Uttlesford Protected Lanes Assessment (March 2012)

In 2013 Essex Ecology Services Ltd (a wholly owned subsidiary of Essex Wildlife Trust) carried out an alert mapping exercise across the district using aerial internet photography and old Ordnance Survey maps. Although not an exhaustive exercise it identified sites of potential ecological importance and worthy of further survey work.

If a developer has undertaken ecological assessments as part of the call for site evidence an extract of the summary / conclusions is provided.

National designations

Adjacent Site

Hildersham Wood SSSI – Ancient woodland of ash-maple type lying on the chalky Boulder Clay. Its ancient origin is reflected in the rich variety of woodland plants and associated communities which it supports. Such woodland habitat is now very localised in extent, both locally and in lowland England as a whole.

Natural England last assessed the site in 2008 and identified it as being in ‘unfavourable’ condition but ‘recovering’ where the site is not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management mechanisms are in place.

Local designations

Within/edge of site

Ufd71 - A11, Chesterford Protected Roadside Verge (1994)

Ufd74 - Great Chesterford Road Verge (part within and part beyond) (2016). This site was surveyed in 2016 as part of the Special Roadside Verges project and found to be in favourable condition. The site is in positive conservation management.

These sites support chalk grass flora.

Beyond site

Ufd103 – Burton Wood – Ancient Woodland (1994)

Ufd104 – Crave Hall Meadow - Grassland flora (1994)

Ufd110 – Paddock Wood – Ancient Woodland (1994)

Other sites identified as being of potential ecological importance

Within the site

Old woodland within site, on north eastern boundary

Developer submission

Extract from Phase 1 Ecology Report July 2016; section 4: Evaluation and Conclusion.

4.1 Overall the site was of limited value in habitat and botanical terms being dominated by intensive arable land.

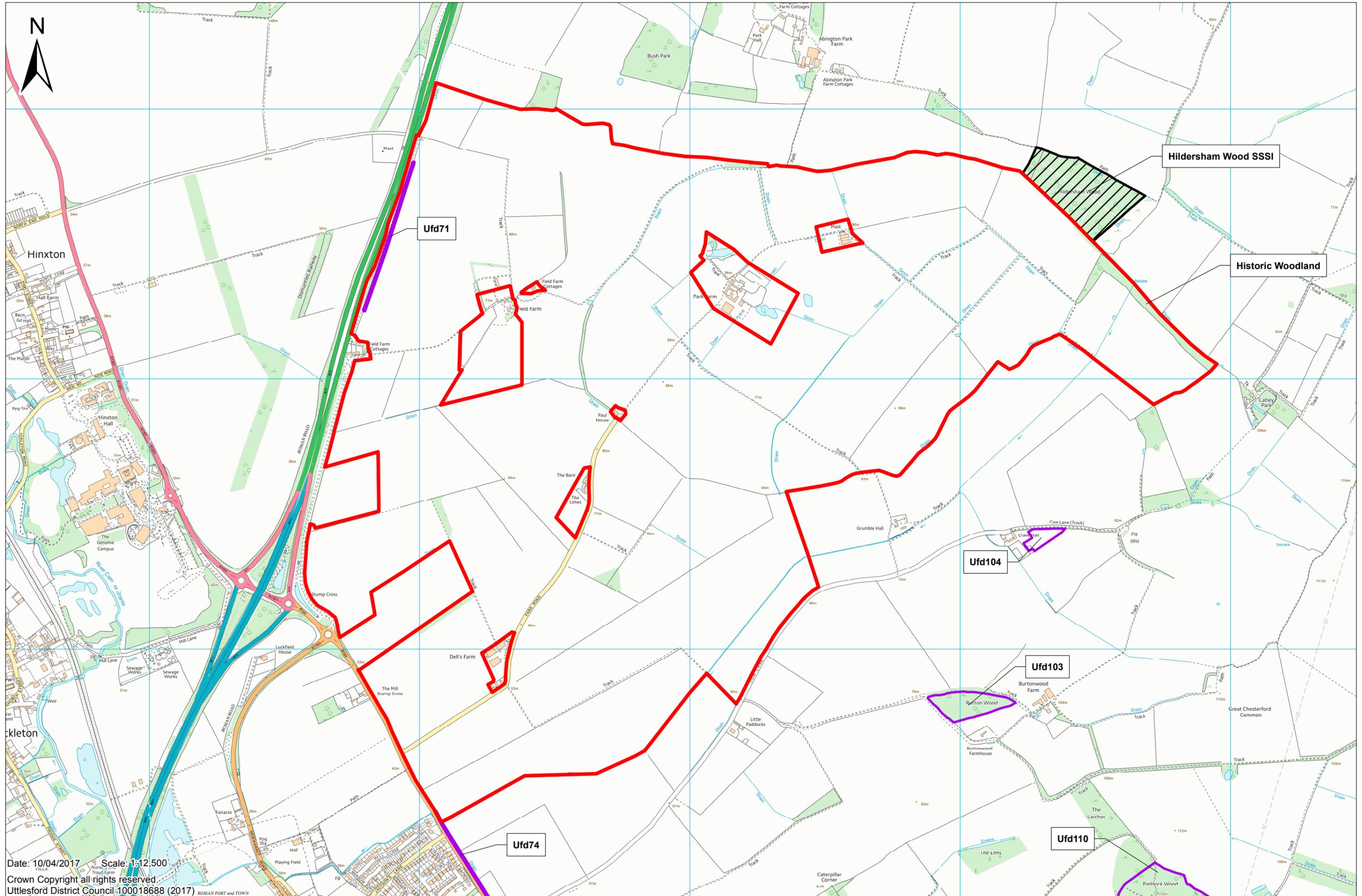
4.2 In terms of nature conservation designations, a small area of Hildersham Wood SSSI is located with the study area (0.3ha) and a LWS road verge is present along the A11 road embankment and is probably at least partly within the study area.

