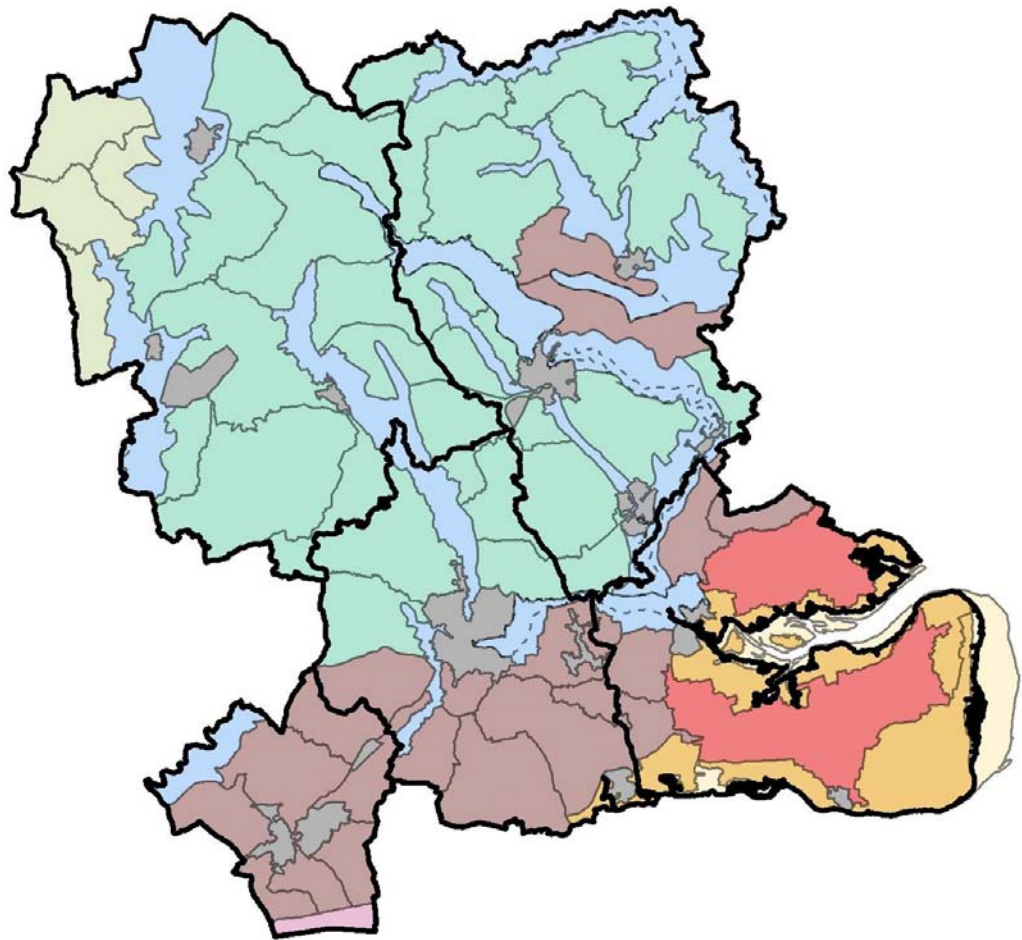

**BRAINTREE, BRENTWOOD, CHELMSFORD,
MALDON AND UTTLESFORD
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS**




September 2006

CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning

**Braintree DC, Brentwood BC, Chelmsford BC,
Maldon DC & Uttlesford DC**

**BRAINTREE, BRENTWOOD, CHELMSFORD,
MALDON AND UTTLESFORD
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS**

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Signed: 
Position: Director
Date: 27 September 2006

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CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Study Area

1.2 Study Aims and Objectives

1.3 The Importance of Landscape Character

1.4 Planning Policy Framework

1.5 Approach and Methodology

1.6 Structure of the Report

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AREA

2.1 General

2.2 Physical Influences on the Shaping of the Landscape

2.3 Historical Influences on the Landscape

2.4 Key Forces for Change in the Landscape

2.5 Landscape Character in The Study Area – An Overview

3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF BRAINTREE DISTRICT

3.1 General

3.2 River Valley Landscapes

3.3 Farmland Plateau Landscapes

3.4 Wooded Farmland Landscapes

4.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF BRENTWOOD BOROUGH

4.1 General

4.2 River Valley Landscapes

4.3 Wooded Farmland Landscapes

4.4 Fenland Landscapes

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHELMSFORD BOROUGH

5.1 General

5.2 River Valley Landscapes

5.3 Farmland Plateau Landscapes

5.4 Drained Estuarine Marsh Landscapes

5.5 Wooded Farmland Landscapes

6.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF MALDON DISTRICT

6.1 General

6.2 River Valley Landscapes

6.3 Farmland Plateau Landscapes

6.4 Estuarine Marsh/Mudflat Landscapes

6.5 Drained Estuarine Marsh Landscapes

6.6 Coastal Farmland Landscapes

6.7 Wooded Farmland Landscapes

7.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF UTTLESFORD DISTRICT

7.1 General

7.2 River Valley Landscapes

7.3 Farmland Plateau Landscapes

7.4 Chalk Upland Landscapes

- 8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**
- 8.1 General**
- 8.2 Key Applications of the Landscape Character Assessments**
- 8.3 Incorporating Landscape Character into Local Development Frameworks**
- 8.4 Monitoring Landscape Change**
- 8.5 Enhancing the Character Evidence Base**

APPENDICES

- A. Stakeholder Consultation**
- B. Glossary**
- C. Sources of Further Information**
- D. Historic Landscape Character Areas Methodology**
- E. Current Local Planning Situation**
- F. Draft Core Strategy Landscape Character Policy**

FIGURES

- 1.1 The Study Area**
- 2.1 Surface Geology**
- 2.2 Landform and Drainage**
- 2.3 Nature Conservation Designations**
- 2.4 Historic Landscape Character Types and Areas**
- 2.5 National Joint Character Areas**
- 2.6 National Landscape Typology**
- 2.7 County Landscape Character Types and Areas**
- 2.8 District/Borough Landscape Character Types and Areas in The Study Area**
- 3.1 Braintree District Landscape Character Types and Areas**
- 4.1 Brentwood Borough Landscape Character Types and Areas**
- 5.1 Chelmsford Borough Landscape Character Types and Areas**
- 6.1 Maldon District Landscape Character Types and Areas**
- 7.1 Uttlesford District Landscape Character Types and Areas**

Box 1 Landscape Character Assessment Process

Box 2 Landscape Sensitivity Evaluation Criteria

PREFACE

This Technical Study was commissioned jointly by Braintree District Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Chelmsford Borough Council, Maldon District Council and Uttlesford District Council.

The Study provides a baseline inventory of the landscape character of the five authority areas. It also sets out recommendations for the application of the Study for consideration and action as appropriate by the local authorities. The need to protect and enhance landscape character is recognised by Government planning policy on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. To ensure that full account is given to landscape character in planning decisions, this Study is commended to the local authorities for use as an evidence base for informing the preparation of Local Development Frameworks and in development control.

