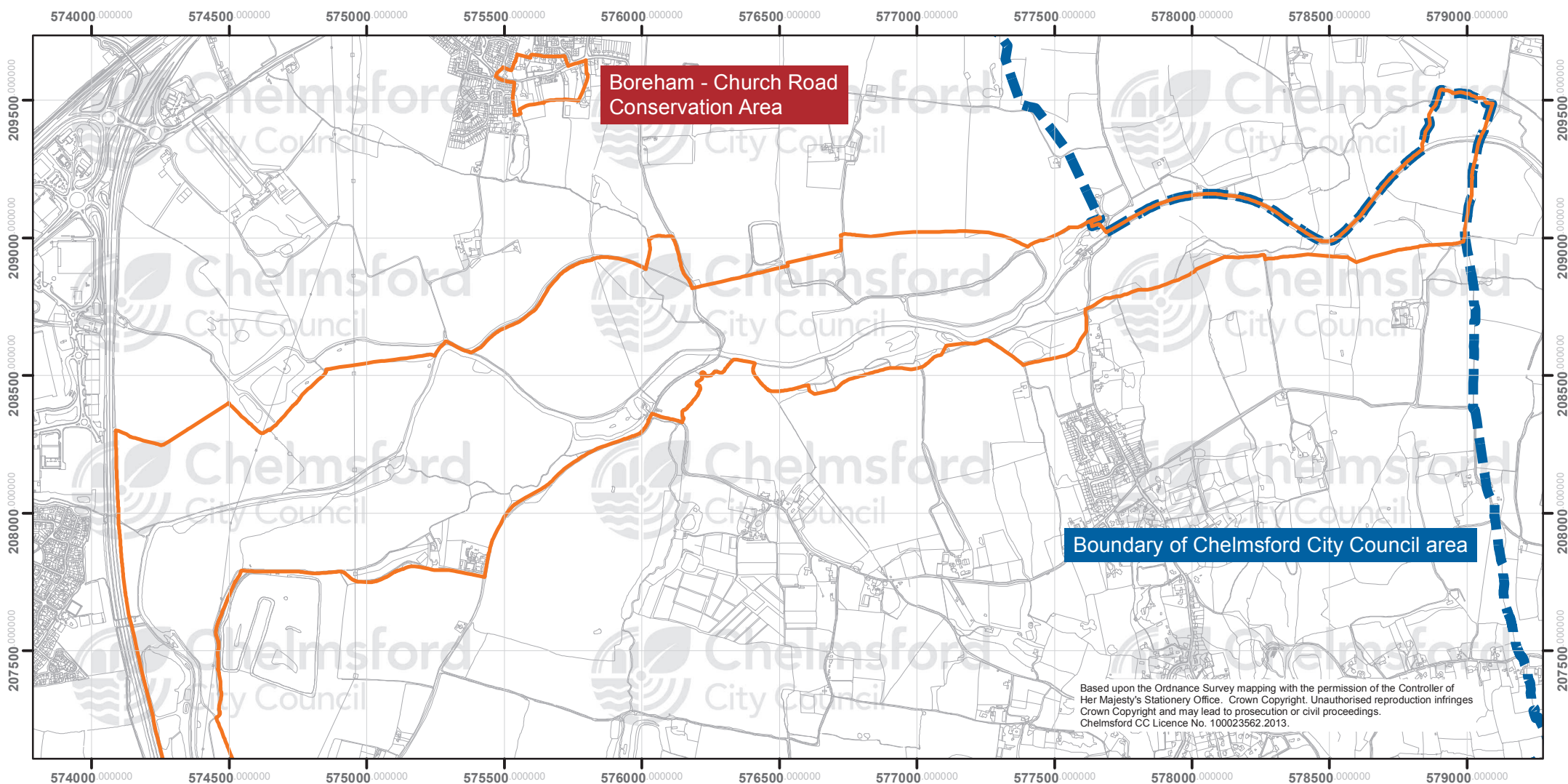


# Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area East

Reference	G021
Designated	24.09.1991
First amendment	-

Second amendment	-
Third amendment	-
Fourth amendment	-



0 250  
Metres  
JULY 2013

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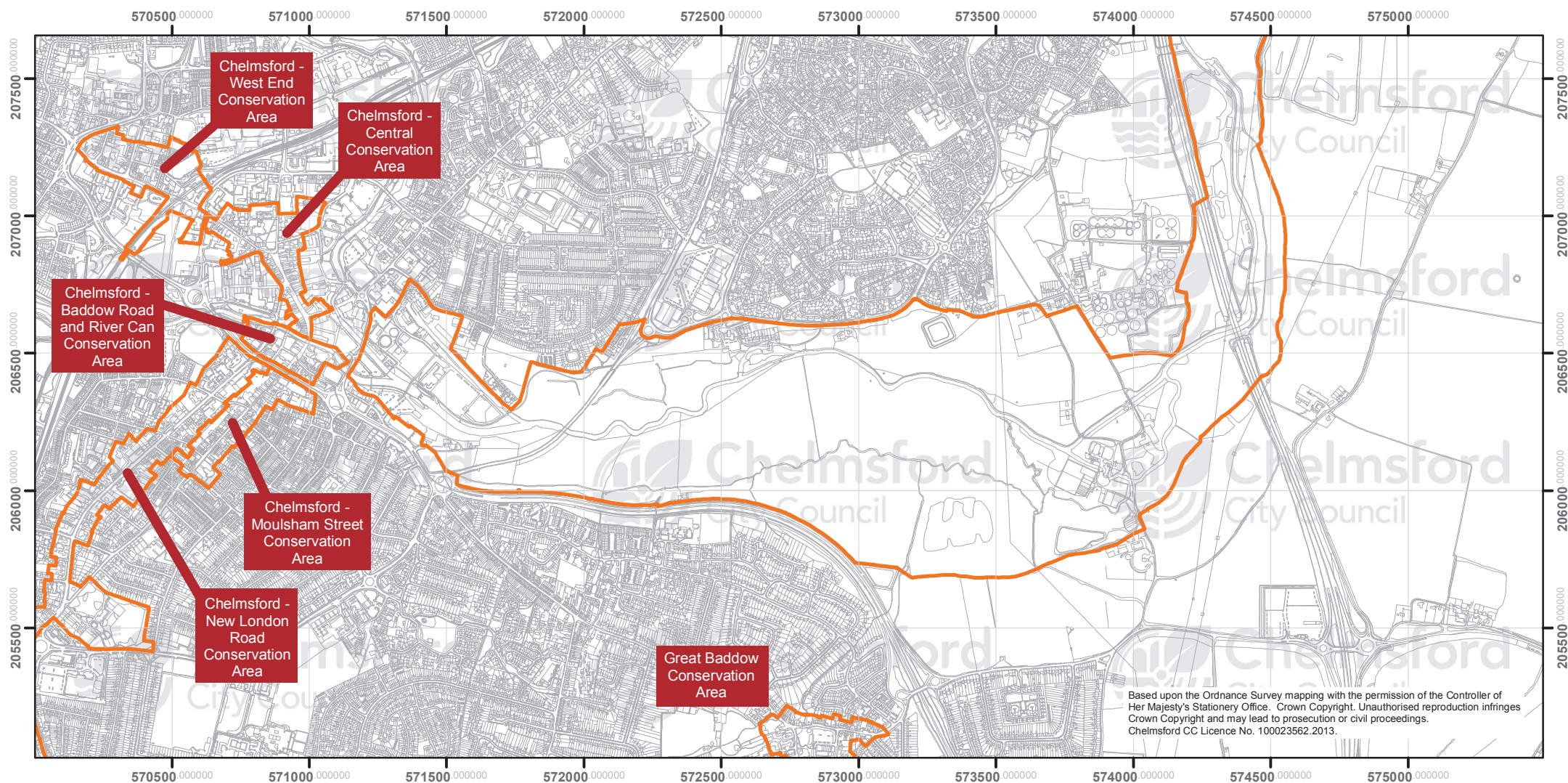




# Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area West

Reference	G021
Designated	24.09.1991
First amendment	-

Second amendment	-
Third amendment	-
Fourth amendment	-



0 250  
Metres

JULY 2013

## Directorate for Sustainable Communities

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# Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area

Conservation area  
character appraisal

Consultation draft

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## Introduction

### Purpose of this appraisal

This appraisal aims to examine and define the character of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area.

This appraisal has several aims:

- To define the special character of the area.
- To raise awareness amongst property owners and the general public of the heritage importance of the area.
- To help inform owners, occupiers, professionals and developers when they propose alterations, extensions and redevelopment.
- To inform Chelmsford Borough councillors and planners when determining planning applications.
- To inform Essex County Council, as highways authority, when making proposals.
- To justify the existing boundaries and consider possible boundary changes.
- To provide a basis for the future enhancement and management of the area.

The scope of the appraisal includes assessing the adjoining areas. The appraisal looks in detail at the buildings, river structures and landscape features that contribute to or detract from the special character, for which the conservation area was designated. These will be identified to help further the planning aim to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The boundaries of the conservation area have been reviewed as part of the appraisal process. The description and analysis of the area justifies maintaining the boundary of the existing designated area and suggests where changes could be made.

### Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* (the Act). Designation of a conservation area places firmer planning controls over certain types of development, including extensions, boundary treatments, the demolition of unlisted buildings and works to trees.

It does not prevent any change to an area and it may be subject to many pressures, both good and bad, that will affect its character and appearance. The commercial and mixed use buildings within the conservation area require planning permission for most external alterations, although dwelling houses generally enjoy permitted development for some minor works. Furthermore any internal or external alterations to listed buildings requires listed building consent.

Chelmsford Borough Council as local planning authority (LPA) has a duty to designate areas of special character as conservation areas. Once designated the LPA has various duties imposed by the Act, including considering whether development proposals and street scene works will preserve or enhance the character of the area and to formulate proposals for enhancement.

### Development and Planning Issues

There is a strategy for regeneration and expansion of the town centre. Major redevelopment is planned for particular sites adjacent to the Chelmsford waterside part of the conservation area as described in the Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan. Figure 1 shows sites with recent or proposed redevelopment and other sites with potential for redevelopment within the waterside area.

Outside of the Area Action Plan area and beyond Chelmer Road, the rural areas face various pressures for new buildings, change of use and changes to the landscape, through for instance the construction of 'agricultural reservoirs', which can be harmful to the character of the water meadows.

### Local Policy background

The Chelmsford Borough Local Development Framework adopted February 2008 (Policies CP9, CPI4, DC17 and DC18) provides the policy to protect or enhance the character of conservation areas, for the preparation of improvement schemes and to encourage regular maintenance.

The area north of the navigation cut is within an employment area (DC48), which seeks to retain employment uses and protect the area from environmental or amenity problems.

The majority of the area is within flood zones 2 or 3, and is a special landscape area. See annex A for planning policies.

### Emerging Statutory Planning Policy

The council has produced an Area Action Plan (AAP, adopted in August 2008) for the town centre forming part of the local development framework. This affects the western part of the conservation area up to Chelmer Road. The plan includes several significant proposals which are within and directly adjacent to the waterside area:

- Extension of the primary retail area east into Chelmer Waterside (the western most part of the conservation area).
- Changes to the Army and Navy road junction.
- A new easterly vehicle access onto the waterside Peninsula.
- Waterway and waterside improvements.
- Regeneration and large scale redevelopment of the Waterside Peninsula and other areas.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle access.

The AAP also sets out wider strategic direction, including limiting building height in sensitive areas and identifying scope for an increase in the scale of buildings within the town beyond the historic core. This appraisal intends to inform and assist the sensitive implementation of development proposals.

### Planning Guidance

Several planning briefs were produced between 1999-2003 for the waterside area, setting out principles for the redevelopment of the area. These contain no formal status within the LDF but contain useful factual information and provide an indication of the Council's approach to development in this area.