4.3 Aside from these designated areas, the main habitat interests relate to hedgerow boundaries / mature boundary trees, occasional wet ditches, ponds and in particular an L-shaped linear block of broadleaved woodland in the site’s north-east corner, close to Hildersham Wood SSSI. This area of woodland had ancient woodland character (albeit it is not included on the Ancient Woodland inventory), being dominated by mature oaks and with a relatively varied understorey and woodland ground layer.

Conclusion

Special Roadside Verge Ufd71 lies on the development site boundary and an historic woodland lies within the site on the norther east boundary. Up to date information on these sites is required as part of an overall ecological survey accompanying any eventual planning submission.

Great Chesterford Ecological Sites



North East of Elsenham

National designations

Beyond the site

Elsenham Woods SSSI - Eastend Wood and Pledgdon Wood. Elsenham Woods are predominantly ancient mixed woods supporting the wet ashmaple, oak-hornbeam and wych elm woodland types. The site comprises Eastend Wood and Pledgdon Wood, both situated on the chalky boulder clay of north-west Essex, less than half a mile apart. Both woods support a diverse assemblage of species, including the nationally uncommon Oxlip. Eastend Wood was surveyed in January 2016 and Pledgdon Wood in March 2017. Both woods are found to be in 'Favourable condition' with the site being adequately conserved.

Local designations

Beyond the site

UTTLANE45 Protected Lane – Henham – Little Henham Hall. The biodiversity value of the lane is classified as being non-designated assets including continuous mixed species hedgerows, mature trees (including TPOs), grass verge with flowering plants, ponds.

Ufd131 – Lady Wood / Regent's Spring - ancient woodland. The eastern section of Lady Wood abuts the SSSI Pledgdon Wood. (2007)

Ufd95 – Alsa Wood - Large ancient woodland, a former SSSI which is now bisected by the M11 (2007). Part of this site is in positive conservation management.

The 2007 review no longer found the following sites met the criteria to be Local Wildlife Sites due to poor management. They are identified as Potential Local Wildlife Sites pending restorative management and further survey work

PLoWS12 Elsenham Hall Fields

PLoWS13 Pennington Hall Meadow

PLoWS14 Elsenham Landfill

Developer submission

Habitat and species survey reports submitted to support planning application Land North East of Elsenham UTT/13/0808/OP

Extract from EIA Chapter 8 Ecology and Nature Conservation

8.1.1 This chapter assesses the likely significant effects of the proposed development upon 'receptors' or 'resources' of ecology and nature conservation value.