The preparation of the Study was steered by officers from the five local authorities. We are grateful for the advice and guidance provided by the Steering Group, namely:

- Melvyne Crow– Braintree District Council
- Melanie Jones and Sarah Nicholas – Uttlesford District Council
- Paul McBride and Derek Stebbing – Chelmsford Borough Council
- Geoff Boyton – Brentwood Borough Council
- Chris Bailey and Zyuoya Ling – Maldon District Council

In addition, we appreciate the help of other Council officers and individuals from other organisations who willingly assisted in the provision of data and information for the Study. We would also like to acknowledge the representatives of organisations who attended the three stakeholder consultation workshops held during the course of the Study (see Appendix A for details). The information gained from these stakeholders provided an important input to the Study.

The Consultant Team comprised:

- Dominic Watkins
- Emma Clarke
- Marian Cameron
- Alison MacDonald
- Darina Williams

Chris Blandford Associates
September 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In October 2005 Braintree District Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Chelmsford Borough Council, Maldon District Council and Uttlesford District Council jointly commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake Landscape Character Assessments of their respective areas.

The aim of the Study is to provide a comprehensive Borough/District-wide assessment of landscape character within the Study Area to inform land use planning and land management decisions. The Landscape Character Assessment will be specifically used as a technical evidence base to inform the Local Development Frameworks currently being prepared by the respective local planning authorities.

The overall aim of landscape planning, design and management should be to achieve ‘sustainable landscapes’ that are as visually, biodiverse and culturally rich as possible to meet all of society’s social, economic and environmental needs. A better understanding of landscapes provided by Landscape Character Assessments – their diversity, character and distinctiveness, evolution, sensitivity to change and their management needs – is essential to help to work towards this goal.

Methodology

The overall approach to the study is based on *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland* (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002), the latest published guidance, and takes into account current best practice. Landscape Character Assessment addresses both the relatively objective process of landscape characterisation, which involves identifying, mapping, classifying and describing ‘landscape character’, and the more subjective process of evaluating landscape character to inform planning and land management decisions. In summary, the main stages involved in the study process were:

- Desk Study Research
- Field Survey
- Characterisation
- Evaluation
- Preparation of the Study Report

Consultation with key stakeholder organisations at three main stages of the above process was an important and integral element of the Study. The purpose of the stakeholder consultation was to strengthen the evidence base by gathering opinions about landscape character from the key stakeholders, and to promote the value of the Study as a tool for informing planning and land management decisions in rural areas. As a technical study, local community and special interest groups were not consulted on the Study at this preparatory stage. However, it is anticipated that community involvement in the future application of the Landscape Character Assessment will be encouraged through development of character-based design guidance at the local level (e.g. Village Design Statements, Town Design Statements, Parish Plans etc.).

Content of the Report

Section 1.0 sets out the context for the Study. It explains the background to the Study, its aims and objectives, and highlights the importance of landscape character. It also describes the planning policy framework for the Study, and outlines the approach and process behind the assessment methodology.

Section 2.0 provides an overview of the Study Area. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today. This section also provides an overview of landscape character across the Study Area as a whole in its national and county context.

Eight separate Landscape Character Types were defined at 1:25,000 scale within the Study Area. Landscape Character Types are generic and have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field systems. The eight Landscape Character Types have been broken down into seventy Landscape Character Areas that reflect distinctive variations in local character based on visual analysis of how different combinations of physical features and perceptual qualities such as scale, pattern, tranquillity, cultural associations, etc. create areas of distinctive landscape character.

Sections 3.0 to 7.0 of the report provide the detailed ‘profiles’ of the Landscape Character Areas identified within Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford respectively. The profiles are structured as follows:

- 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 evaluation of indicative landscape sensitivity for each Landscape Character Area took into account the area’s intrinsic landscape qualities, biodiversity value, visual characteristics (intervisibility and visual prominence), historic integrity and its re-creatability. The sensitivity analysis, together with the proposed strategy objectives and suggested guidelines for each Landscape Character Area, can be used to inform:

- the identification of spatial development options within the District/Borough Local Development Frameworks.
- Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local Development Framework site allocations.
- the highlighting of landscape issues that may need to be considered in greater detail in relation to development control decisions for major schemes.
- the application of criteria-based landscape protection and enhancement policies within Local Development Frameworks.

Section 8.0 sets out the consultant’s recommendations to the commissioning authorities for their consideration and action as appropriate. Recommendations are provided for the application of the Landscape Character Assessment including its use in relation to informing Local Development Framework policies for protecting and enhancing landscape character, and in providing a baseline and framework for monitoring landscape change. Recommendations for further work required to enhance the evidence base on the landscape and settlement character of the Study Area are also included.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Study Area

1.1.1 In October 2005 Braintree District Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Chelmsford Borough Council, Maldon District Council and Uttlesford District Council jointly commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake Landscape Character Assessments of their respective areas.

1.1.2 The Study Area is shown on Figure 1.1. Situated in the County of Essex, the Study Area comprises the following administrative areas:

- Braintree District
- Brentwood Borough
- Chelmsford Borough
- Maldon District
- Uttlesford District

1.1.3 The areas characterised by this Study include all the rural area up to and including the urban edge and, where they exist, river valleys and other green corridors extending into urban areas.

1.1.4 The Study Area borders Babergh District and St Edmundsbury District in Suffolk, and South Cambridgeshire District in Cambridgeshire to the north; the Districts of North and East Hertfordshire and Epping Forest District in Essex to the west; the Borough of Havering in Greater London, and Thurrock and the Districts of Basildon and Rochford in Essex which form the southern border of the Study Area. The eastern border of the Study Area is provided by the North Sea and by Colchester Borough in Essex.

1.2 Study Aims and Objectives

1.2.1 The aim of the Study is to provide a comprehensive Borough/District-wide assessment of landscape character within the Study Area to inform land use planning and land management decisions.

1.2.2 The Landscape Character Assessment will be specifically used to inform the Local Development Frameworks currently being prepared by the respective local planning authorities.

1.2.3 The key objectives of the Study are to:

- Provide a baseline inventory and description of landscape character by Type and Area at a scale of 1:25,000.
- Identify key issues, sensitivities to change and management strategy objectives/guidelines for each Character Area.
- Ensure that Landscape Character Areas and Types join up seamlessly across administrative boundaries, including with existing character assessment studies carried out by neighbouring authorities outside of the Study Area.
- To liaise with and understand the issues and concerns of the key stakeholder organisations in relation to the landscape characterisation process.

1.3 The Importance of Landscape Character

1.3.1 The UK Government signed the European Landscape Convention¹ on the 24 February 2006. The Convention aims to encourage public authorities within member states to adopt policies and measures for the protection, management and planning of all landscapes, both outstanding and ordinary, that determine the quality of people's living environment. The Convention specially encourages local authorities to introduce exemplary and long lasting policies or measures to protect, manage and plan landscapes.

1.3.2 The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as:

'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'

1.3.3 The term landscape is typically synonymous with the countryside; however, landscape is everywhere and may comprise rural landscapes, urban landscapes or townscape, urban fringe landscapes, coastal landscapes or seascapes, etc.