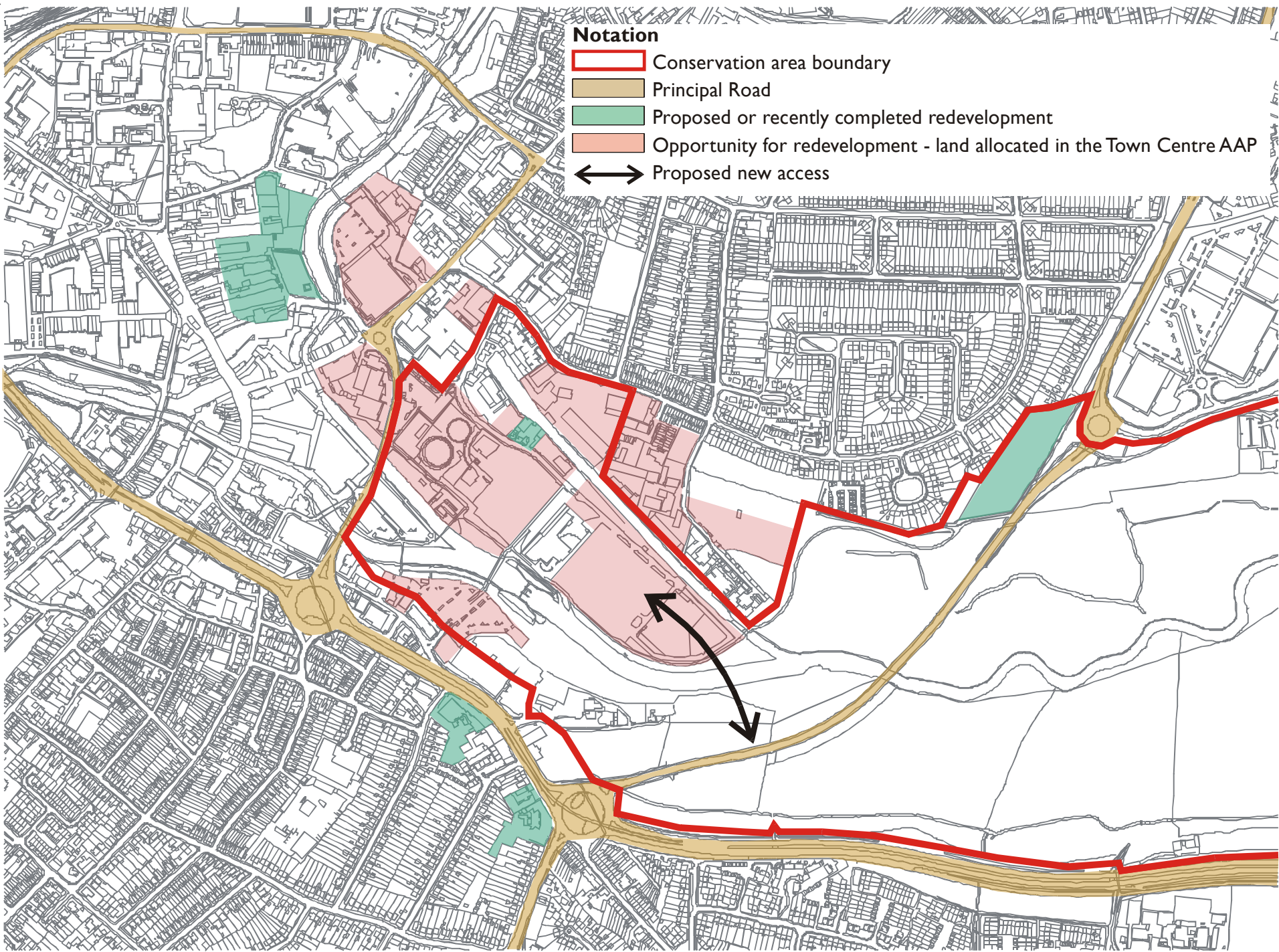
Site layout guidance 'Making Places', has been produced and adopted in 2008 as a Supplementary Planning Document. A town centre Public Realm Strategy is also in the process of being produced.





**Figure 1**

Planning and development issues affecting the conservation area



**Chelmer and Balckwater Navigation Conservation Area**

The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation conservation area (Fig.2) was designated on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1991. There was a short report prepared for committee at this time, however there has been no comprehensive review of the area or its boundaries since its first designation.

At the time of designation Braintree and Maldon District Councils also designated their sections of the navigation as conservation areas, giving the full length of the navigation conservation area status.

The present conservation area in Chelmsford Borough (Fig.3) extends from High Bridge Road east following the line of the navigation and the extent of the valley floor to Paper Mill Lock, then beyond to Heybridge Sea Basin - a total length of 22.1 km.

**Significance**

In the context of Essex, the Chelmer and Blackwater navigation is of considerable architectural, historic and scenic interest. Since its opening in 1797 the influence of the canal has been considerable, revolutionising industrial transport.

The development of Springfield Basin also fundamentally influenced Chelmsford's historic industrial development.

**Special Interest**

The special interest which justifies the designation of the Chelmer and Blackwater navigation as a conservation area derives from the following:

- Its economic significance as part of the late eighteenth century canal network for urban and rural areas;
- Its importance as a legacy of the dominant form of pre-railway industrial transport;
- Its contribution to the growth of Chelmsford in the nineteenth century;
- The architectural and historic interest of Springfield Basin;
- The architectural and historic interest of the historic buildings, some of which are listed buildings;





**THE CHELMER & BLACKWATER NAVIGATION**

- Locks
- Existing bridges built in the 1790's
- Moorings

The map shows the navigation route from Chelmsford in the west to Heybridge Basin in the east. Key locations and features include:

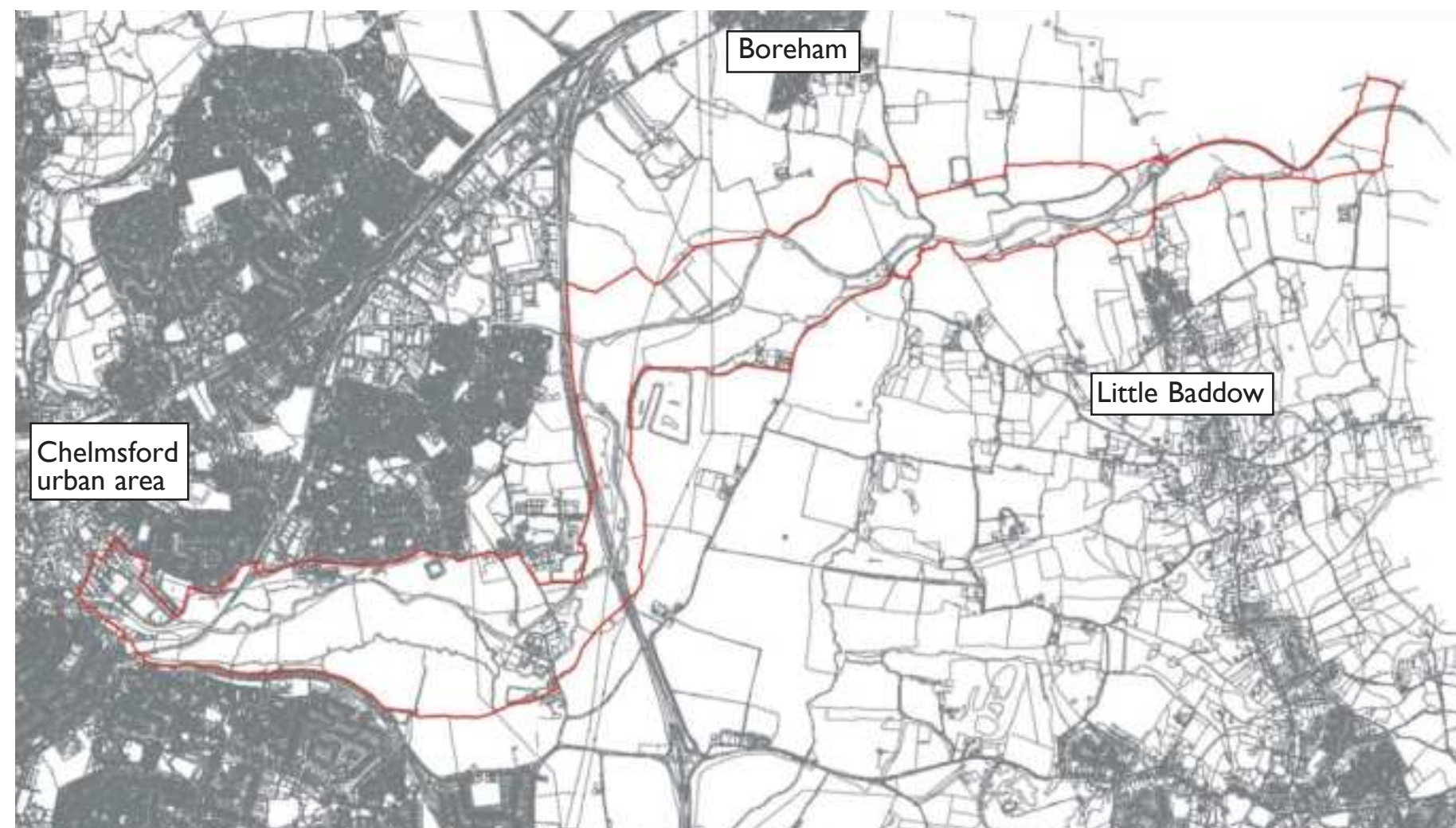
- Chelmsford:** Springfield Basin, Springfield Lock and Bridge.
- Locks and Bridges:** Stoneham Lock, Cuton Lock, Bundoes Bridge, Barnes Mill Lock, Sandford Mill Lock and Bridge, Paper Mill Lock, Rushes Lock, Little Baddow Mill Lock, Ulling, Hice Mill Lock, Beeleigh Lock and Bridge, Langford Cut, Chapman's Bridge, Heybridge.
- Other Locations:** Woodham Walter, Danbury, Maldon, Heybridge Basin.
- Scale:** 0 to 2 Miles.

- ### Character Statement

The character of the west part, where the river valley flood plain continues into the heart of Chelmsford, is derived from its physical relationship with the town and surrounding landscape, its historic economic function and transport. The navigation is contained by the built form of the urban area, including the industry which grew around the navigation after the river was made navigable. The waterway network is therefore key to the town's identity and provides an integral link to the river valley, countryside and agricultural hinterland. This is now important to recreation as well as ecology.

## Origins and Historic Development

The Moulsham Street bridging of the River Can provided a commercially viable site for the medieval settlement at Chelmsford to be founded on higher ground to the north of Moulsham between the Rivers Can and Chelmer.





The surrounding land has always been liable to flooding, which means that open water meadows have always been part of the town.

The important overland trade route from the coastal port of Maldon to Chelmsford went via Danbury which is one of the highest points in Essex. The rivers Chelmer and Blackwater provided the opportunity to found the navigation allowing quick and efficient transport of goods.

The early plans for the navigation were hampered by opposition from water mill owners and the port of Maldon, fearful of reduced water flow and losing tolls respectively.

In 1793 a successful parliamentary bill was put forward to canalise the river Chelmer from Chelmsford, bypassing Maldon, joining the Blackwater estuary at Heybridge. Progress was swift and *John Rennie*, a well known canal architect was appointed chief engineer and a survey was carried out by *Charles Wedge* and *Richard Coates*.

The finance for the compulsory purchase of the necessary land was obtained by selling shares, of which half were purchased locally and the other half in Leicestershire, where a successful canal had recently been completed.

By 1797 the whole navigation had been completed partly as canal and partly as river, allowing the transportation of goods, with the navigation company levying tolls for entering Heybridge Basin, passing through the locks, and docking at Chelmsford.

The navigation has an unbroken history from the 1793 Act of Parliament authorising the making and maintaining of a navigable waterway.

The navigation was almost 14 miles long, with twelve locks and five bridges. The cost of coal in Chelmsford is said to have halved when the navigation opened. Timber, lime and slate were also common goods to be transported (figure 4).

Traffic increased on the canal, until the mid 1800s, when completion of the Great Eastern Railway in 1843, caused the navigation's use to gradually decline. The company increased revenues by increasing rents, selling property and diversifying into new business. The farming of cricket bat willows, now grown extensively, developed from this time.



**Figure 4.** Early C20 photographs of the navigation in use

### Archaeological Significance

The geology of the valley comprises alluvium, river terrace gravels and glacially derived gravels and sediments. The valley contains a varied and valuable archaeological legacy within a landscape of crop marks, track ways, field systems, enclosures and ring-ditches.

The major prehistoric monuments such as the Springfield Neolithic Cursus and the Springfield Lyons Late Bronze Age enclosure were significant elements that would have been highly visible in the landscape and indicate that there may have been a significant prehistoric presence along the river terraces.

A band of meadow pasture is identifiable along the route of the

Chelmer and its tributaries, much of which was converted to arable in the second half of the twentieth century. However, significant areas survive, most notably immediately east of Chelmsford town centre. The boundary between these areas of traditional pasture is defined by clear boundaries often including lynchets. Even where meadows have been converted to arable, remains of these boundaries often survive, offering the possibility of relatively easy restoration. Evidence of settlement in the medieval period can be inferred by the remains of moated sites, such as the one at Phillows Farm, Little Baddow.

The built character of the area is dominated by the structures associated with the Chelmer and Blackwater navigation. Many of the separate elements such as locks, bridges, mills and lock houses survive along the length of the navigation.



There were once a number of watermills including Moulsham Mill, Barnes Mill, Little Baddow Mill, Paper Mill and Sandford Mill. The water works industry complex and associated buildings at Sandford Mill survives. The industrial nature of the area is evident from the gas works site and Brookend sewage works.