8.1.4 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of all land under the control of The Fairfield Partnership was undertaken initially to determine the habitats present and to highlight the suitability of those habitats present for protected species, with subsequent specialist species surveys undertaken to determine their presence absence as necessary.

Extract from EIA Volume 3: Non-Technical Summary

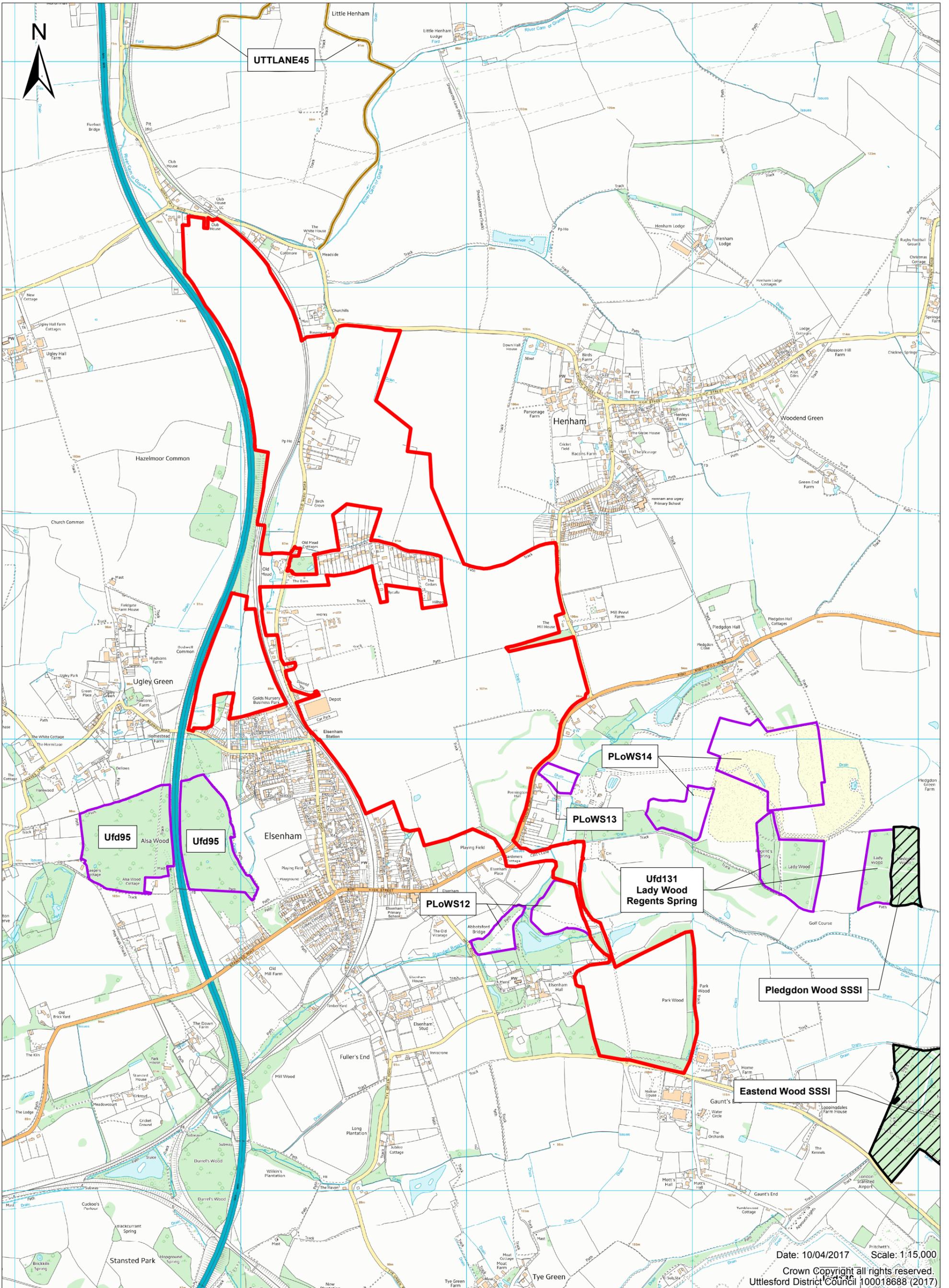
8.0 ECOLOGY AND NATURE CONSERVATION

8.1 The Proposed Development would have negligible effects on sites of nature conservation interest, specifically two statutory sites Elsenham Woods SSSI and Quendon Woods SSSI.