1.3.4 The European Landscape Convention defines 'landscape character' as:

'a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape.'

1.3.5 In England and Scotland, Landscape Character Assessment² is a tool that allows landscape character to be understood, explained and described in a transparent and robust way. It does this by mapping and describing the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes and experiential characteristics that make one area distinctive from another at a range of spatial scales. Landscape Character Assessment also recognises how landscapes have changed over time, and acknowledges the changing influences of human activities and the impacts of economic development.

1.3.6 The overall aim of landscape planning, design and management should be to achieve *sustainable landscapes* that are as visually, biodiverse and culturally rich as possible to meet all of society's social, economic and environmental needs. A better understanding of landscapes provided by Landscape Character Assessments – their diversity, character and distinctiveness, evolution, sensitivity to change and their management needs – is essential to help to work towards this goal.

1.4 Planning Policy Framework

1.4.1 National Planning Policy relating to landscape character is contained in PPS1³ and PPS7⁴.

Planning Policy Statement 1 : Delivering Sustainable Development

1.4.2 PPS1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It states that one of the Government's objectives for the planning system is that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable urban and rural development by protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and the quality and character of the countryside (para 5). In its key principles, PPS1 states that 'a

¹ The European Landscape Convention opened for signature in Florence on 20 October 2000. Jim Knight, Minister for Rural Affairs, Landscape and Biodiversity announced the UK signing of the European Landscape Convention on 24 February 2006.

² Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

³ Planning Policy Statement 1 : Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005).

⁴ Planning Policy Statement 7 : Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004).

spatial planning approach should be at the heart of planning for sustainable development' (para 13.iii) and *'design which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted'* (para 13.iv). When preparing development plans *'planning authorities should seek to enhance as well as protect biodiversity, natural habitats, the historic environment and landscape and townscape character'* (para 27). PPS1 also requires new design to be integrated into the existing urban form and natural and built environments (para 35).

Planning Policy Statement 7 : Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 1.4.3 Landscape Character Assessment, along with Village or Town Design Statements and Village or Parish Plans, is recommended by PPS7 as a tool to assist Local Authorities in the preparation of policies and guidance that encourages good quality design throughout rural areas (para 13). Landscape Character Assessment is also recommended by PPS7 as a tool for creating carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in Local Development Documents to protect valued landscapes outside nationally designated areas without the need for rigid local designations, which may restrict sustainable development and the economic vitality of rural areas. PPS7 advises that local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based policies cannot provide the necessary protection (paras 24 and 25).

The East of England Regional Spatial Strategy

- 1.4.4 The East of England Plan : Draft Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England was published by the East of England Regional Assembly for consultation in December 2004. An Examination in Public (EIP) into the draft RSS was held between November 2005 and March 2006. The EIP Panel Report was published in June 2006, which included recommended changes to the draft RSS.
- 1.4.5 The Draft RSS is based on the principles of sustainable development and specifically identifies landscape character as a key consideration in the spatial development of the region. Taking into account the recommended changes of the EIP Panel, draft Policy ENV2 Landscape Conservation states:

'Planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and programmes and decision-making will, in accordance with statutory requirements, afford the highest status of protection to the East of England's nationally designated landscapes – the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (having status equal to a National Park) and the Chilterns, Norfolk Coast, Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)s. Within the Broads priority will be given to the statutory purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, promoting public enjoyment and protecting the interests of navigation. Within the AONBs priority over other considerations will be given to conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

Throughout the East of England planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies, programmes and decision-making will aim to recognise, protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the countryside character areas indicated on Map 9.1 by:

- *developing area-wide strategies, based on landscape character assessments, setting long-term goals for landscape change, targeting planning and land management tools and resources to influence that change, and giving priority to those areas subject to most growth and change;*

- *developing criteria-based policies, informed by the area-wide strategies and landscape character assessments, to ensure that all development, wherever possible respects and enhances local landscape character; and*
- *providing/requiring appropriate mitigation measures where avoidance of damage to local landscape character is unavoidable.'*

The Essex Structure Plan

- 1.4.6 The Essex and Southend on Sea Replacement Structure Plan was adopted in April 2001. Under the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, the Structure Plan will remain the operative development plan for Essex from 2004-2007. The Structure Plan and its policies are therefore saved for three years, unless the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy is adopted sooner. Once the East of England Plan is adopted, the Structure Plan policies will be repealed and will have no effect.
- 1.4.7 The need to protect landscape character has been recognised by Essex County Council, and policies to protect the distinctive character of the towns, villages, countryside and coast of the County is set out in the Structure Plan. The Structure Plan specifically encourages District and Borough Councils in Essex to prepare Landscape Character Assessments to inform land use planning and land management in their areas.

Local Planning Context

- 1.4.8 The five local planning authorities within the Study Area have prepared and adopted Local Plans for the whole of their areas to guide development and to protect and enhance the environment. These will eventually be replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) under the arrangements set out in the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*. LDFs comprise a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs) that will set out proposals for the future development use and conservation of land and buildings.
- 1.4.9 The new LDFs will normally comprise the following main LDDs of relevance to landscape planning objectives:
- *Statement of Community Involvement* – sets out how the community will be consulted during the production of LDDs and in development control.
 - *Core Strategy* – establishes the overarching vision for development in local authority areas and sets out the key planning objectives as a basis for policies. It contains a spatial strategy, strategic policies and proposals for promoting and controlling development in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, and includes a monitoring and implementation framework.
 - *Development Control Policies* – comprise a suite of policies to be used in development control to ensure that all development meets the vision and strategy set out in the Core Strategy.
 - *Site Specific Allocations* – this identifies site-specific land allocations for different types of development, and land to which specific policies apply.
 - *Area Action Plans* – are developed, where necessary, for particular sites or areas identified for significant change or conservation. They focus on implementation, setting out the measures needed to deliver development or conservation initiatives.