The valley also contains extensive WWII survivals such as the General Headquarters Line of defence crosses in the area to the east of Sandford Mill.

## Character Area Description

The navigation has two areas of distinct character, the waterside area and the rural area. For ease of description the area is divided into 5 zones:

- Area 1** 1. High Bridge Road to Chelmer Road;  
**Area 2** 2. Chelmer Road to Barnes Mill;  
3. Sandford Mill;  
4. Sandford Mill to the A12;  
5. A12 to Paper Mill Lock.

Character area 1 (zone 1) has a largely urban character, whilst character area 2 (zones 2-5) have an essentially rural, river valley character. A description and spatial analysis of the individual zones, generally describing character, is followed by recommendations for enhancement and management. General building groups are also identified for each character area. Landscape assessment and building contribution maps are provided for each zone, in accordance with the English Heritage guidelines.

### Character Area 1 – Chelmer Waterside

#### Zone 1, High Bridge Road – Chelmer Road (A138)

Figure 5 – Zone 1, Landscape Assessment

Figure 6 – Zone 1, Contribution of individual buildings

#### Spatial analysis

The water meadows extend into the urban centre of the town, with the rivers and navigation banks continuing a soft green edge. The urban built edge of the town is clearly discernable from the water meadows to the east.

The far westerly part of the navigation, between Springfield Basin and Chelmer Road, has a distinctive industrial character significantly different to that elsewhere within the conservation area and contained by the urban periphery of Chelmsford forming a strong built edge, in contrast to the open landscape elsewhere. Zone 1 is bounded by High Bridge Road to the northwest and Chelmer Road (A138) to the east, beyond which the character of the conservation area adopts a marked rural character from the urban area to the open water meadows beyond, from the sluice gate (adjacent the Essex Record Office) eastward, with a visual link with to zone 2 by the bridge and raised road deck of Chelmer Road, which allows the water meadows to continue below.

The water meadows area, even at its western most limits, are open in character. The Rivers Can and Chelmer flow from the town centre combining into the Chelmer and Blackwater, with open land either side. The Springfield basin canal reaches into the town. The land between the basin and river however is former industrial land which, prior to demolition of a large gas works and other industrial buildings, created a severe contrast with the meadows. The gas holders and Essex Record Office are the only prominent built features, with other smaller scale buildings forming disparate groups.

From the approach east along the wharf the long narrow navigation cut, leading to the basin, is rather ill-defined on both sides by disparate buildings and trees, however the listed lock and bridge terminates the vista looking east with the backdrop of open water meadows beyond. The cut itself is a linear feature of immense value, giving a sense of place, relating the historic functions, and forming the basis for waterside lead regeneration. Although there are few original industrial and waterway buildings left, these have influenced the design of the new development that now generates the waterside character. The western end, around the head of the basin, is well defined by brick and render buildings containing a mix of uses (figure 7), with older industry related structures and the converted and extended Waterfront Place providing a sense of context. The Lockside Marina development forms a courtyard around a small marina, which introduced important boating activity. The industrial area between this and the timber yard appears untidy and detracts from the navigation's setting. The footpath is broken in places, which undermines the pedestrian relationship and historic tow path function with the navigation. Beyond the footbridge the landscape extends towards Danbury, with a wide flat valley to the water meadows. This area frequently floods, which changes its appearance significantly.

On the riverside walk the river's edge has a distinctive green margin, with soft planting, grass and trees, which extends towards the town centre. The buildings beyond enclose the space. This area has large expanses of unsightly, temporary open hard standing, much of which is used for car parking, pending regeneration. This detracts from the appearance of the area, although soft planting helps to provide a screen. The sluice gate limits the recreational use of the river and prevents waterborne travel along the river. East beyond this point the river's edge is open in character, providing an important setting for Moulsham Mill and House (figure 8).



Figure 7

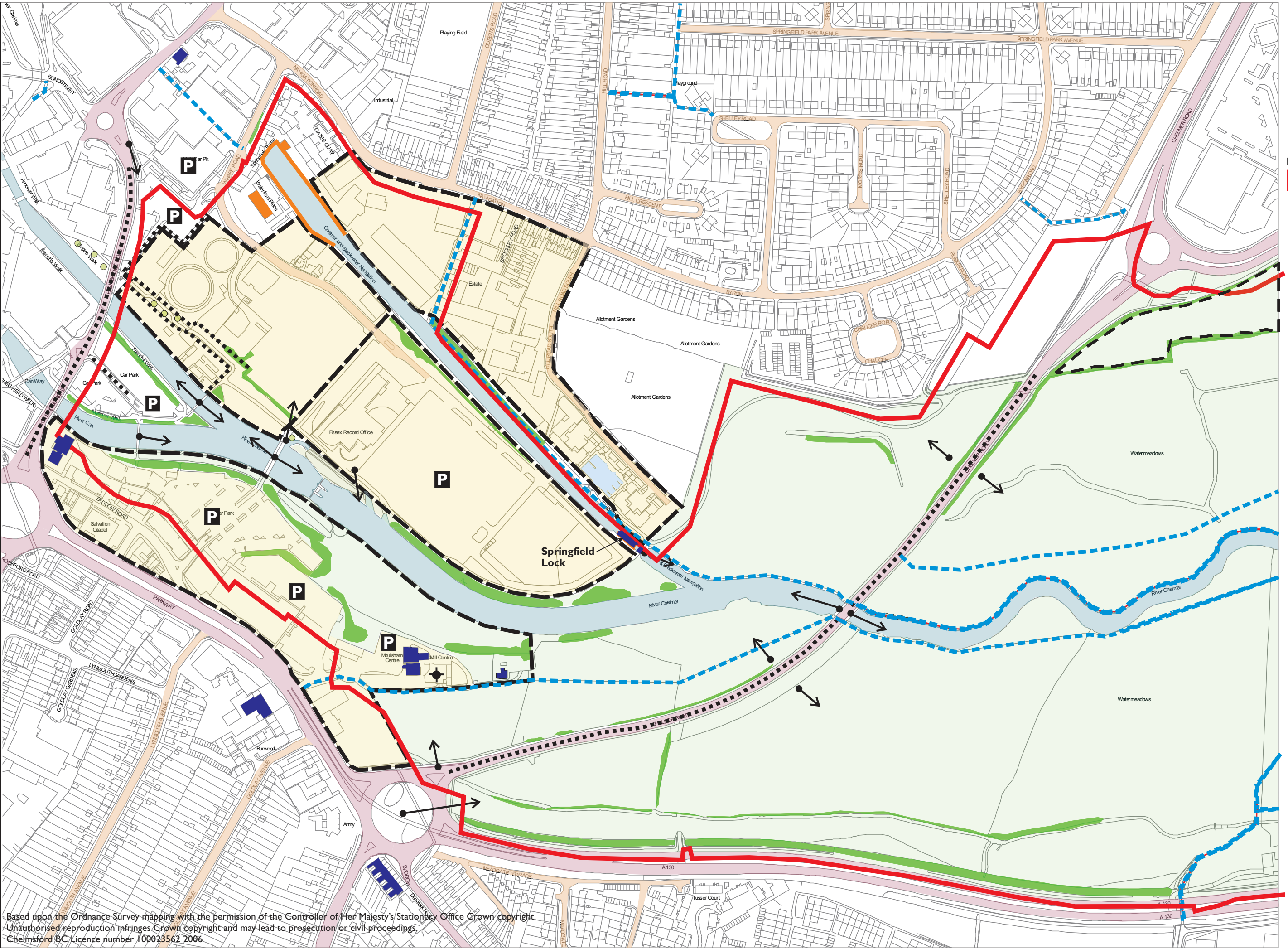


Figure 8





**Figure 6**  
**Character Area I**  
Zone I  
Landscape assessment



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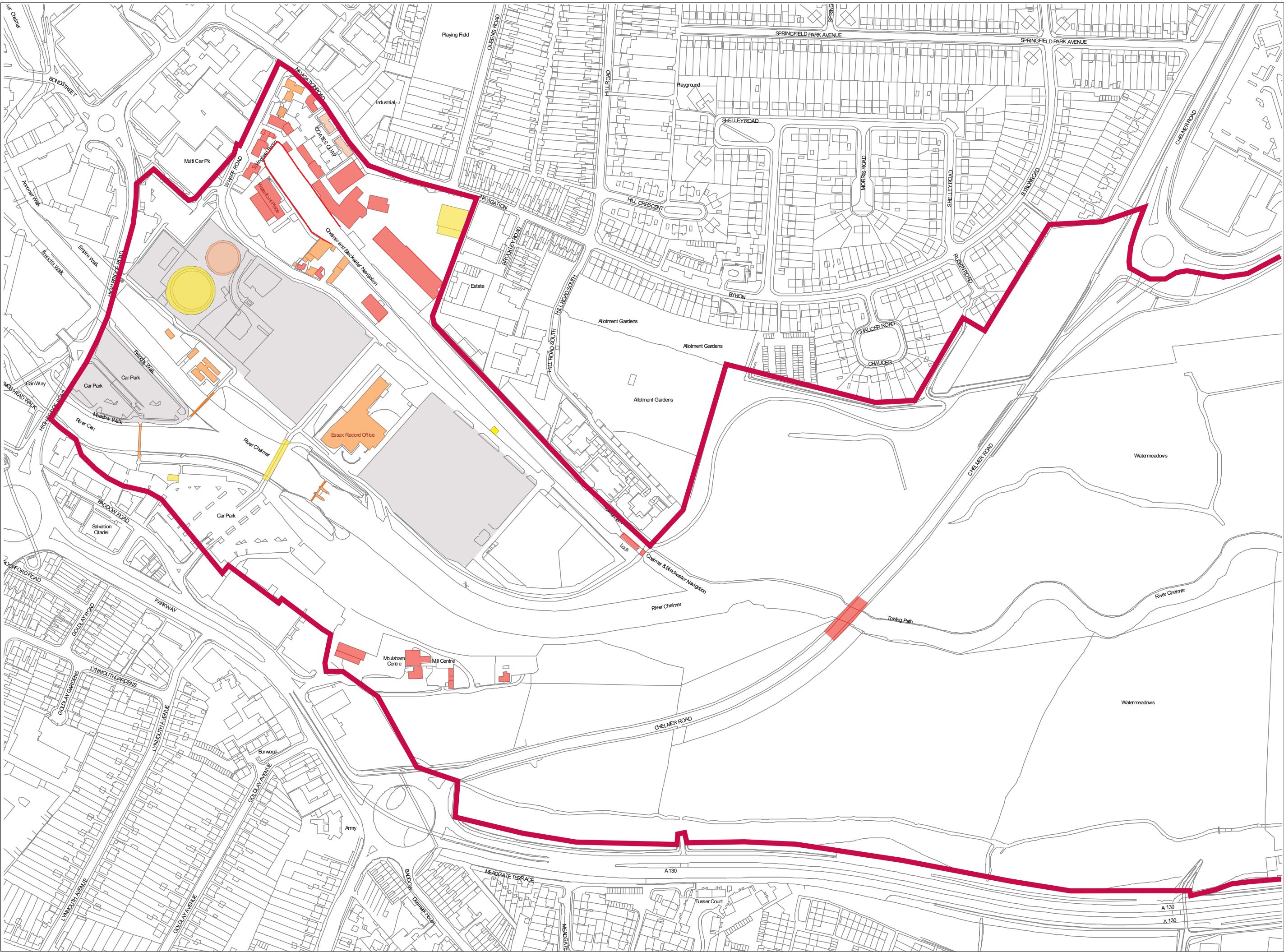


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**Figure 7**  
**Character Area I**

**Zone I**  
Contribution of individual  
structures to character



- Notation**
- Positive**  
Significantly contributes to character
  - Neutral**  
Little or no contribution to character
  - Negative**  
Detracts from character
  - Negative spaces**



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The riverside and canal-side verges with their shrubs and trees create the impression of being within the countryside, even though there is urban development behind them. This brings the countryside into the town centre along 'green fingers'. The mature trees and hedges provide the spatial enclosure creating the impression of being in the countryside by screening much of the urban development beyond them. Between the trees are narrow views east along the valley with Danbury Hill and church spire as the primary focal point, especially from the bridges. Close to the confluence of the rivers Chelmer and Can the view opens up to the south across meadows on the south bank east of Baddow Road car park, to which Moulsham Mill forms the intermediate focal point and the containment of the view which opens up beyond.