Conclusion

There are no designated sites within the development site.

Elsenham Ecological Sites



Land north and east of Takeley (Great Priors Green)

National designations

None

Local designations

Adjacent site

Ufd146 - Prior's Wood – ancient woodland (2007)

UTTLANE166 Takeley – Warrish Hall Road 1 - The biodiversity value of the lane is classified as being non-designated assets including continuous mixed species hedgerows, mature trees (including TPOs), grass verge with flowering plants, ponds.

Beyond site

Ufd196 - Flitch Way (2007) - This disused railway line has been taken over by the County Council as a bridle/pathway/linear country park which in addition acts as a valuable wildlife corridor throughout the south of the district, as well providing a good series of habitats in its own right. At nearly 34 hectares it is effectively one of the largest woodland/scrub/grassland habitats of high nature conservation value in the district. The site is in positive conservation management.

Ufd172 – Runnel's Hey – ancient woodland (1994)

UTTLANE156 Takeley Warrish Hall Road - The biodiversity value of the lane is classified as being significant lengths of intermittent hedge (with or without occasional mature trees) and verge surviving and individual non-designated assets e.g. pond or lane is adjacent/connected to designated asset e.g. Ancient Wood, SSSI

Other sites identified as being of potential ecological importance

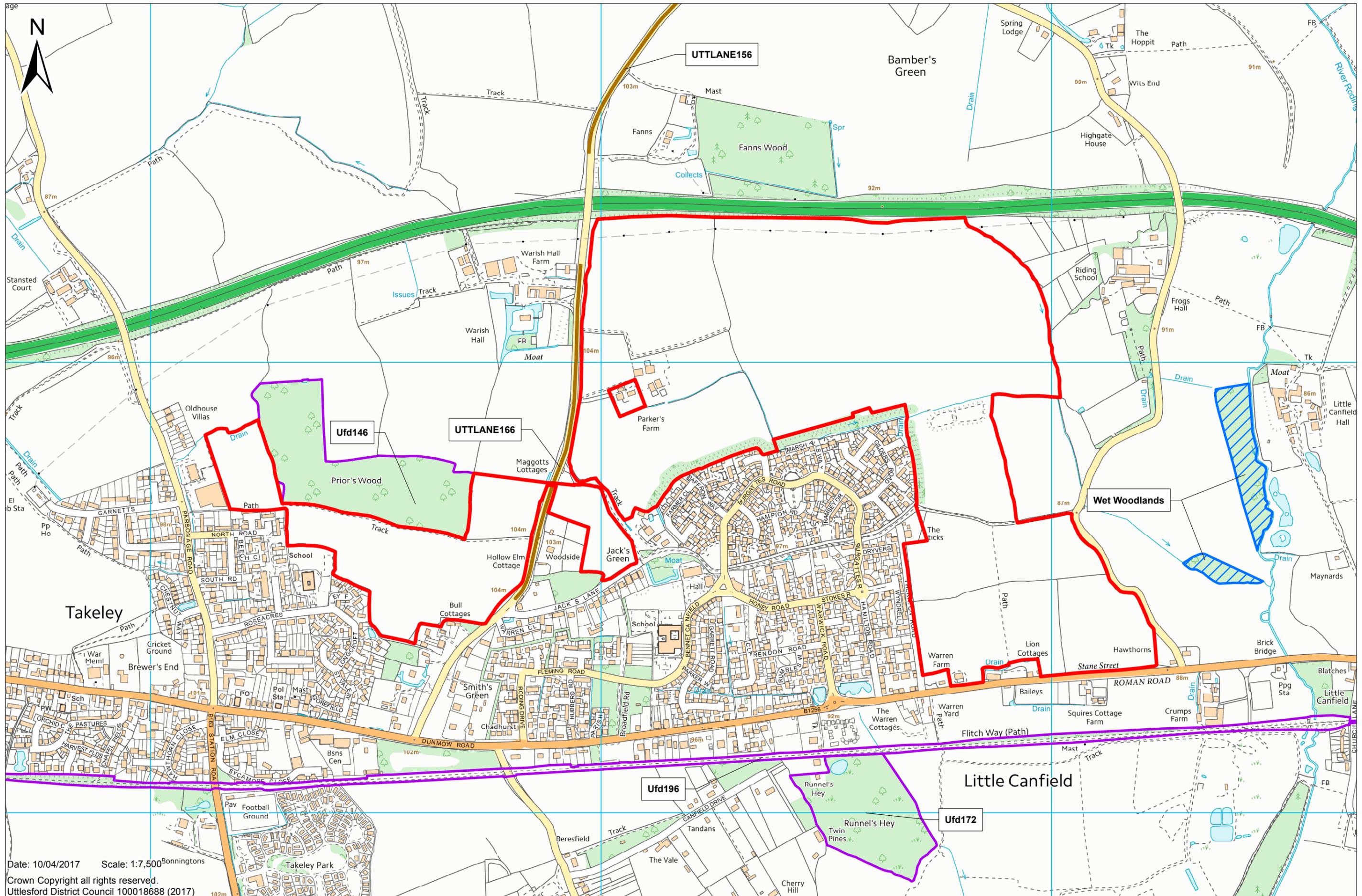
Beyond site

Adjacent River Roding, east of site - possible wet woodland habitats

Conclusion

No designated sites lie within the development site. However Ufd146 and UTTLANE166 lie adjacent to the site boundary. Up to date information on these sites is required as part of an overall ecological survey accompanying any eventual planning submission.

Takeley - Priors Green Ecological Sites



Little Easton (Easton Park)

National designations

Beyond the site