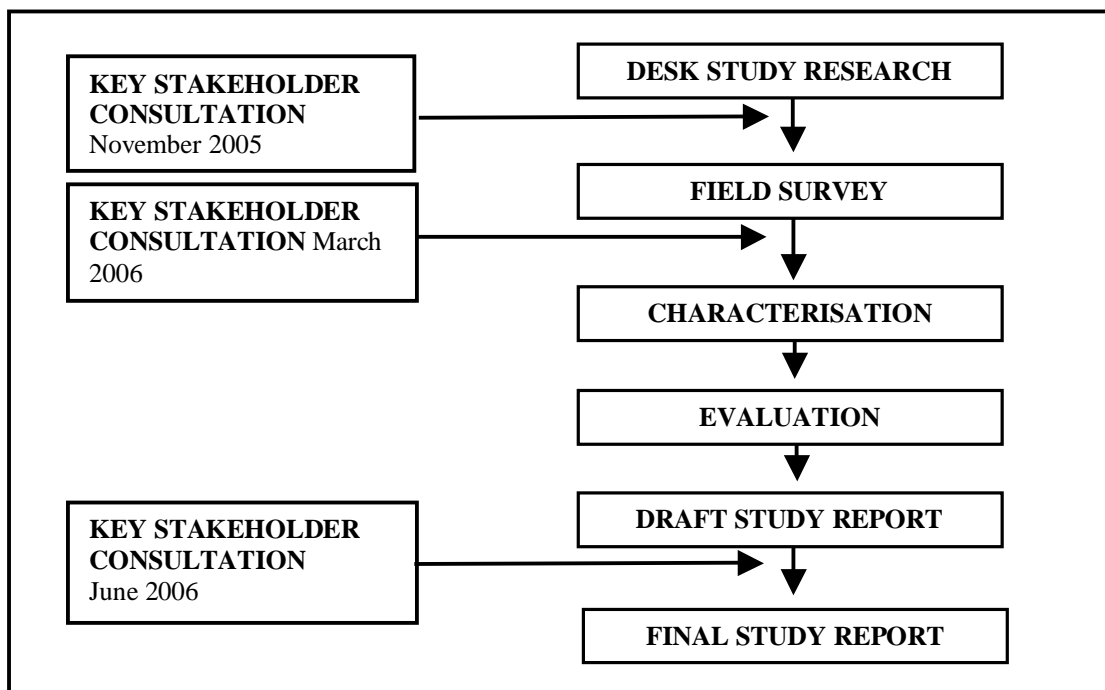
- *Proposals Map* - expresses geographically the adopted development plan policies, including locations and sites for particular land use and development proposals, and areas of protection.
- *Supplementary Planning Documents* – provide detailed guidance to elaborate upon the core policies and proposals, e.g. design guides, site development briefs or topic based guidance. SPDs are capable of being updated regularly making them more able to respond to changing circumstances. They do not have Development Plan Document status, but are a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

- 1.4.10 The Core Strategy, Development Control Policies, Site Specific Allocations, Proposals Map and any Area Action Plans, together with the RSS, comprise the statutory Development Plan Documents against which all planning decisions will normally need to be made. It is intended that this Landscape Character Assessment will be used as part of the evidence base of technical studies to inform the preparation of the LDFs within the Study Area.
- 1.4.11 The current local planning situation in each of the respective authority areas is set out in Appendix E.

1.5 Approach and Methodology

- 1.5.1 The overall approach for undertaking the Landscape Character Assessment is based on the latest guidance published by the Countryside Agency⁵, taking into account current best practice. Landscape Character Assessment addresses both the relatively objective process of landscape characterisation, which involves identifying, mapping, classifying and describing ‘landscape character’, and the more subjective process of evaluating landscape character to inform planning and land management decisions.
- 1.5.2 The study process is illustrated in Box 1, and described below.

Box 1 – Landscape Character Assessment Process



⁵ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

Desk Study Research

- 1.5.3 This stage involved desk-based research to identify physical and historical factors that have influenced the shape and use of the landscape. This work drew on a variety of documents and maps that describe the physical geography and cultural history of the Study Area (see Appendix C for details). The desk research also identified the forces for change affecting the character of the landscape within the Study Area.
- 1.5.4 In summary, the desk work involved:
- A review of existing national and local character assessments relating to the Study Area, including the Countryside Agency's Character of England Map/Countryside Character descriptions and National Landscape Typology; Essex Landscape Character Assessment; and existing assessments for neighbouring areas in Essex, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Thurrock.
 - Production and analysis of map overlays of surface geology, landform and drainage, and nature conservation designations.
 - Analysis of air photos.
 - Identification of draft Landscape Character Types and draft Landscape Character Areas.
- 1.5.5 In recognition of the important contribution that historic patterns and features make to the character of the current landscape in this part of Essex, information from the Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Study dataset was incorporated into the Landscape Character Assessment using a methodology developed and agreed with Essex County Council Historic Environment Unit and English Heritage (see Appendix D for details). 'Historic Landscape Character Areas' were derived from amalgamation of the HLC typology, and used to (i) inform the definition of the Landscape Character Areas defined in this report, and (ii) to identify the key historic land use features in the present-day landscape (see the Landscape Character Area profiles in Sections 3.0 to 7.0).

Field Survey

- 1.5.6 Field surveys were undertaken between November 2005 and April 2006 to allow consideration of seasonal variations. The aim of the surveys was to undertake a visual analysis of how different features and elements combined to create distinctive patterns in the landscape. The surveys were undertaken from key viewpoints within each draft Landscape Character Area by a team of field assessors. The checklist included:
- Landform
 - Rivers/drainage
 - Land cover
 - Field pattern and field boundaries
 - Communication routes
 - Settlement form/pattern
 - Building styles
 - Scale
 - Texture
 - Enclosure
 - Stimuli
 - Sense of tranquillity
 - Movement

- View types and composition
- Landmarks

1.5.7 The survey information (including photographs) was used to (i) inform the descriptions of landscape character and (ii) to test and refine the draft Landscape Character Area boundaries.

Characterisation

1.5.8 The characterisation stage involved the combination of the desk study research and field survey analysis to identify and map generic Landscape Character Types and geographically unique Landscape Character Areas at 1:25,000 scale (see Section 2.5 for details).

1.5.9 For each generic Landscape Character Type, its boundaries were mapped and its key characteristics described. For each unique Landscape Character Area, its boundaries were mapped and the following characterisation information was recorded:

- Key Characteristics
- Overall Character Description
- Visual Characteristics
- Historic Land Use
- Ecological Features

Evaluation

1.5.10 This stage involved making the following judgements about each Landscape Character Area:

- Key Planning and Land Management Issues
- Sensitivities to Change
- Proposed landscape Strategy Objectives
- Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines
- Suggested Land Management Guidelines

Evaluation of Landscape Sensitivity

1.5.11 The methodology for evaluating the intrinsic sensitivities of each Landscape Character Area to change is based on the criteria for judging sensitivity set out in an accompanying paper to the *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland*⁶, taking into account current best practice.

1.5.12 It should be noted that the evaluation is based on the relatively broad-brush analysis undertaken at 1:25,000 scale for this Study. The degree of sensitivity is not absolute. It is likely to vary according to the nature of change under consideration, and is therefore only indicative. This evaluation should be read in conjunction with the more strategic evaluation of landscape sensitivity set out in the Essex Landscape Character Assessment⁷.

1.5.13 The criteria used to evaluate the relative sensitivities of each Landscape Character Area are defined in Box 2.

⁶ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland : Topic Paper 8 – Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (Swanwick, 2004).

⁷ Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (July 2002).

Box 2 - Landscape Sensitivity Evaluation Criteria

Intrinsic Landscape Qualities

- The number and contribution of positive visual qualities/characteristics to landscape value/sense of place.

Biodiversity Value

- The contribution of positive ecological elements or features to landscape value/sense of place.

Visual Characteristics (Intervisibility and Visual Prominence)

- The degree to which an area is widely visible from, and positively influences the character of, surrounding areas.

Historic Integrity

- The contribution of positive visible historic elements within the area, taking into account the intactness and integrity of historic landscape patterns and the presence of valued historic features within the area.