East of the Essex Records Office there are few mature trees along the riverside on the peninsula or alongside the navigation. At the eastern end of the peninsula a 180-degree panoramic view of the valley opens up to the observer. Danbury Hill and church spire remain the primary distant focal point, however there is an intermediate focal point of the stilted A138 as it crosses the valley and bridges the river, afforded by its physical presence rising to the bridge and the constant movement of vehicles across it. Danbury Hill remains in view above the roadway and the meadows remain in view beneath it between the stilts. It would be impossible therefore to screen the road from view without obstructing the view of the valley beyond. The A138 is visually intrusive and noisy, which detracts from the open tranquil setting of the water meadows. The bridge itself is a good example of its type and is of historic significance (see building group section). The approach viaducts are however intrusive.

The existing urban edge defines the valley floor and any further development would diminish the urban/rural and valley floor definitions, this pressure is contained by LDP policy. The northern meadows are ungrazed and losing character, becoming rough grassland. The southern meadows are grazed and retain their character. Some scrub has self-generated along the towpath separating the towpath from the riverside.

The predominantly open character of the area offers many important views. Good views are available to the west across the open water meadows to the high ground at Danbury containing the landscape in the distance. Bridges provide a slightly elevated position with the open setting of the river or navigation. Many of the navigation related features are important in localised views, but

the key landmark structures from the wider landscape are Moulsham Mill and House to the east and the gas holders to the west (figure 9 and 10). However the current openness comes from vacant, derelict land in use for surface car parking or redundant gas works land - all of which seriously detracts from the character. Beyond the conservation area boundaries key landmarks are towers and spires in the distance. From the A138 and the French's Walk and the Essex Record Office (ERO) footbridges views are available to St Mary's Cathedral (figure 10), from the ERO north to Holy Trinity Church and westward in the distance to St John the Baptist on the hilltop at Danbury.

Views are interrupted by High Bridge Road and Chelmer Road which are dominant concrete raised roads which detract from views west to the town centre and east towards the water meadows. The raised roads do however provide an elevated position giving views across the river valley.



Figure 9



Figure 10

## Building Groups - Area I

### Springfield Basin

Springfield Basin (figure 11) was completed in 1797 and the head of the basin provides the western termination of the Chelmer and Blakwater Navigation. The basin is fed by water from the River Chelmer, from the northeast, partly via a brick culvert under Wharf Road. The basin is constructed of brick embankments, with a hard Dundee stone coping. Various holes along the wharf edge infilled with cement mark the former positions of bollards and cranes. The basin narrows to the southeast before entering the navigation cut which links with the river via the lock. Historically it was surrounded by warehouses, lime kilns, maltings, an iron foundry and a gas works (the first in Essex, constructed by *Richard Coates*).

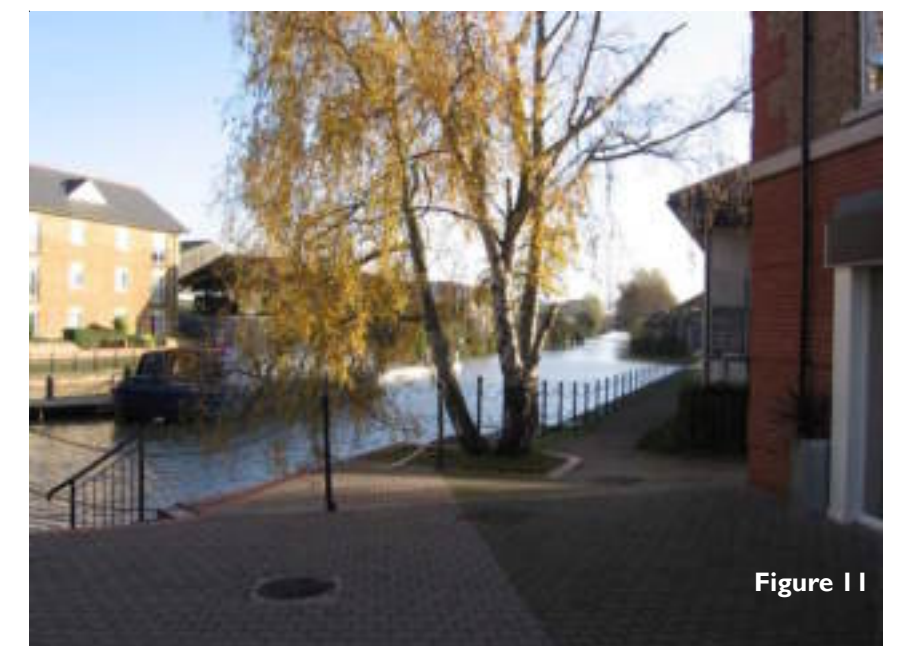


Figure 11

Many of the structures associated with the industrial uses around the basin have gone. However there are a number of structures which remain, which are the warehouses around the basin, lock, lock bridge, red shed and gas holders. These structures help to define the appearance of the area and provide an important tangible link to the historic function of the area.



The basin provides a focal point at the termination of the navigation. Historically this area would have been teeming with activity, surrounded by industrial uses and frequent deliveries by barge. Now the area is more subdued, but the timber yard on the northern side gives an impression of the once bustling wharf, the nineteenth and twentieth century warehouses and sheds also provide a sense of context. The restaurant, retail and service uses at the north eastern end of the basin provide an important mix, which add to the vitality of the area, as does the recently installed jetty and office barge, which adds some activity to an otherwise eerily tranquil setting.

### Timber Yard

To the north east of the wharf the timber yard has a group of timber and steel clad sheds (figure 12). They are utilitarian in appearance, but relate to the historic and ongoing function of the site. The linear form, modest scale and relationship with the basin are reminiscent of the former prevalent industrial use of the area. The Navigation Road frontage is poorly defined with the yard open to the street. The wide span modern sheds appear overly bulky and poorly related to the surrounding buildings and street scene.



Figure 12

### Coates Quay

The residential development around the head of the basin built in the mid 1990s is named after the navigation's engineer, *Richard Coates*. The dwellings are three and four storeys in height, set back from the basin, constructed of brick mainly with slate roofs. To the north eastern side the ground floors have retail and service uses. The development fronts Navigation Road, Wharf Road and the basin.

Browns Cottage, an attractive late nineteenth century red brick building is retained within the new development fronting Navigation Road. To the north eastern corner of the basin a small nineteenth century timber clad warehouse abuts the wharf. This serves as an important and prominent reminder of the basin's former function.

### Waterfront Place

Waterfront Place includes an early twentieth century brick warehouse (figure 13), originally used for timber storage. The north eastern side has a two and three storey range fronting the basin. The warehouse is an important feature of the area's industrial heritage. It is prominent in views from Wharf Road and High Bridge Road. The car park side to the west is open, but provides the opportunity to redefine the edge of the basin and continue the footpath.



Figure 13

### Wharf Road Industrial Units

The group of industrial units south east of Waterfront Place forms a small courtyard, mainly twentieth century sheds, which are modest in scale. The site appears untidy at present, the most significant buildings are the early twentieth century dwellings which front Wharf Road (figure 14). The large red shed to the south east is a prominent and important industrial building.

### Gas Works

The Gas Works occupies a large site at the north western end of the conservation area. The site is long associated with gas works, originally occupied by the Chelmsford Gas Company.

The area is predominantly disused hard standing but the gas holders are a dominant landmark from the surrounding area. The early twentieth century north eastern unit is the most distinctive with its outer frame with diagonal supports (figure 15). This adds to the industrial character of the area and is a unique and well known feature.



Wharf Road

Figure 14



Figure 15

### Canoe Club

The Canoe Club occupies the site at the edge of the River Chelmer. The buildings are all timber clad and modest in scale. They are of no architectural or historic interest, but the riverside function is an important activity which adds immensely to the character of the area (figure 16).







**Essex Record Office (ERO)**

The ERO is a large modern building with an upswept roof, designed by W.S. Atkins (1997-9), it is of some architectural interest and has an important public function. At present it is the main built feature on the riverside, with an open landscape setting (figure 17).



**Moulsham Mill**

The group of buildings at Moulsham Mill are some of the most impressive within the conservation area (see figure 9). The group retain a predominantly rural, open setting at the edge of the town, which is an essential feature of their setting. The listed mill house and attached mill is an important landmark on the eastern approach to the town along both the A138 and A130, and from

the surrounding landscape. Meadow view cottage and the outbuildings historically associated with the mill form part of this attractive group. The mill is constructed of part timber frame (C18) and part yellow brick (c.1891), with a slate roof. It is used as a craft centre. The house is constructed of red brick and dates from the late eighteenth century. The remaining large Poplar trees to the south of the house define the end of the open water meadows, screen the urban area beyond and are an impressive feature which provides a counterpoint to the mill. The best examples have been felled due to decay and are unlikely to be replaced until the site is redeveloped.

### Bridges

The confluence of the Rivers Can and Chelmer, navigation cut and adjacent main traffic routes (High Bridge Road, Chelmer Road and Parkway) mean that the area is difficult to permeate freely. However pedestrian bridges are well positioned to give access across the area from Baddow Road. The three bridges to the south east, at the confluence of the rivers Can and Chelmer, are of no architectural interest. The late eighteenth century round arch bridge adjacent to Springfield Lock is an important historic feature, as one of the remaining original navigation bridges (figure 18). The adjoining gas main detracts from its appearance.



**Figure 18**

The road bridge which is the river crossing for Chelmer Road (1930-2) is concrete of one main span with two side arches, with stripped down classical detailing, including obelisk lamp standards (figure 19). This is a good example of its type and is of historic and architectural interest, however structural decay of the concrete means that replacement is planned.



**Figure 19**

**Locks** (See character area 2)

### Pressures

The urban setting of the conservation area at its western most extreme introduces a different form of pressure on character. Where elsewhere the pressure for change comes from primarily rural activity, through for instance, agricultural reservoirs, in the urban area there is an imperative for redevelopment.

Apart from the meadows, the waterside area is underused existing and former industrial land in need of regeneration, with much of the area covered in surface car parking and hard standings. The redevelopment of the area provides the potential for change and significant enhancement of the area including the opportunity to use the navigation for recreation and leisure, however there is also pressure on the sensitive waterside character of the area. The Town Centre Area Action Plan provides the policy basis for future development.

One of the main problems of large scale redevelopment is the relatively poor vehicular access, with the only route from Navigation and Wharf Roads, via the already busy Springfield Road. The main traffic hub is at the Army and Navy roundabout,





but the area between this and the riverside is open in character and forms the important setting to the listed Mill, Mill house and the adjacent cottage. Regeneration will entail creating new road access, which needs to be managed very carefully to minimise the impact on the landscape setting.

## Enhancement and Management Recommendations

- Retain and protect historic buildings and their setting in development proposals.
- Improve river access beyond the sluice gates and visual continuity between river and basin
- Increase use of the navigable waterway by means of moorings in Springfield Basin and developments around it.
- Prevent further urban expansion into the meadows.
- Retain views across the area to Chelmsford Cathedral, Holy Trinity Church, Moulsham Mill, Danbury Church and other significant features.
- Retain riverside functions relating to river and navigation use.
- Reintroduce grazing of the northern meadows.
- Extend and re-establish the towpath along the riverside and the navigation.
- Protect mature and semi mature trees.
- Instigate a programme of phased planting of trees to provide trees where none currently exist.
- Instigate a programme of phased planting of trees to ensure continuity of mature trees.

## Character Area 2 – The Rural areas

The second broad Character area covers the rural part of the navigation from Chelmer Road (A138) to Paper Mill Lock. For ease of description this area is described in 4 zones. At the end of the character area section a general description is given for the common building types within the area.

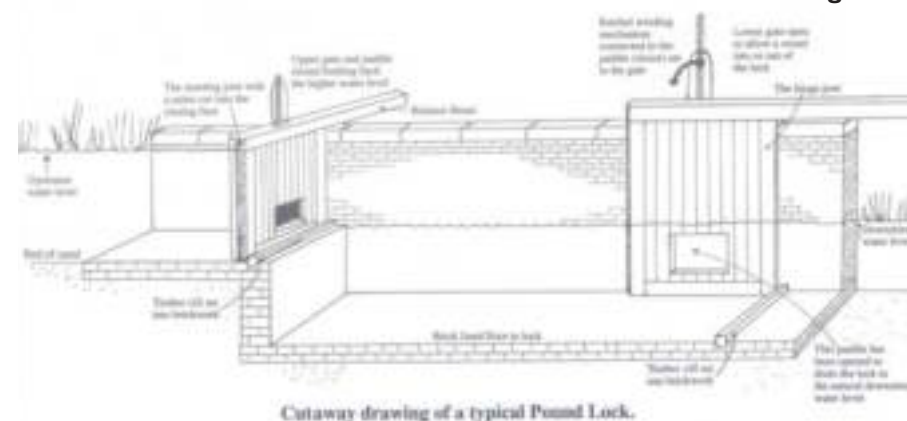
## Building Groups - Area 2

## Locks

There are 11 locks and a further sea lock at Heybridge, which in all give a fall of 76'11" over the length of the navigation. The locks were constructed to larger dimensions than was common elsewhere in the country, to allow existing barges used at the port of Maldon to travel to Chelmsford. The locks (figures 20 and 21 below) are constructed of brick with hard Dundee stone copings. The gates are made of oak and elm, which require regular maintenance and replacement.