High Wood SSSI - a wet Ash-Maple and Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam wood developed over Chalky Boulder Clay and Loess on the main watershed between the Rivers Roding and Chelmer. Most of the wood is poorly drained giving rise to strongly gleyed soils, ranging from a neutral or weakly acidic series in the predominantly clay areas to strongly acidic series over the Loess. A rich and varied flora is associated with these soil types.

Natural England last assessed the site in 2015 and identified it as being in 'unfavourable' condition with 'no change' which means the site is not being conserved and will not reach favourable condition unless there are changes to the site management or external pressures.

Local designations

Within the site

Ufd179 Philipland / Middlefield Wood – ancient woodland (1994)

Ufd194 Little Easton Airfield - This unusual site comprises broad strips of grassland which would have been adjacent to old airfield runways, and one isolated patch of grassland which together support scarce Essex flora. (2007)

Beyond the site

Ufd196 - Flicht Way (2007) - This disused railway line has been taken over by the County Council as a bridle/pathway/linear country park which in addition acts as a valuable wildlife corridor throughout the south of the district, as well providing a good series of habitats in its own right. At nearly 34 hectares it is effectively one of the largest woodland/scrub/grassland habitats of high nature conservation value in the district. The site is in positive conservation management.

UTTLANE90 – Little Easton/Tilty/Thaxted -Duck St. to Folly Mill Lane

UTTLANE94 – Little Easton - Common Lane

UTTLANE95 – Broxted - Water Lane

The biodiversity value of these lanes is classified as being significant lengths of intermittent hedge (with or without occasional mature trees) and verge surviving and individual non-designated assets e.g. pond or lane is adjacent/connected to designated asset e.g. Ancient Wood, SSSI.

UTTLANE92 – Broxted/Tilty - Broxted Road

UTTLANE96 – Broxted - Browns End Road

The biodiversity value of these lanes is classified having designated assets e.g. LOWS, Special Verge, Veteran pollards, Ancient Species Rich hedgerow(s) associated with the lane or its component parts.