Re-creatability

- The degree to which the *intrinsic landscape qualities*, *biodiversity value* and *historic integrity* of an area can be re-created if eroded or lost.

Landscape Strategy Objectives and Guidelines

- 1.5.14 This stage also involved identifying proposed broad strategy objectives and suggested guidelines for each Landscape Character Area. Taking into account the condition and sensitivities of the particular Landscape Character Area, one or more of the following strategy objectives was identified:

- **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 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.

- 1.5.15 The sensitivity analysis, together with the proposed strategy objectives and suggested guidelines for each Landscape Character Area, can be used to inform:

- the identification of spatial development options within the District/Borough Local Development Frameworks.
- Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local Development Framework site allocations.

- the highlighting of landscape issues that may need to be considered in greater detail in relation to development control decisions for major schemes.
- the application of criteria-based landscape protection and enhancement policies within Local Development Frameworks.

Key Stakeholder Consultation

- 1.5.16 Consultation with key stakeholder organisations was an important and integral element of the Study. The purpose of the stakeholder consultation was to strengthen the evidence base by gathering opinions about landscape character from the key stakeholders, and to promote the value of the Study as a tool for informing planning and land management decisions in rural areas.
- 1.5.17 The first stage of consultation in November 2005 involved a workshop to explore stakeholder's views on what gives different places within each of the authority areas their local identity and distinctive character (see Appendix A for further details). This information was fed into the desk study research and field survey stages of the Study to refine and validate the preliminary draft mapping of Landscape Character Types and Areas by the Consultant Team.
- 1.5.18 The second stage of consultation in March 2006 involved a further workshop to: explore stakeholder's views on the refined Landscape Character Types and Areas identified following field survey work; identify key threats to valued landscape characteristics/areas; and identify opportunities to enhance landscape character and sense of place (see Appendix A for further details). This information was fed into the characterisation and evaluation stages of the Study to inform: (i) the descriptions of landscape character; (ii) judgements about the sensitivities of different Landscape Character Areas to change; and (iii) the development of strategy objectives and guidelines for guiding change within different areas.
- 1.5.19 The findings of the Draft Report were presented to and discussed with the key stakeholders at a third workshop held in early June 2006, and their comments incorporated into the final version.
- 1.5.20 As a technical study, local community and special interest groups were not consulted on the Study at this preparatory stage. However, it is anticipated (see Section 8.0) that community involvement in the future application of the Landscape Character Assessment will be encouraged through development of character-based design guidance at the local level (e.g. Village Design Statements, Town Design Statements, Parish Plans etc.).

1.6 Structure of the Report

- 1.6.1 The study report is structured as follows.
- 1.6.2 **Section 1.0** sets out the context for the Study. It explains the background to the Study, its aims and objectives, and highlights the importance of landscape character. It also describes the planning policy framework for the Study, and outlines the approach and process behind the assessment methodology.
- 1.6.3 **Section 2.0** provides an overview of the Study Area. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today. This section also provides an overview of landscape character across the Study Area as a whole in its national and county context. The descriptions of individual Landscape Character Areas in Sections 3.0 to 7.0 (see below), should be read in conjunction with this information to ensure that the contextual relationship with the wider landscape is understood.

1.6.4 **Sections 3.0 to 7.0** of the report provide the detailed ‘profiles’ of Landscape Character Areas within Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford respectively. The profiles are 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

Where Landscape Character Areas fall within two or more adjacent District/Borough areas included within this Study report, the same profile has been included within the respective section. For example, the profile for Landscape Character Area *B16 – Felsted Farmland Plateau* is ‘shared’ by Braintree District (Section 3.0), Chelmsford Borough (Section 5.0) and Uttlesford District (Section 7.0). In such instances, a cross-reference is noted in the respective Character Area profile(s). References to other studies in neighbouring authority areas is facilitated by signposts to relevant documents as appropriate within each Section.

1.6.5 **Section 8.0** sets out the consultant’s recommendations to the commissioning authorities for their consideration and action as appropriate. Recommendations are provided for the application of the Landscape Character Assessment including its use in relation to informing Local Development Framework policies for protecting and enhancing landscape character, and in providing a baseline and framework for monitoring landscape change. Recommendations for further work required to enhance the evidence base on the landscape and settlement character of the Study Area are also included.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AREA

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AREA

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 This section provides an overview of the Study Area. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today. This section also provides an overview of landscape character across the Study Area as a whole in its national and county context.

2.2 Physical Influences on the Shaping of the Landscape

- 2.2.1 The landscape within the Study Area has evolved as a result of an interaction of the physical structure of the landscape and the vegetation and land uses that cover it. To understand what makes a place distinctive, it is useful to identify the key physical influences that have shaped the landscape over time.
- 2.2.2 The basic structure of the landscape is fundamentally influenced by its underlying rocks and relief. Geology and the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition influence the shape and form of the landscape and its drainage and soils. In turn, these influence patterns of vegetation and land use.

Geology, Landform and Drainage

- 2.2.3 The oldest rocks were laid down between 440 and 360 million years ago. They mainly consist of hard, slaty shales, mudstones and sandstones. Overlying this base are a number of different geological layers that have formed and undergone erosion through marine, fluvial and glacial processes between 135 million years ago to the present to form the rock structure of the Study Area today.
- 2.2.4 The surface geology of the Study Area (see Figure 2.1) is dominated by the deposition of glacial tills laid down during the Quaternary Period when the area was subjected to periodic ice advances and retreats as the climate cooled and warmed. This led to a complex mix of glacial, proglacial and periglacial deposits overlying each other, forming a generally flat landscape near the coast developing into gently undulating hills and valleys in the northwest with a corresponding mixture of soils and vegetation cover.
- 2.2.5 In the coastal plains of the Study Area, alluvial mud deposits laid down on the floor of a subtropical sea 50 million years ago overlay the London Clay. This forms the extensive area of low flat land in the southeast near to the coast at an altitude of 0-20m AOD (see Figure 2.2).
- 2.2.6 Overlying the alluvial deposits, soils along the coastline are derived largely from intertidal alluvial muds, which give rise to reclaimed coastal marshes with stoneless, clayey, silty and loamy soils. The soils on the saltmarshes are heavy gleys that undergo periodic waterlogging from fluctuations in the ground water table. Good arable yields have resulted from under-draining, levelling and liming.
- 2.2.7 Inland from the coastal marshes, the soils on the London Clay are seasonally water-logged slowly permeable heavy clay soils. There are some lighter soils on foot slopes. Generally the soils shrink and crack on drying, swelling on rewetting. When wet the soils become very sticky and plastic, they are not easy to cultivate requiring drainage to grow arable crops. Along the river courses alluvial sand and gravels provide well-drained fertile soils on undulating valleys. Surrounding the valleys are low hills and ridges the highest of which is Danbury Hill at 116m AOD.