The locks provide important focal points along the navigation, offering elevated positions with views out into the surrounding landscape.

**Figure 20**



### Figure 21

## Mills

The area originally had numerous mills, now few survive, although good examples remain at Moulsham and Barnes, representing both timber framed and brick examples. Archaeological and documentary evidence is available for mills along the river at Little Baddow, Sandford and Paper Mill.

## Farmsteads

The river valley provides fertile agricultural land, which has been farmed for many centuries. Farmhouses (see figure 28, Barnes Farm), barns, granaries, stables and other traditional farm buildings are found throughout the area, which add to its character and significance. Large modern agricultural buildings detract from the appearance of the area where they are prominently sited, due to their wide span, scale, form and materials.

## Cottages

Individual cottages and groups of cottages (figure 22 below) are important features in the landscape dispersed throughout the area, although infrequently and with subtle but positive impact on the wider landscape. The majority are modest in scale, 1 ½ or 2 storeys, with steep plain tiled roofs and weatherboard, render or brick walls.



**Figure 22**



## WWII Defences

The Chelmer valley formed part of the general headquarters defence line at Sandford and Cuton locks during WWII, much evidence remains for this, most visibly in the remaining pill boxes (see figure 39, Cuton Lock). These defences serve as a strong historic feature and are integral to the character of the area. See survey of WWII defences in the Borough of Chelmsford (Essex County Council 2008) for further information

## Zone 2 – Chelmer Road – Barnes Mill

Figure 23, Zone 2, Landscape Assessment

Figure 24, Zones 2,3 & 4 Contribution of individual buildings

Figure 25, Zone 5, Contribution of individual buildings

## Spatial Analysis

The valley is very broad and shallow, with the view eastward dominated by the distant Danbury Hill (figure 26), with Danbury church as the primary focal point. The view westwards is terminated by the tree planted edge of the Chelmsford town centre and its skyline, spreading across the valley floor (figure 27). To the south, spreading over the bounding hill, is the urban area of Great Baddow, with a few tall constructions acting as focal points and the primary focal point being the radio mast. To the north the urban area of Springfield and Chelmer Village spreads over the bounding hill.



*The River Valley towards Danbury*

**Figure 26**

The overall quality of the valley landscape is high and has a significant impact on the observer. The key feature of the landscape is rough pasture, which is grazed on the south bank of the river, therefore retaining its character, visual quality and ecology resulting from the retention of its management

regime, but ungrazed and left rough on the north bank (figure 28) and thus losing its character and visual quality and ecology resulting from the loss of the management regime.



*The river valley towards Chelmsford*

**Figure 27**



**Figure 28**

Fields of arable crops are encroaching down onto the valley floor on the south side as meadowland is improved and fields enlarged. On the north side there is development pressure to encroach onto the valley floor and the meadows, in order to expand Chelmer Village southwards. Much of the meadow land on the north bank outside flood zones 2 and 3 but the existing urban edge defines the valley floor and any further development would diminish the urban/rural boundary and valley floor definition. Similarly on the southern meadows the existing urban edge defines the valley floor.

There is sparse tree planting alongside the river at the western end of this part of the valley. The trees that are there are individual trees, a few rows of trees and the fragmented remains of hedgerows, the quality of which overall is good, but due to

their sparseness have a low impact in the landscape. Between Barnes Lock and Sandford Mill, to the rear of the towpath, there is considerable tree planting in rows, which individually are of a good or very good quality and collectively have a positive high impact on the character of the valley. Further west the hedgerows are fragmented and of a poor or good individual quality, but positively contribute to the overall strength of tree planting in this part of the valley.

At the western end of this part of the valley the urban edges of Springfield and Great Baddow are clearly defined, with some softening from trees along the urban edge. Further east the urban/rural fringe is defined primarily by screening tree belts, through breaks in which, the urban development can be glimpsed. Above this edge, especially to Great Baddow, the urban area rising over the hill is broken by widespread mature tree planting, which softens the urban form and aids in the visual integration of the urban form into its rural setting. Other buildings are isolated. Overall buildings have a medium impact on the landscape character and generally present an appearance of good quality.

At the western end of this part of the valley the A138 crossing the valley on its causeway and bridge and the A414 climbing the southern valley side intrude into the landscape, both visually and aurally, respectively through the movement and noise of traffic. Roads other than these are few and quiet, therefore having little impact on the valley character.

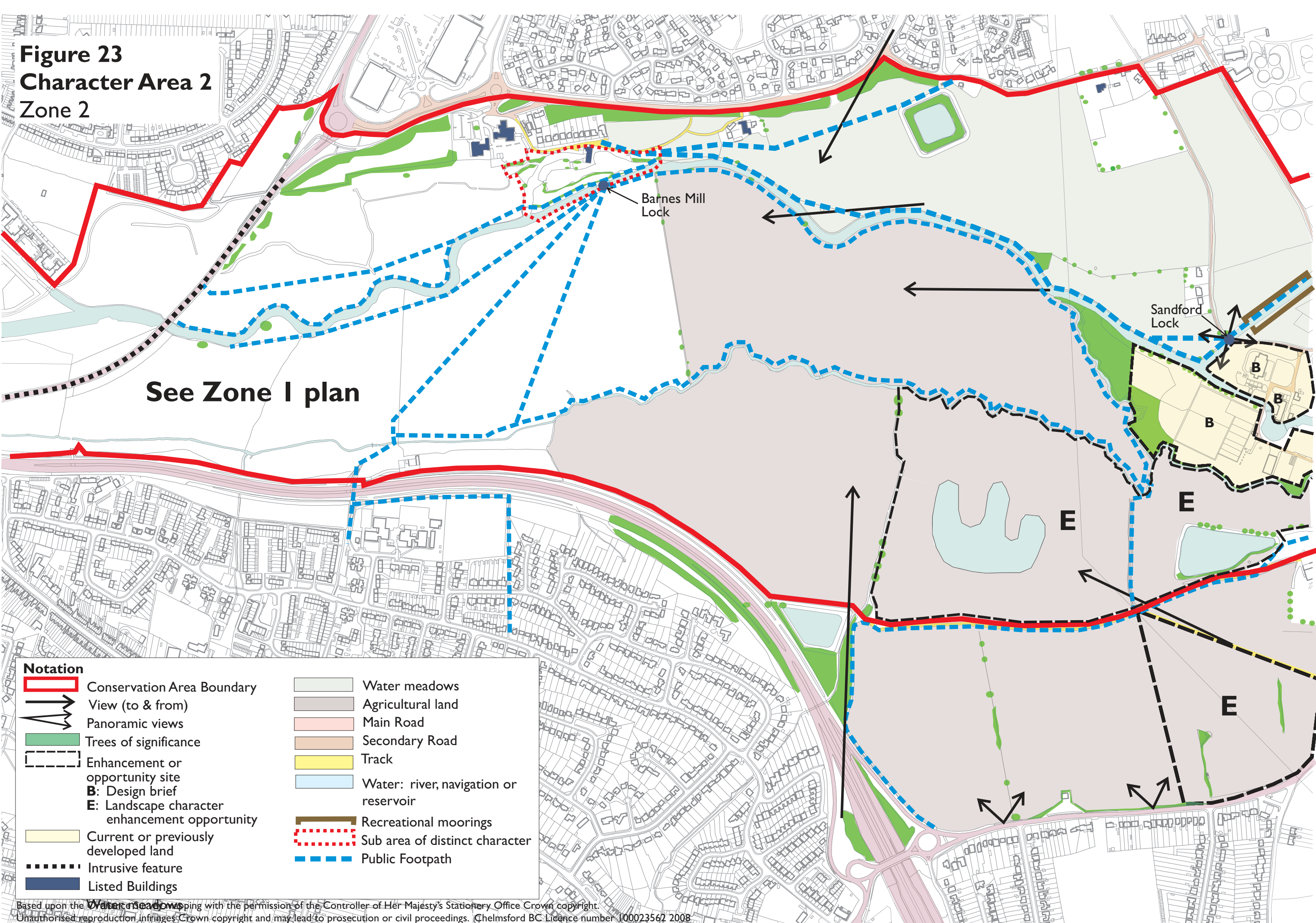
Barnes Farm is a prominent feature within the landscape and provides a strong focal point. The open setting with a treed enclosure provides an important setting to the historic buildings. Beyond, the housing is small scale and unobtrusive.

West of Barnes Mill the main footpath diverges from the river edge cutting across the meadow, resulting in the loss of the towpath, which has become virtually unused. Barnes Mill within its wooded setting and historic mill building provides a strong positive visual focal point for views along the valley in both directions and a high quality interest group of buildings at close quarters (figure 29). Between Barnes Mill and Prentices Farm land has been fenced to provide paddocks for horses. This is out of character with the open meadow, but is in a separately defined area contained between two building and tree groups and





**Figure 23**  
**Character Area 2**  
**Zone 2**





### Figure 24

#### Character Area 2, Zones 2,3 & 4

#### Contribution of individual structures to character

**Inset 1**

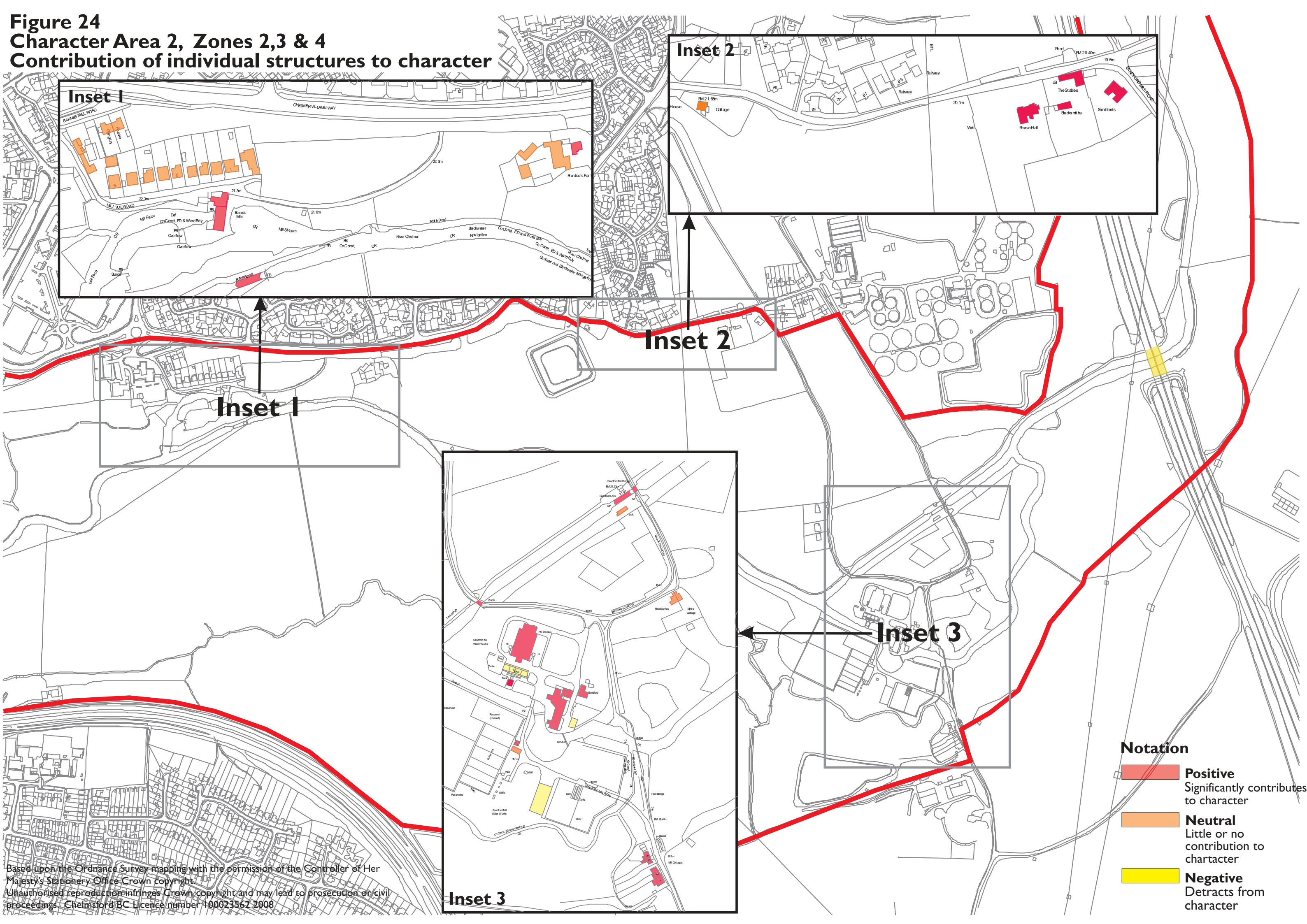
**Inset 2**

**Inset 3**

**Notation**

- Positive**  
Significantly contributes to character
- Neutral**  
Little or no contribution to character
- Negative**  
Detracts from character