UTTLANE97 – Little Easton - Laundry Lane - The biodiversity value of the lane is classified as having Non-designated assets including continuous mixed species hedgerows, mature trees (including TPOs), grass verge with flowering plants, ponds

Other sites identified as being of potential ecological importance

Within site

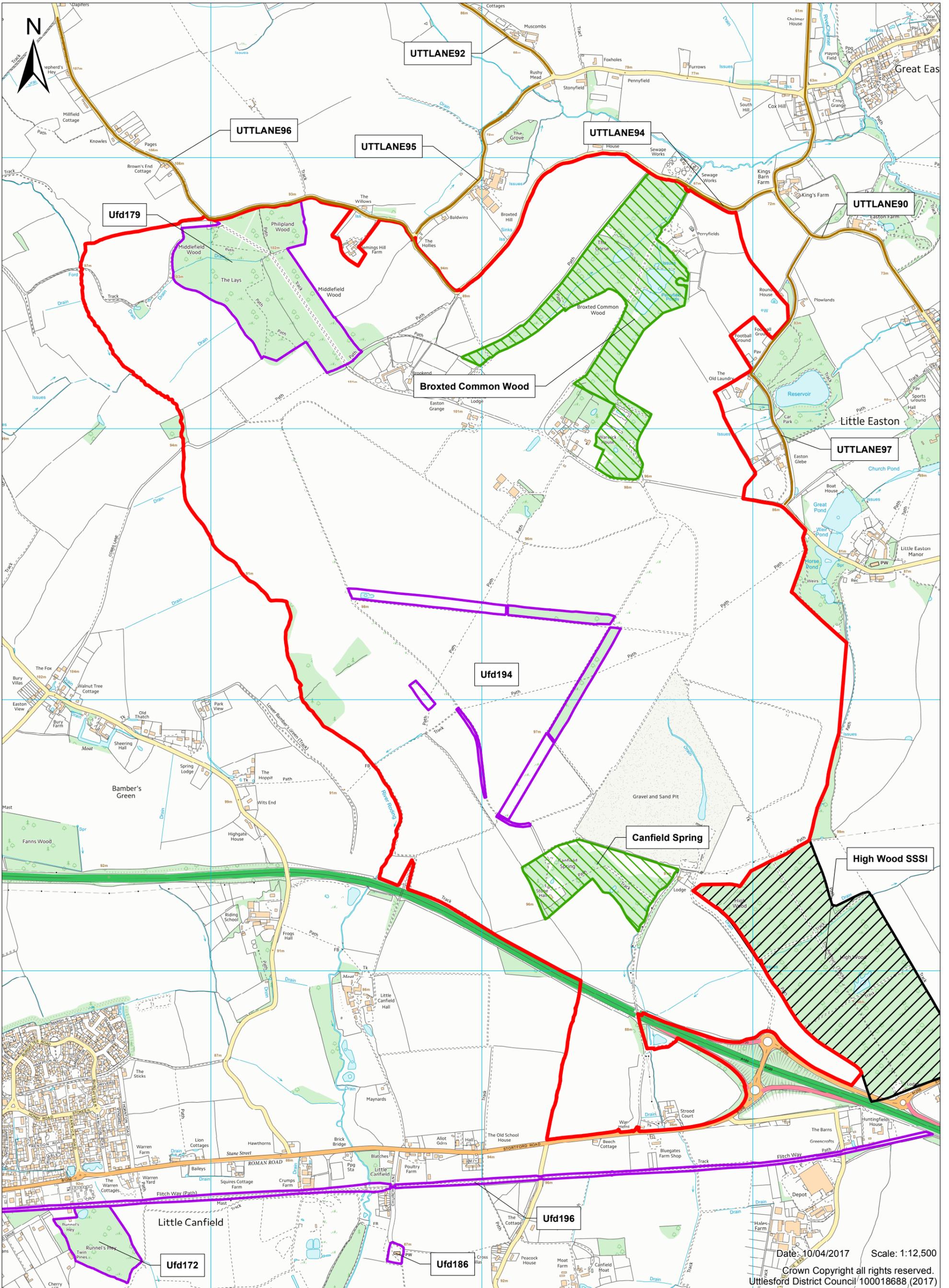
Canfield Spring -

Boxted Common Wood – a large mosaic of different habitats

Conclusion

Two Local Wildlife Sites and two woodlands identified as being of potential ecological importance lie within the development site and a number of historic lanes adjoin the site boundary. Up to date information on these sites is required as part of an overall ecological survey accompanying any eventual planning submission.