- 2.2.8 On the hills above the London Clay, the capping of the fine sands of the Bagshot Beds by the pebbly clay drifts have led to acidic soils with low natural fertility that are easily cultivated.
- 2.2.9 In the northwest of the Study Area, the geology changes to glacial tills composed of sands and gravels overlain by the most extensive soils in the area, pelosols. These are heavy acidic soils often prone to waterlogging in winter months and to shrinking and cracking in summer resulting in a predominance of pasture fields on the low hills and ridges.
- 2.2.10 In the northwest of Uttlesford, the altitude reaches just over 130m AOD to the west of Saffron Walden. In this area the chalk is exposed at the surface and has given the area its characteristic rolling topography and free draining poor alkaline soils that support widespread cereal farming.
- 2.2.11 The Study Area has a large intricate network of rivers and streams. These are an important component of the area's topography, character and identity and are frequently of landscape, nature conservation and heritage value. To the north the valleys become steeper and more deeply cut.
- 2.2.12 Most of the rivers flow towards either the Thames or the North Sea (see Figure 2.2). Only the Cam flows northward. Principal rivers within the Study Area are the Stour, Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and Crouch. The Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and tributaries rise in the plateau to the north and flow south where their estuaries are extensive and contribute to the deeply indented coastline. The Crouch flows east across the undulating lowland to the south of the plateau and when joined by the Roach forms an estuary complex that includes the islands of Wallasea, Potton and Foulness.
- 2.2.13 The coastline is mainly marshland and is characterised by a maze of winding shallow creeks, drowned estuaries, mudflats and broad tracts of tidal salt-marsh with sand and shingle beaches along the coast edge. The relatively permanent, branching, meandering creeks, dissect the salt marshes.

Landcover and Ecological Character

- 2.2.14 The rural landscape of the Study Area is predominantly used for arable or improved pasture, particularly on the flat or gently undulating land. The rich soils are intensively cultivated and large cereal fields are a major feature of the landscape. The cereal field margins occasionally support uncommon plants such as cornflower, broad-leaved cudweed, corn cleavers and shepherd's needle.
- 2.2.15 There are significant areas of remaining semi-natural habitat that make an important contribution to the area's distinctive character. The presence and distribution of these habitats is strongly influenced by geology and landform, and include woodland, grassland, heath, estuary, saltmarsh and mudflat and freshwater and open water habitats. Many sites where these habitats occur are designated as Ramsar Sites, candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)¹, Special Protection Areas (SPA), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and/or Local Nature Reserves (LNR). The distribution of these areas designated for their nature conservation value are shown on Figure 2.3 and described below in relation to key habitat types.

¹ SINCs are also referred to as County Wildlife Sites, which will become known as Local Wildlife Sites in due course.

Woodland

- 2.2.16 There are areas of lowland beech and yew woodland scattered in the west of the Study Area on the pelosols overlying glacial tills. This type of woodland includes a variety of vegetation types reflecting soil and topographical differences. The canopy can include mixtures of beech, ash, sycamore, yew and whitebeam. Some of these woods are former pasture woodland, where grazing as well as wood production was practised.
- 2.2.17 Ancient Woodland, practically all of which have been coppiced since medieval times or earlier, are found throughout the Study Area on the various soil types. Examples of the ancient woodland include Bovingdon Hall Woods SSSI (north of Braintree), West Wood, Little Sampford SSSI (northeast of Thaxted), Nunn Wood SSSI (west of Ashdon). Many of the areas of ancient woodland are ancient Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam coppice-with-standards woodland. They provide valuable habitats for invertebrates, dormouse and breeding birds.

Grassland

- 2.2.18 There are a number of broad types of grassland determined by the plant species which are largely influenced by the soil type and underlying geology. However within the Study Area a lot of the grassland has been drained and agriculturally improved for pasture, but some grasslands of conservation importance remain. For example there are two small areas of calcareous grassland on the chalk hills at Debden Water SSSI near Newport in the northwest of the Study Area and a further small area of calcareous grassland as well as unimproved neutral grassland at Ashdon Meadows SSSI near Saffron Walden.
- 2.2.19 Wet grasslands are also common in the Study Area. Of particular importance are the floodplain marshes of the Thames and Cam, where areas of permanent grassland are deliberately flooded to prevent rivers over-topping.

Heath

- 2.2.20 The largest remaining fragments of heath within the Study Area are located around Danbury east of Chelmsford on the brown calcareous earths. Danbury Common SSSI is one of the largest areas of heathland remaining in Essex and shows various stages in the succession from open heath, through bracken and gorse scrub, to birch and oak woodland. The upper parts of the site are located on the glacial gravels capping Danbury Ridge. Lower down, spring lines and flushes at the junction between the gravels and the underlying clay give rise to boggy areas of heath and moist woodlands. Unimproved meadows adjacent to the Common support a rich grassland flora including a number of uncommon species. There are also other smaller fragments found in the south and in the northeast corner.

Estuary, Saltmarsh and Mudflat

- 2.2.21 The Essex Coast is among the top five coastal wetlands in the UK. Grazing marshes dominate the southeast corner of the Study Area along the coast of the Greater Thames Estuary such as at Sandbeach Meadows SSSI located on the intertidal alluvial muds. The estuaries, floodplain and coastal marshes are important for the invertebrate fauna of both the wet grasslands and their associated ditches, and support internationally important populations of wintering waterfowl. These areas along the coast of the Study Area are of international significance and designated as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), or Ramsar sites as well as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

- 2.2.22 The Essex Estuaries cSAC is a large estuarine site forming the eastern coastal boundary of the Study Area. It is a typical, undeveloped, flat low lying coastal plain estuarine system with associated open coast mudflats and sandbanks. The site comprises the major estuaries of the Blackwater, Crouch and Roach rivers and is important as an extensive area of contiguous estuarine habitat. Essex Estuaries also contains a very wide range of characteristic marine and estuarine sediment communities and some diverse and unusual marine communities in the lower reaches.
- 2.2.23 Blackwater Estuary is the largest estuary in Essex north of the Thames and one of the largest estuarine complexes in East Anglia. Fringed by saltmarsh, its mudflats, on the upper shores, support internationally and nationally important numbers of over wintering waterfowl. The seawall, ancient grazing marsh, associated fleet and ditch systems and semi-improved grassland are all of high conservation interest.
- 2.2.24 Dengie SPA is located on the coast. It is a large remote area of tidal mud-flats and saltmarshes at the eastern end of the Dengie Peninsula, between the adjacent Blackwater and Crouch Estuaries. The saltmarsh is the largest continuous example of its type in Essex. Foreshore, saltmarsh and beaches support an outstanding assemblage of rare coastal flora.
- 2.2.25 The Crouch and Roach Estuaries SPA are located on the southeast coast of the Study Area. The River Crouch occupies a shallow valley between two ridges of London Clay, whilst the River Roach is set predominantly between areas of brick earth and loams with patches of sand and gravel. The intertidal zone along the Rivers Crouch and Roach is 'squeezed' between the sea walls along both banks and the river channel. Unlike more extensive estuaries elsewhere in Essex, there is only a relatively narrow strip of tidal mud which, nonetheless, is used by significant numbers of birds.