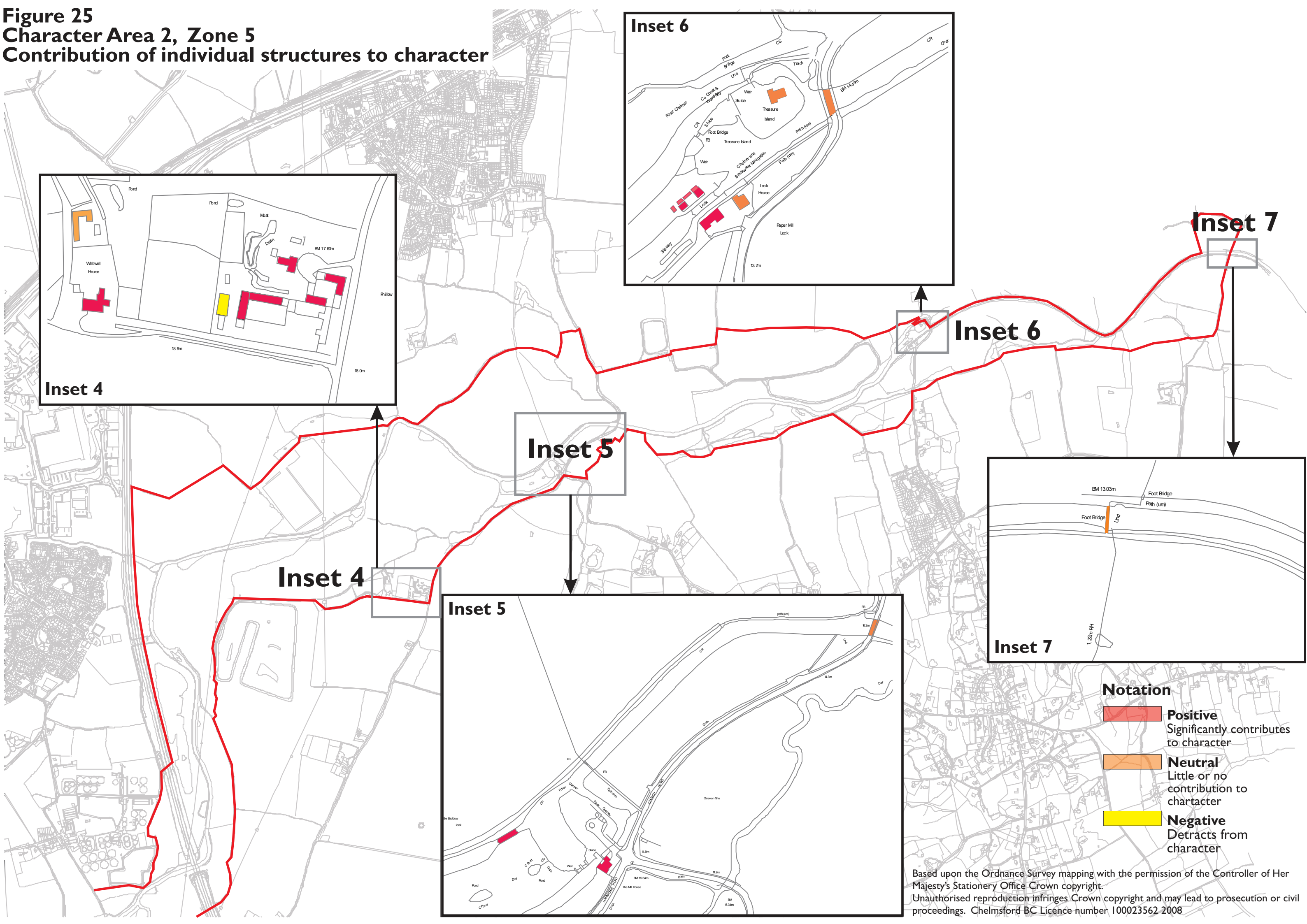
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**Figure 25**  
**Character Area 2, Zone 5**  
**Contribution of individual structures to character**





therefore is not a major intrusion into the overall valley landscape and provides additional visual interest for the rambler. However the paddocks are bounded by timber post and rail fences, which are alien features in the landscape.

The treed and wooded developments around Sandford Mill provide a strong visual stop to the eastward view in this part of the valley (figure 30). The trees are of good or very good individual quality and collectively have a high beneficial impact on the valley character.



Figure 29



Figure 30

The arable fields on the higher valley slopes rising to the south, up to the A414, are outside the boundary of the study area but are visually of major importance to this section of the valley, being the visibly bounding valley side and could therefore be included within the protection of the Conservation Area. There are few views into this section of the valley from Great Baddow, Springfield and Chelmer Village. The primary views into and across the valley are from the A138, crossing the valley; the

A414 following the southern edge of the valley, which is on the valley floor to the west and higher up the valley sides to the east; and Chelmer Village Way on the northern edge of the valley floor.

South of Manor Farm adjacent to the A414 is a large area of rough grass across which the valley and the town centre are viewed by traffic travelling westwards along the A414 and which consequently detracts from this overall good view of the valley. Similarly north-west of this area on the valley floor is a large area of rough grassland around a modern agricultural reservoir, which detracts from the overall good quality view of the valley from upon the valley sides. Both these areas of grassland should be managed to improve the valley landscape.

### Enhancement and Management Recommendations

- Prevent further urban encroachment onto the valley floor.
- Prevent further loss of grazing on the valley floor meadows.
- Retain historic buildings and protect their setting.
- Retain important views to key historic landmarks.
- Reintroduce grazing of the northern meadows.
- Reinstatement of arable land to meadows on the valley floor, especially the first 100m alongside the river to protect the character of the valley.
- Plant native trees to strengthen and extend the tree belts to strengthen the definition of the urban/rural edge, ensuring a continuity of mature trees.
- Protect mature trees in the urban areas that are visible from the valley floor and encourage other tree planting in those urban areas.
- Instigate a programme of native tree planting alongside the river west of Barnes Lock.
- Instigate a programme of native tree planting along the riverside to ensure the continuity of mature trees.
- Protect the trees around Barnes Mill.
- Reinstatement of the towpath along the northern bank of the river.
- Seek to replace the paddock fences with hedges more in keeping with the character of the valley.

- Seek improvements to the perimeter of the reservoir area.
- Consider extending the boundary of the conservation area to the A414 to include visually important agricultural valley sides.

### Zone 3 – Sandford Mill

Figure 31 – Zone 3, Landscape Assessment

### Spatial Analysis

Overall, the area around Sandford Mill and the premises along Sandford Mill Road, south of the river, is one of small scale and enclosed development. There is extensive tree planting around this building group creating the impression, from a distance, of a wood on the valley floor. This is of major visual importance for the Chelmer valley assisting in its legibility, dividing the valley into definable visual areas.

Within this area is the historic building group of the old pumping station, which provides additional historic interest. The buildings in the Sandford Mill area are isolated or in small groups, with the largest group being the historic pumping station buildings (figure 32). They are generally of good quality and due to being hidden by the trees only have a moderate impact on the wider landscape, with their impact being restricted to their immediate surroundings.



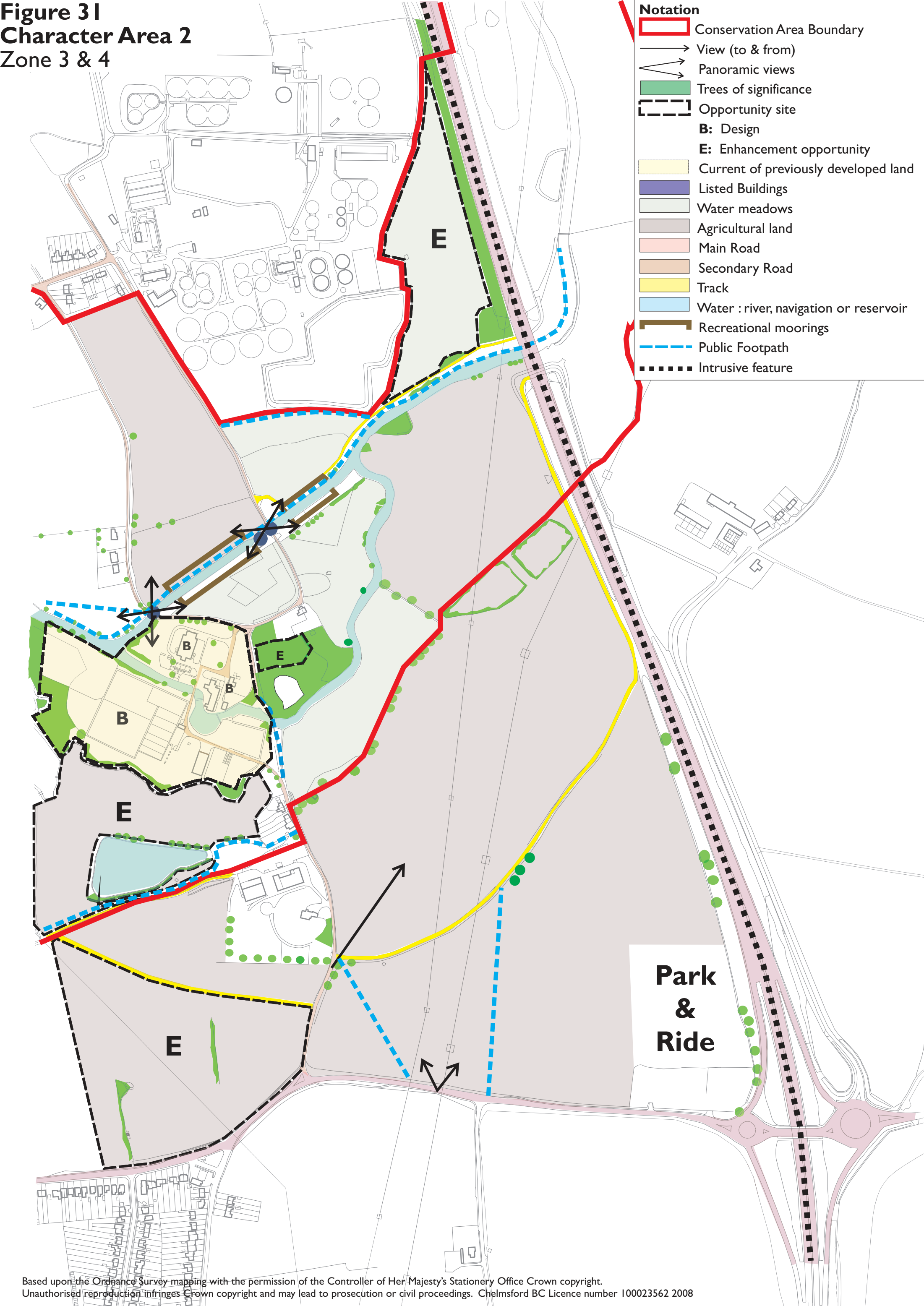
Figure 32

South of the river at Sandford Lock is a disused compound, which is unkempt, of poor quality and detracts from the visual quality and character of the valley.





Figure 3I  
Character Area 2  
Zone 3 & 4







**Figure 33** *Sandford Lock towards the A12*

Between the two original bridges at Sandford where the navigation deviates from the line of the river, is one of the areas of recreational moorings, which are unobtrusive in this location.

Sandford Mill Lane provides a pedestrian link between Great Baddow and Chelmer Village. It is narrow and rural in character, with modest nineteenth century cottages which are picturesque, although unsympathetic alterations detract from their appearance.

Beyond the western bridge the pylons and A12 begin to impact on the rural character of the area (figure 33).

There is pressure for reuse of buildings and development at Sandford Mill, which could provide the basis for enhancement of the area, one possibility is the creation of a new marina in the old compound, reinvigorating the navigation's function and reuse of the redundant filter house.

#### Recommendations

- Protect the trees in the Sandford Lock building group.
- Instigate a phased programme of tree planting to ensure the continuity of mature trees.
- Preserve the key historic pumping station and filter house buildings; seeking alternative new uses which could be accommodated within them.
- Seek new appropriate uses and improvements to the disused compound.
- Pursue enhancement of mill cottages.
- Deter fly tipping and litter dropping.
- Manage trees along Sandford Mill Lane.