Easton Park Ecological Sites



Little Dunmow (Chelmer Mead)

National designations

None

Local designations

Adjacent site

UTTLANE79 Bramble Lane - The biodiversity value of the lane is classified as being significant lengths of intermittent hedge (with or without occasional mature trees) and verge surviving and individual non-designated assets e.g. pond or lane is adjacent/connected to designated asset e.g. Ancient Wood, SSSI

Adjacent/within site

Ufd196 - Flich Way (2007) - This disused railway line has been taken over by the County Council as a bridle/pathway/linear country park which in addition acts as a valuable wildlife corridor throughout the south of the district, as well providing a good series of habitats in its own right. At nearly 34 hectares it is effectively one of the largest woodland/scrub/grassland habitats of high nature conservation value in the district. The site is in positive conservation management.

Beyond site

Ufd257 Homeley Wood – ancient woodland (2007)

Other sites identified as being of potential ecological importance

Edge of site

Site east of Station Road - Rough grassland – potential reptile habitat

The Moors – scrubby grassland – potential reptile habitat, may have other interests

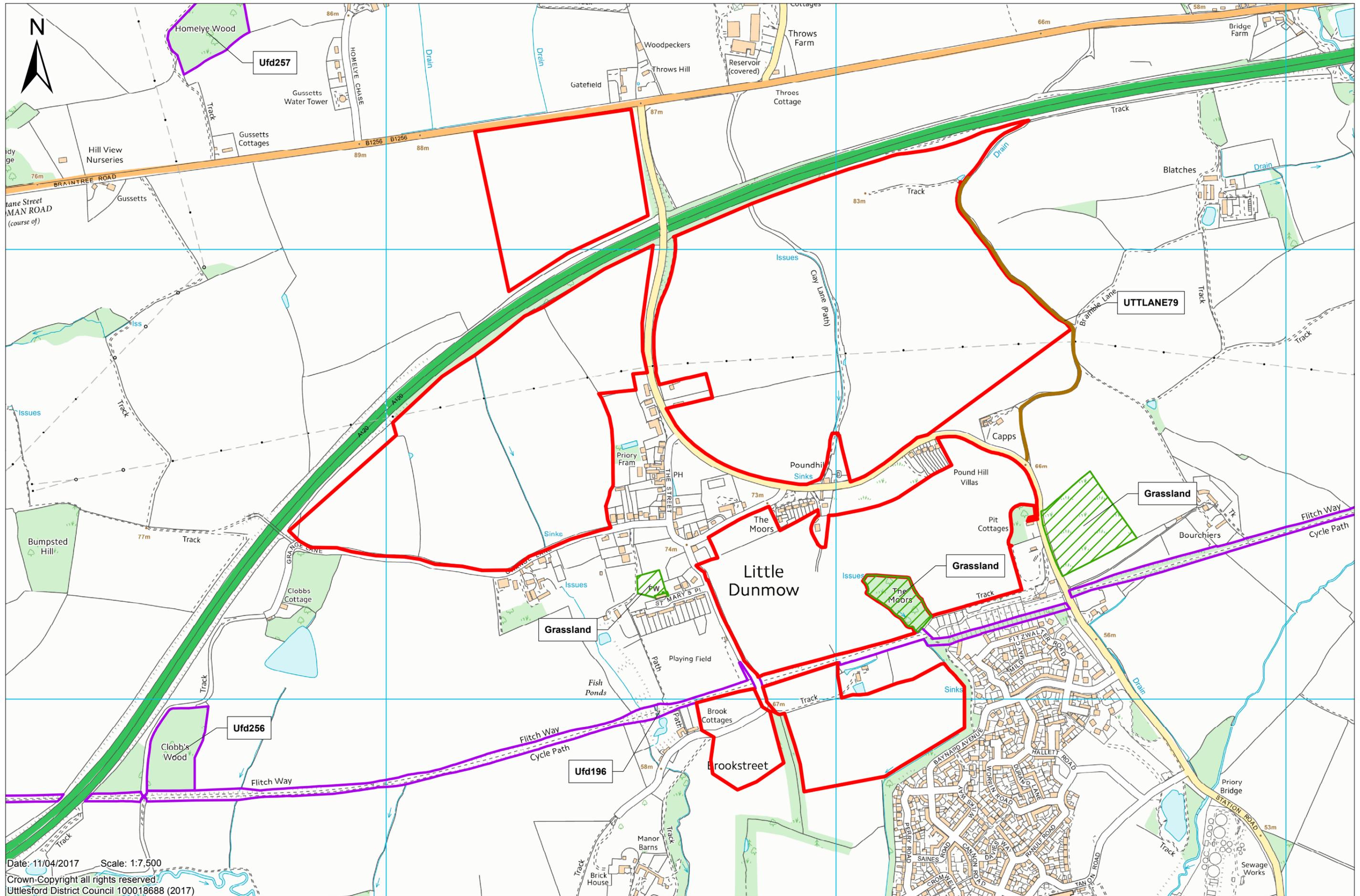
Beyond site

Church yard - grassland

Conclusion

There are no designated sites within the development site, however there are some grassland sites adjoining the development site which may be of ecological importance and up to date information on these sites is required as part of an overall ecological survey accompanying any eventual planning submission.

Little Dunmow - Chelmer Mead Ecological Sites



West of Braintree, Stebbing (Boxted Wood and Andrewsfield Garden Village)

National designations

None

Local designations

Within site

Ufd281 Broxted Wood – ancient woodland (2007)

Beyond site

Ufd278 Whitehouse Spring – ancient woodland (2007)

Ufd279 Mouslin Wood – ancient woodland (2007)

Ufd280 Stebbing Green (2007) – flower rich Green and sections of roadside grassland that were formally parts of grassy droves leading into the green. This site is surveyed by a local volunteer and is in positive conservation management.

UTTLANE77 – Stebbing – Whitehouse Road - The biodiversity value of the lane is classified as designated assets e.g. LOWS, Special Verge, Veteran pollards, Ancient Species Rich hedgerow(s) associated with the lane or its component parts