Fresh Water and Open Water Habitats

- 2.2.26 A complex of rivers and streams flow across the Study Area, many of which have been modified for flood alleviation or drainage. The rivers support a varied aquatic and emergent flora and scarce plants such as along the River Ter SSSI, west of Terling. Chalk rivers in the northwest of the Study Area are particularly rich in species.
- 2.2.27 A number of animal species occur in the rivers, including the freshwater pea mussel, the white clawed crayfish, otters and water voles. The river corridors also provide rich foraging habitats for many of the ten species of bat recorded in East of England.
- 2.2.28 There are flooded gravel pits, clay pits and reservoirs in the Study Area, forming significant landscape features. The artificial water bodies have a wide range of water and substrate types, with a corresponding variety of aquatic plants. One example is Glemsford Pits SSSI comprising a series of water-filled disused gravel workings and a length of the River Stour on the Essex/Suffolk border.
- 2.2.29 Hanningfield Reservoir SSSI, approximately 5 miles south of Chelmsford, is the second largest reservoir in Essex. Its main scientific interest lies in its breeding and wintering wildfowl.
- 2.2.30 Most natural bodies of open water in the Study Area are eutrophic (rich in nutrients) or mesotrophic/eutrophic (medium – rich in nutrients). Small ponds and lakes are also abundant.

2.3 Historical Influences on the Landscape

Settlement of the Landscape

- 2.3.1 The landscape of the Study Area has long been subject to episodes of settlement, abandonment and reuse, evolving into the present day rich tapestry.
- 2.3.2 People have transformed the landscape of this area from their first appearance in the Palaeolithic (500,000 – 10,000BC). The wildwood forests that covered the Study Area were slowly cleared as people began to inhabit and use the area. Favoured areas for the early hunter-gatherers of the Palaeolithic and the Mesolithic (c.10, 000 to c.4, 000 BC) were the rich and fertile river valleys. A few flint artefacts, dating from the Palaeolithic have been found in the gravels of the river valleys. However, from at least the Mesolithic (c.8000 BC), the diverse landscapes within the boundaries of the modern Boroughs and Districts of Brentwood, Braintree, Chelmsford, Malton and Uttlesford has attracted continuous human occupation. The presence of human groups, whose economy was based entirely on hunting and gathering is attested by flint scatters, which are widespread. These collections of flint tools and waste flakes concentrate on the sands and gravels of the river valleys and wooded hills, with a major site at Great Baddow. One of the most important and extensive sites is in the far south-east of Chelmsford District, around the junction of Fenn Creek and the Crouch at South Woodham Ferrers. This site, like many others around the coast of Maldon District, is now within the estuarine intertidal zone, however, during the Mesolithic it would have occupied a location adjacent to freshwater streams, and probably represents a ‘base camp’. This would have operated for quite lengthy periods during particular seasons and was reoccupied year on year over many generations.
- 2.3.3 As agriculture was adopted in the Neolithic period (4000 – 2200 BC), at first only augmenting rather than replacing the existing hunter-gather economy, land management practices dramatically altered, and probably involved increased clearance of woodland and more permanent settlement. Investigation over the last twenty years has revealed a sophisticated social and economic system operating throughout parts of the region, if not the entirety of it. In some area, for example Chelmsford, major ceremonial monuments were built. The Springfield Cursus, a kind of processional way defined by a large ditch and internal bank with a circular setting of upright posts within the eastern terminal, was constructed just above the floodplain of the Chelmer. A Causewayed Enclosure was constructed at Springfield Lyons commanding wide views of the valley. This site was defined by a deep ditch broken by many gaps, or causeways (hence the name) which cut off a neck of land between two small streams. Both the Springfield monuments lie close to the edge of the Boulder clay plateau. They thus occur at a transitional point in the landscape for people passing to and from the river valleys up on to the boulder clays, and may have been gathering places, at particular times of year, for normally dispersed communities.
- 2.3.4 This process continued and intensified during the Bronze Age (2200 – 700 BC). Numerous cropmark ring-ditches, the remains of early and middle Bronze Age barrows, are known throughout the area. By the Late Bronze Age (c 1000BC) the economy was fully agricultural, and some locations within the area were densely occupied, for example the area of the present Chelmsford Borough. At this time a landscape of farms or small groups of buildings was dominated by circular enclosures like those found at Great Baddow and Springfield Lyons. The latter site besides being strategically placed within the landscape was located at a place already hallowed by traditional ancestral associations represented by the remains of the Neolithic causewayed enclosure. Extensive excavations of the Springfield site revealed that it had a deep ditch, rampart and impressive gate structure. The largest quantity of clay moulds for casting bronze swords ever found at a Bronze Age site in Britain were recovered during excavation of the enclosure ditch. Other settlements have been excavated throughout Brentwood, Braintree, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Boroughs and Districts

and have been found to have been either enclosed by small fairly shallow ditchers of unenclosed. In addition the site excavated at Boreham Interchange contained small post-built structures, which appear to have been shrines.

- 2.3.5 In addition to the evidence of bronze casting at Springfield Lyons, finds of Bronze Age metalwork are widespread throughout the region. The raw materials for this all had to be imported, and the river valleys and estuaries, were crucial routes. Fenn Creek and the Crouch Estuary, which by this stage was fully tidal, provide evidence of the economic importance of estuarine areas; the earliest saltern in Essex, of later Bronze Age date has been recorded here. Salt would have played a vital role as flavouring, preservative and valuable commodity for trade.
- 2.3.6 The Iron Age (800 BC – AD 45) brought an increased focus to settlement as the first ‘towns’ or ‘*Oppida*’ began to develop. Hillforts, such as that established at Danbury which commands wide views to the south across the Crouch valley towards the distant Thames, were also an iconic monument of the time. In general there is more Iron Age settlement evidence from the boulder clay areas than other areas within the region. Rectilinear fields of Iron Age/Romano-British date exist within the landscape. Towards the end of the Iron Age coinage was first introduced into Britain and recently a number of Iron Age gold coin hoards have been recovered.
- 2.3.7 Examples of prehistoric sites in this area include:
- Slight univallate hillfort, in Brentwood, dating between the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, at the crest of a ridge of sands.
 - Ring Hill Camp in the parish of Littlebury, Uttlesford. An oval hillfort on a summit of the hill overlooking the River Cam.
- 2.3.8 Roman settlement (c.43 to 410 AD) was generally built along the Roman roads from the coast and into Colchester, or other economic centres. In addition to Colchester other small towns or significant settlements include Chelmsford, Heybridge, Wickford, Braintree and Great Dunmow. Forts within the region may have been established after AD60 in the aftermath of the Boudican rebellion. The rural hinterland was densely settled, with some Iron Age settlements being formalised, such as at Little Waltham. Villas, bathhouses, Temples, administrative centres and also supporting farming systems have all been recorded within the region. Environmental evidence recovered from alluvium and peat in the intertidal zone of the Crouch estuary near Fenn Creek has also revealed largely freshwater sedimentation perhaps the result of constriction of the tidal flow by bridges at Hullbridge and/or Fambridge.
- 2.3.9 Examples of Roman sites in the area include:
- Roman barrow, in the Parish of Elmdon Langley, Uttlesford. Circular in plan and 50m in diameter. Ploughing over the years has reduced the mound, but there is still a significant amount left to make it a prominent landmark.
 - Roman Villa, in Rivenhall, Braintree. This site comprises of the remains of at least four major Roman building and associated characteristics including Roman burials that have been built on a previous Iron Age settlement.
- 2.3.10 As the Saxons settled in the Study Area they reused earlier settlements but also created new ones. Settlement also tends to lie around, but at a distance from, the former Roman towns, which is probably not an accident. It seems to be an acknowledgement of the strategic importance of river confluences and the significance of the former Roman town, together with a desire to keep at a distance from them. Pollen evidence from peat deposits recorded in the valley of the Chelmer and Sandon Brook in advance of construction of the A12 bypass,

showed continuous cereal production from the Iron Age throughout the Roman period and into the Saxon period.