#### Zone 4 – Sandford Mill - A12

Figure 31 – Zone 4, Landscape Assessment

#### Spatial Analysis

This is a short and isolated section of the valley, visually separated from the valley west of Sandford Mill by the trees around Sandford Mill and separated from the remainder of the valley to the east by the A12 embankment cutting across the valley. The character of this area has also been lost by the construction of the sewage works on the northern bank (figure 34), which encroaches down the valley side close to the river and the extension of agricultural fields down the southern valley slopes onto the former meadows of the valley floor.

The field immediately adjacent to the river to the southeast of Sandford Mill is good pasture, whilst the field between the river and the navigation is rough pasture. The field north of the navigation, within the loop of Sandford Mill Road is sown to pasture, whilst the field south of the navigation is rough pasture. On the north bank of the river is rough pasture, but which has been improved through agriculture from its original form, and screen planting amenity space around the sewage works and alongside the A12. South of the river, on the valley floor, is a large arable field, south of which are other arable crop fields that are outside the study area boundary but which have a major visual impact on the study area.



**Figure 34**



The elevated A12 breaks the continuity of the view along the valley. The movement and the noise of traffic intrude into the study area. Danbury Hill can be seen above it. Closer to the A12 the continuation of the valley can be seen beneath the large span bridge, with the river bending northwards out of view behind the A12 embankment.

Trees are planted along the river, around the sewage works and alongside the A12. Otherwise tree cover is not extensive in this area.

### Recommendations

- Graze the rough pasture.
- Return arable fields on the valley floor to meadows.
- Instigate a phased programme of tree planting to extend tree cover.
- Instigate a phased programme of tree planting alongside the A12 to screen the movement and reduce the noise intrusion into the study area.
- Instigate a phased programme of tree planting alongside the sewage works to screen the valley from its visual intrusion into the study area.
- Improve the land between the A12 and the sewage works.
- Instigate a phased programme of tree planting to ensure the continuity of mature trees.
- Consider extending the boundary of the study area to include the arable fields to the south, up to the A414.

### Zone 5 – A12 to Paper Mill Lock

Figure 35 – Zone 5, (sheet 1/3) Landscape Assessment

Figure 36 – Zone 5, (sheet 2/3) Landscape Assessment

Figure 37 – Zone 5, (sheet 3/3) Landscape Assessment

### Spatial Analysis

The A12 Chelmsford bypass provides long easterly views over the Navigation and river valley to the wooded slopes of Little Baddow and Danbury hill. The attractive rural scene is spoilt only by the dual lines of electricity pylons which cross the valley. Similar views are found from the edge of the village of Boreham.

The reciprocal views from Danbury and Little Baddow suffer from the background intrusion of the A12 with its constant traffic drawing the eye.

Passing beneath the elevated A12 bypass, there are views towards Rumbold's Farm with its collection of buildings and farm machinery to the southeast, whilst the visual intrusion of the A12 embankment and its moving traffic is soon reduced by the row of cricket bat willows beside the towpath.

A steel footbridge forms a local landmark spanning the Navigation and connecting footpath 29 to Graces Walk and Little Baddow to the east.

The Navigation corridor appears narrow here, contained by the A12 on one side and by hedgerows forming the arable field boundary on the other. Glimpses of the borrow pits, now used as angling lakes, are possible between recent planted areas.

The Navigation bends back towards the A12 and Cuton Lock before turning eastwards away from the periphery of Chelmsford. Cuton Lock provides a local landmark with a World War 2 pillbox sited on its island (figure 38 below). The broad weir here has been rebuilt with local red brick wing walls. In contrast to the tree-enclosed water above the lock, its elevated position provides panoramic views in several directions downstream. From just below the lock, Boreham House, a fine country house dating from 1728, is glimpsed.

Figure 38 Cuton Lock



The close proximity to the A12 is foiled by the cricket bat willow planting whilst the large irrigation reservoir to the east is not visible from the Navigation.

As the Navigation turns sharply eastwards, footpath 17 provides a connection beneath the A12 back to Chancellor Park, a recent residential area and the adjoining business area. Panoramic views northwards over fields are disturbed by the A12 traffic and the non-descript industrial shed backcloth seen until Stonhams Lock is reached (figure 39 below).



View to the A12 and Sheepcotes Industrial estate

Figure 39

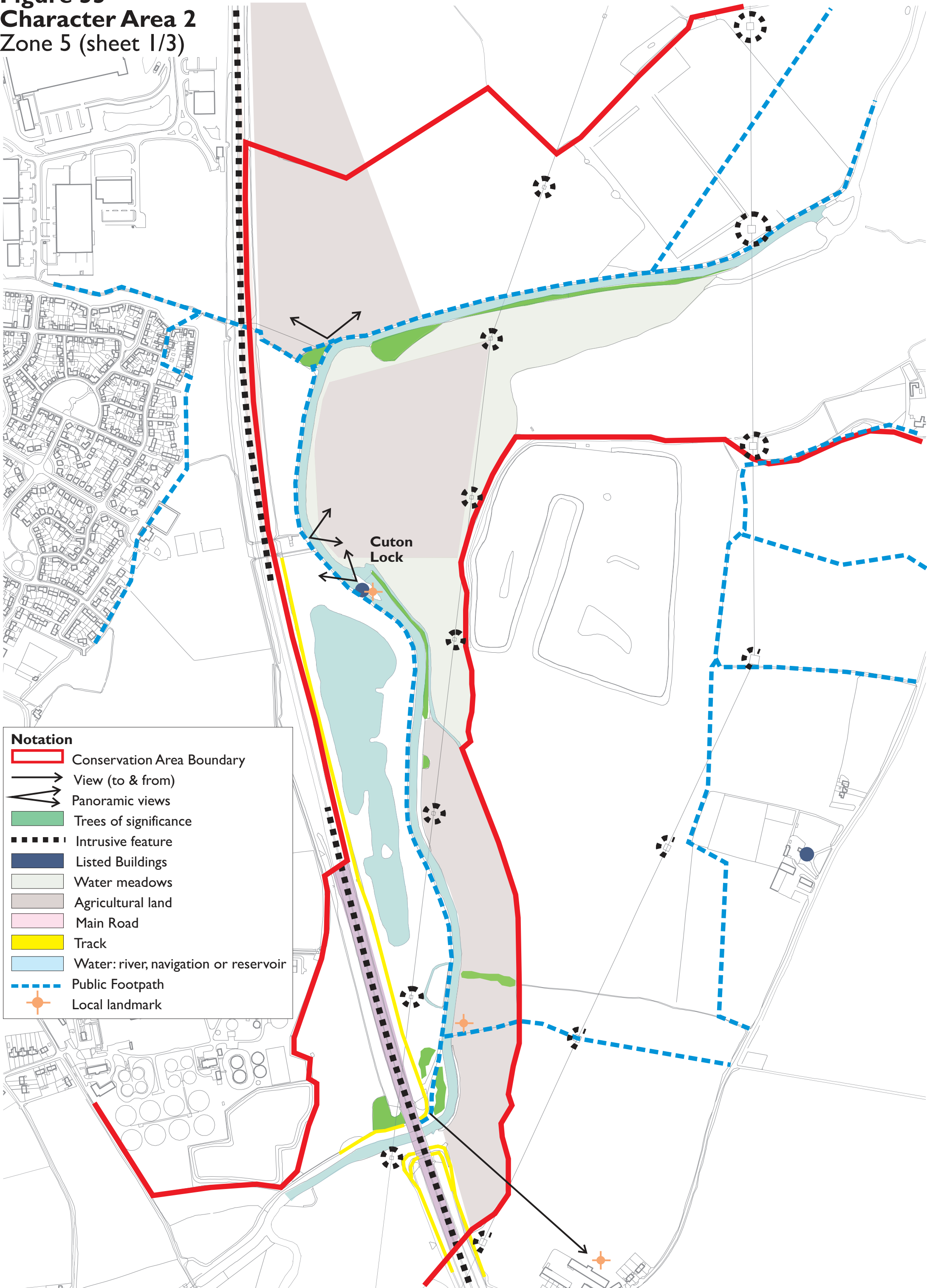
Throughout this stretch, the Navigation itself is framed by a native tree line on the southern bank and cricket bat willows on the northern bank (figure 40 below).