Ufd196 - Flich Way (2007) - This disused railway line has been taken over by the County Council as a bridle/pathway/linear country park which in addition acts as a valuable wildlife corridor throughout the south of the district, as well providing a good series of habitats in its own right. At nearly 34 hectares it is effectively one of the largest woodland/scrub/grassland habitats of high nature conservation value in the district. The site is in positive conservation management.

Other sites identified as being of potential ecological importance

Beyond site

Rough grassland south of Mouslin Wood – potential habitat or reptiles plus other wildlife interest

Cannon Wood NE of Mouslin Wood – named wood on old OS maps, being indicative of older woodland stands.

Developer submission

Extract from Andrewsfield Garden Village: Preliminary Ecological Assessment (June 2015)

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

CONCLUSION

5.1 The majority of site is considered to be of low ecological value due to the dominance of intensively farmed arable crops and isolated, heavily shaded linear woodland blocks (spinneys) lacking structural diversity.

5.2 Opportunities to enhance these relatively extensive uniform landscape features within the context of the proposed development are available including the replacement of the extant arable monoculture to more biologically diverse, accessible semi-natural habitats with reference to relevant habitats and species of principal importance in line with national planning policy and relevant legal drivers.

5.3 Habitats of higher ecological value including field margins, hedgerows, woodland and waterbodies are present throughout the site. These habitats have a greater potential to support rare and protected species. In addition certain species, such as farmland bird specialists, utilise the arable fields, increasing their value.

5.4 Notwithstanding the need for further detailed surveys, the retention, enhancement and management of more valuable habitats could be achieved through well directed and implemented design. Certain species, such as nesting skylark, would inevitably be lost from the site, however, these may be catered for through *ex situ* enhancements within the wider agricultural landscape to maintain and ideally enhance local / regional populations.

Conclusion

Ufd 281 Boxted wood lies within the development site. There is a grassland site and Cannon Wood adjoining the development site which may be of ecological importance. Up to date information on these sites is required as part of an overall ecological survey accompanying any eventual planning submission.

West of Braintree Ecological Sites