Figure 40

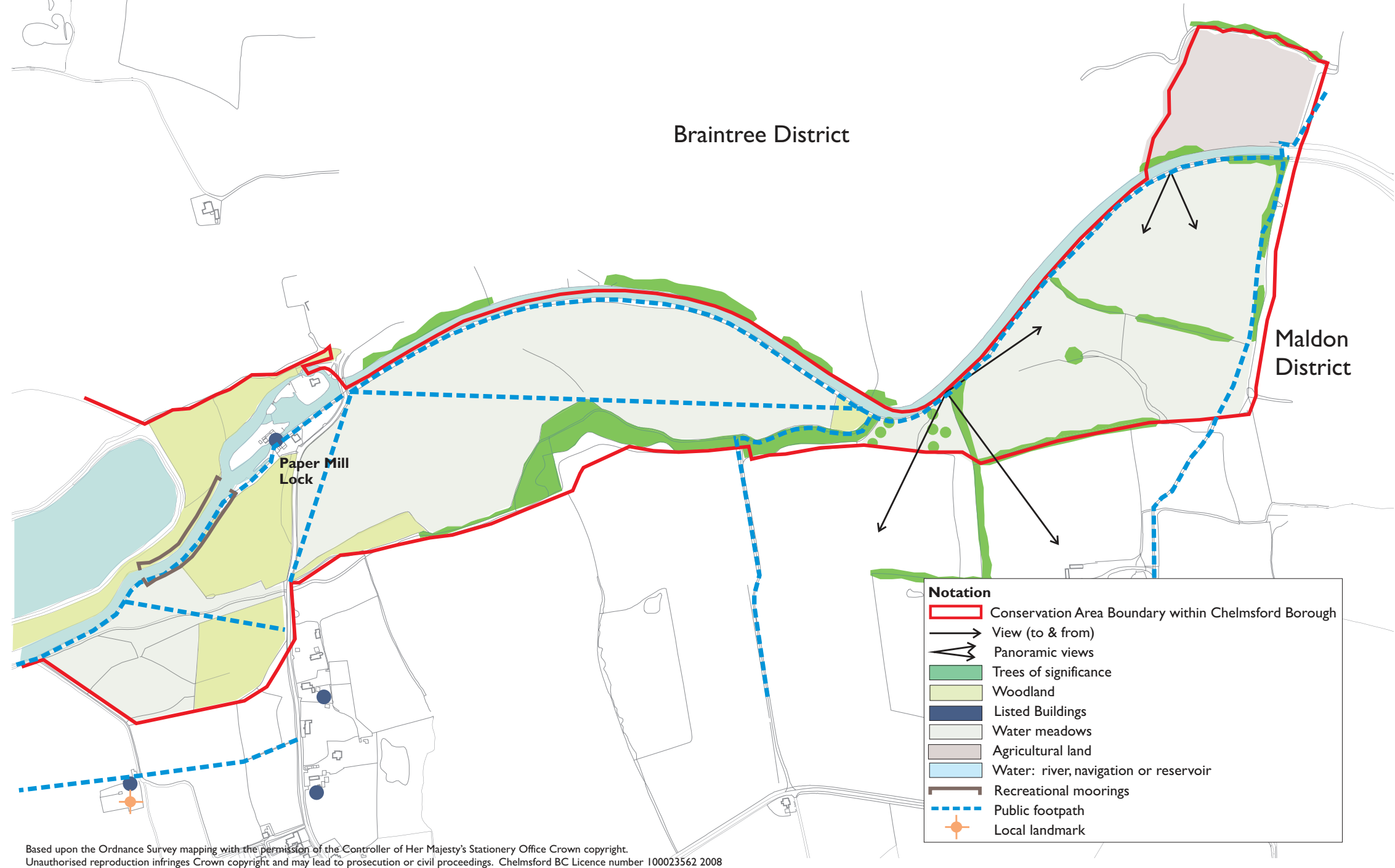


**Figure 35**  
**Character Area 2**  
**Zone 5 (sheet 1/3)**



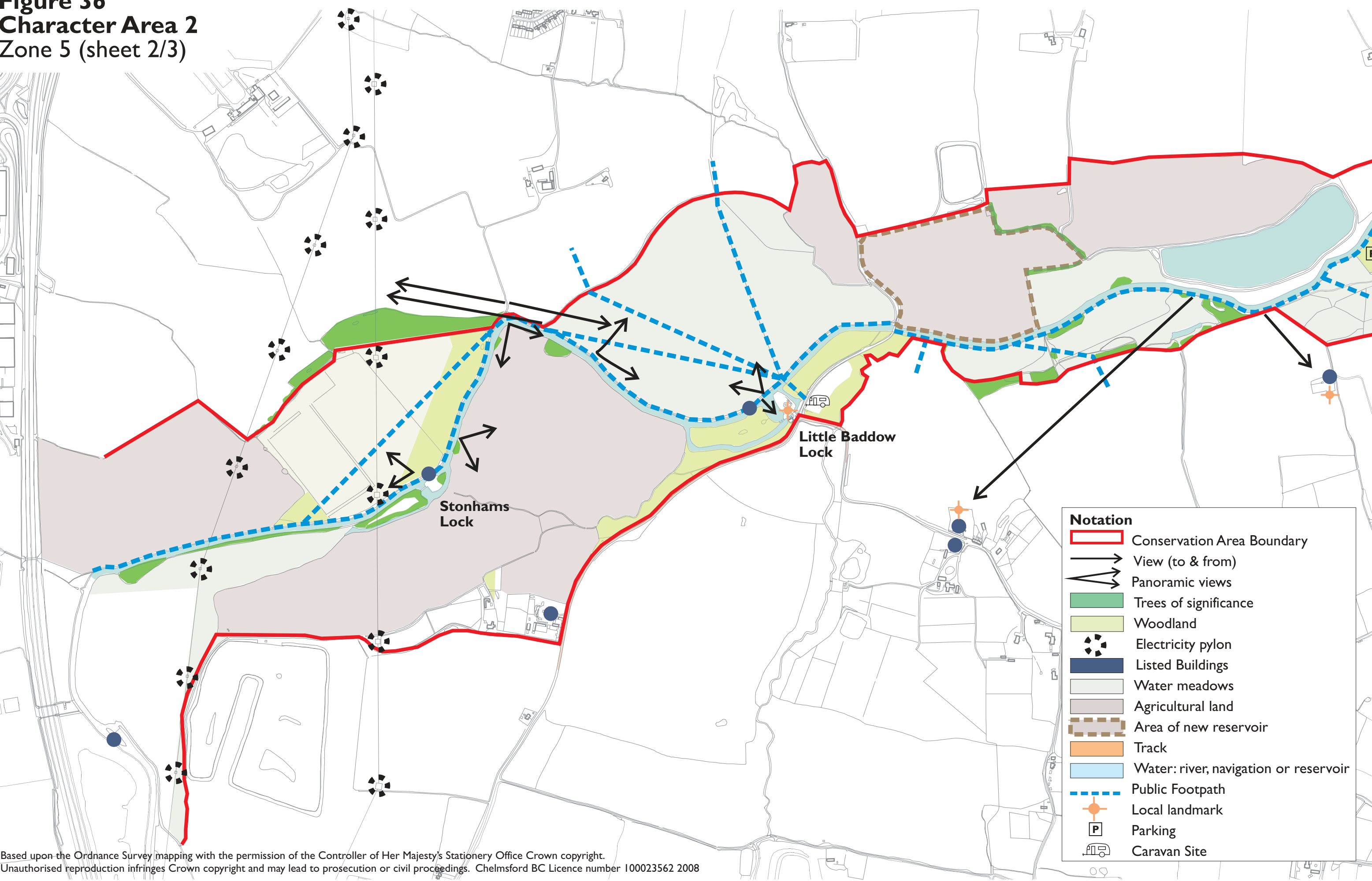


**Figure 37**  
**Character Area 2**  
Zone 5 (sheet 3/3)





**Figure 36**  
**Character Area 2**  
Zone 5 (sheet 2/3)



**Notation**

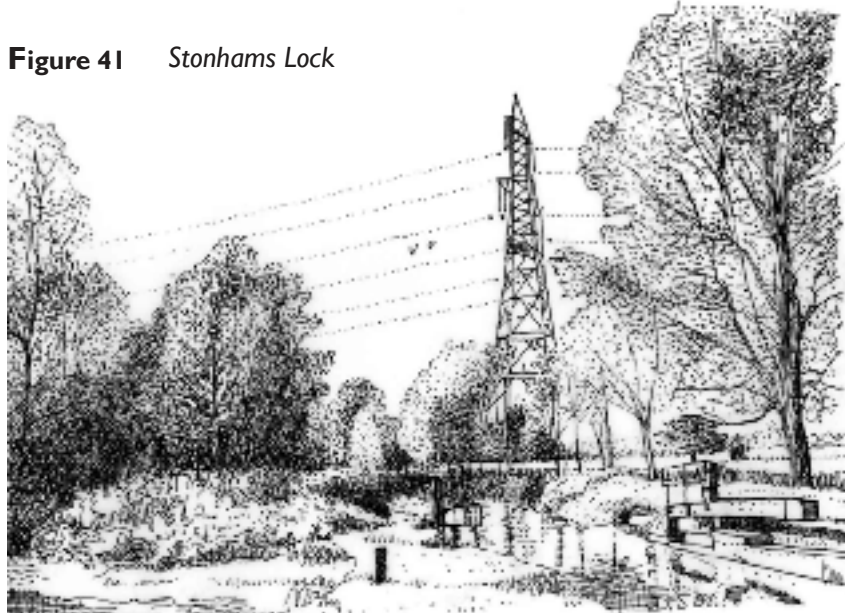
- Conservation Area Boundary
- View (to & from)
- Panoramic views
- Trees of significance
- Woodland
- Electricity pylon
- Listed Buildings
- Water meadows
- Agricultural land
- Area of new reservoir
- Track
- Water: river, navigation or reservoir
- Public Footpath
- Local landmark
- Parking
- Caravan Site

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From the A12 bridge to Brick Kiln corner the twin line of electricity pylons form an intrusive feature in the landscape and a large pylon dominates the setting of Stonham Lock (figure 41 below).

**Figure 41** *Stonhams Lock*



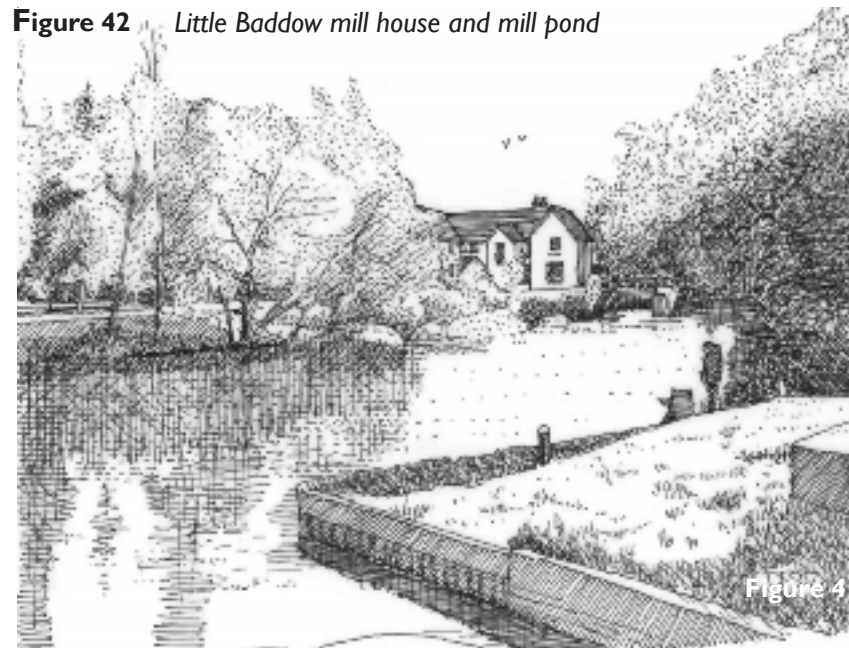
A backcloth of trees and hedges now contains the wider valley bottom and a water meadow character becomes more obvious. Panoramic views are frequent, and Danbury hill with its woodlands and church spire forms the southern skyline.

Brick Kiln corner allows a view back to the A12 and the intrusive Royal Mail building but also attractive unspoilt views towards Danbury and Little Baddow lock. From here is some of the best landscape along the Navigation with the quiet water meadows and fields framed by hedgerows and trees on the gently rising valley sides.

The Little Baddow Mill House (figure 42) with its white rendered walls, plain tiled roof and traditional gables is set amongst willow plantations, overlooks the wide mill pool below the lock and forms a focal point and landmark, a tranquil remainder of a once large mill.

The valley feels a little narrower here as the gentle slopes and framing hedgerows and trees are a little closer to the Navigation. A similar unspoilt character continues with the cricket bat willow lined waterway passing through a rural landscape of fields and water meadows.

**Figure 42** *Little Baddow mill house and mill pond*



Numerous footpaths radiate across the water meadows from the footpath bridge to Church Road, and head towards Boreham, which is seen beyond the hedgerows (figure 43 below). Church Road crosses the Navigation at Black Bridge, which is single track and has concrete balustrades resembling horizontal timber rails. This location with its road access and the nearby lock and Mill House, is a popular stopping point for visitors to the Navigation. The lack of parking facilities has however resulted in eroded verges.

**Figure 43** *View towards Boreham*



A seasonal caravan site lies noticeably next to Church Road. The field to the east of Church Road and north of the Navigation is currently being excavated for irrigation reservoirs, which will be

mitigated by improved landscape and planting on completion, but are likely to change the character of this area when their exposed banks become a summer feature.

Between Black Bridge and Paper Mill Lock, set aside and water meadows with woodland copses lie alongside the Navigation and allow the occasional longer views to Little Baddow Church and Chelmer Cottage. The large agricultural reservoir here has little impact upon the conservation area views.

Paper Mill Lock (figure 44 below) has an important group of riverside structures, which are utilised for the café and boat trips. The bridge and lock provide elevated positions to view the weir and give views along the navigation, as does the mid-twentieth century road bridge beyond. Paper Mill is generally recognised as the half way point on the Navigation, as the small red brick and slate bothy building which overlooks the lock is where the barges slept and the black weather boarded stables opposite where the horses spent the night.

**Figure 44** *Paper Mill Lock*



The weir adjacent to the lock and pool below are a feature from the towpath and even out of season this location is still busy with visitors to the tearoom, walkers and cyclists. The lack of parking out of season results in eroded roadside verges and towpaths become muddy due to much use. The temporary use car park supports the summer activities in the locality, however it appears untidy after frequent use.



The modern mill cottage (Treasure Island) is on the site of a former mill which retains a mill stream to the rear. The site is documented to have been associated with milling since 1272.

Beyond the road bridge the navigation is bounded by cricket bat willows and agricultural land (figure 45 below), with Braintree district to the north and Maldon district to the east.

### Enhancement and Management Recommendations

- Improvements to tow path.
- Resist expansion of recreational moorings.

- Retain historic buildings and continue waterside functions.
- Instigate a phased programme of tree planting to screen the A12.
- Instigate a phased programme of tree planting to ensure continuity of mature trees.
- Provide screen planting to the new agricultural reservoir at Black Bridge.
- Improvements to parking areas at Black Bridge and Paper Mill Lock.
- Retain views to Boreham House, Boreham and Little Baddow churches.

**Figure 45** East of Paper Mill Lock



### Pressures for Change

The rural area faces continuing pressure for urbanisation through building and industrialised agriculture in the form of incremental intrusions in the valley and intensification of existing buildings/uses. The change of use or lack of management of land, erection of agricultural sheds and the introduction of agricultural reservoirs has in some cases undermined the character of the area.

### Conclusions

The Chelmer and Blackwater navigation has immense historic, architectural, scenic and recreational value. Its character is derived from its historic function and development, land uses, buildings and views.

With future management and partnership working, the area can be protected and enhanced. This document forms the basis of future enhancement and management and will help inform proposals within the area.



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## Annex A – Planning Policy Comparison

1997 Local Plan Policy	2006 Core Policy	2006 Development Control Policy
ENV6 Conservation Areas	CP9	DC19
ENV7 Enhancement Schemes	CP9	DC19, AAP*
EHV8 Maintaining Conservation Areas	CP9	DC19, AAP*
ENV9-11 Listed Buildings	CP9	DC20
ENV16 Shop fronts		DC49, AAP*
ENV17-18 Advertising	CP9	DC49, AAP*
ENV19 Security Shutters	CP9	DC46, DC49, AAP*
SHP4 Core Retail Area	CP7, CP22, CP23	DC5, DC63, AAP*
EMPI-4	CP13, CP15	DC4, DC31, DC36, DC52, DC55-57
CSU8 Flood Risk	CP10	DC23
Dev Adj watercourses	CP9	DC18
EMP17 Farm diversification	CP9	DC60
EMP17 Re-use of rural buildings	CP9	DC61
REC8 Access to rivers		DC18, DC40, DC41
REC9 Restoration Springfield Basin		DC18, DC40, DC42, AAP*
REC10 River activities	CP2	

\*The Area Action Plan (AAP) only relates to the Chelmer Waterside area.