- 2.3.11 The principal towns of the Study Area were market towns by the Domesday Book (1086). They each had their own church, and in Maldon and Uttlesford there were several. In around 1100, the Bishops of London built a new bridge at Chelmsford which stimulated growth and attracted traffic back to the more direct route between London and Colchester. Brentwood was founded as a small market town by the monks of St Osyth in 1177.
- 2.3.12 Sizes of communities started to change and many of the estates were laid within medieval parkland, of which a number survive within the landscape today. The settlement pattern was essentially dispersed, with numerous farmsteads and moated sites, and church/hall complexes and greens forming focal points. Even villages which today are strongly nucleated were originally polyfocal. The complex landscape of Writtle Forest with its compartmentalised coppice woodland surrounded by banks and ditches, commons, and green lanes is a fine example of a medieval forest of national significance and comparable with the better known Hatfield Forest in northwest Essex. The complex landscape of woods and heaths at Danbury and Little Badow preserves many boundary banks of medieval origin defining areas of woodland and common. Much ancient woodland survives but the area is now significantly more wooded than in the medieval period with much former common and heathland colonised by secondary woodland. Many of the sites of present day farms and villages occupy the sites of their medieval predecessors, and of course timber framed buildings of medieval origin survive in use throughout the region. However, settlement though broadly occupying the same location have often shifted slightly over the centuries and the 13th century a time of great prosperity and agricultural expansion, saw medieval rural settlement at its most widespread. The 14th century was beset by economic and social unrest, poor harvests, wars, epidemics and rebellion, with many more marginal settlements being abandoned never to be re-occupied.
- 2.3.13 Some of the most striking features of the medieval landscape whether urban or rural were monastic establishments and religious houses of various kinds. These included the college of canons established at Pleshey and the Dominican friary at Chelmsford. Some elements of the medieval priory itself survive although most of the buildings which can be seen today are the remains of the post-medieval brick mansion built by Richard Rich, earl of Warwick in the second half of the 16th century.
- 2.3.14 Examples of medieval sites in these areas include:
- Cressing Temple, Cressing, Braintree. Although with its origins in prehistory, Cressing Temple developed during the medieval period with barns and a farmhouse that the Knights Templar built in the 12th century.
 - Old Thorndon Hall and Gardens, in the parish of Herongate and Ingrave, Brentwood. The remains of this medieval hall and gardens dating back to the Domesday survey, the 17th century saw the rebuilding of this hall using as much of the old masonry as possible.
 - Leez Augustinian Priory, fishponds and Tudor mansion, in the parish of Felsted, Great and Little Leighs. The remains of one of the 11 Augustinian houses in Essex until the dissolution in 1532. The mansion built by Lord Rich, is one of the best examples of a monastic house being turned into domestic use. This kind of conversion is very rare and of national importance.
 - Canfield motte and bailey castle and moated site in the parish of Great Canfield. Flat-topped motte with the eastern side filled with water, double rampart and ditch around the bailey.

- Medieval settlement, in the parish of Ashdon. The remains of a medieval settlement, terraces and platforms spreading 100m across the field immediately east to All Saints Church.

2.3.15 The 17th century brought the manor house, many of which were built on the early estates of the medieval period. These were usually set within parkland landscapes, such as Audley End House and designed in formal styles influenced by the fashions of the Continent. By the 18th century the Study Area towns were expanding with new trade, the prosperity of which can be seen in some of the buildings such as the churches and the Town Halls. This wealth came from wool and silk, however much of the trade and wealth went to neighbouring Colchester.

2.3.16 The diverse economic base of the rural economy in the region in the late 16th century is reflected by a 1582 survey of the manor of Woodham Ferrers which emphasises the presence of woodland arable and pasture, including grazing marsh, the proximity both to Chelmsford and London, ease of water transport via the Crouch estuary and the value of salt production from the saline water of the estuary. Mounds and earthworks which are the remains of such salt production can still be seen in Marsh Farm Country Park, and more extensive and better preserved examples lie just across Clements Green Creek at Stow Maries.

Utilisation of the Marshes and Mudflats

2.3.17 As unreclaimed environments, the marshes provide an important interface between the land and water, and historically have been an important resource for the area's residents, not only providing a rich and varied source of food, including fish, eels, oysters and wildfowl, but also serving as the location for important early industrial activity such as salt making and pottery production. The unreclaimed marshes also provided protection. It is within Maldon that this evidence can be found in its 96.54 kilometres (60 miles) of coastline, including salt marshes and archaeological evidence of an Iron Age port among other sites.

2.3.18 Rivers and marshes became the ideal place for industry to grow from as early as the Roman period. The retention of the marshes and reclamation of the marshland within the area dates back from the Roman period and has continued through to present day. By the 12th century, wool was one of Britain's most important exports. This led to increased pressure on reclamation of the marshlands. Key sites of historical interest in the landscape include:

- Rat Island: Saltings at the mouth of the Geedon Creek.
- Abbots Hall farm: 25km of Essex coast and wildlife land.
- Roman River valley; marsh and woodland fed by springs.
- Stow Marie's Halt: Nature reserve on the disused Maldon to Woodham Ferrers railway line.
- Tollesbury Wick: Salt marsh land and wildlife habitat.
- Fingringhoe Wick: West shore of the Colne estuary, land and animal conservation area.

2.3.19 The marshland landscapes of the past were ideal in the production of salt. The manufacture of salt (which began in the Bronze Age) flourished in the early Roman period, turning most of the coastline at certain times into a smokey landscape. By the end of the 1st century AD this production went into decline, possibly due to inland salt production sites. Tollesbury Wick, in Malden, shows us the extent of this production with 242.81 hectares (600 acres) of salt marsh land.

2.3.20 Fishing and hunting would have been the earliest forms of industry dating from the Palaeolithic to the present day. Fishing in the later periods became more complex as the creeks and estuaries were used to catch fish.

Parks

- 2.3.21 During the late 16th and 17th centuries, Essex became a key area for wildfowl. The marshes were an ideal landscape for the wildfowl hunters of the past as they are for the bird watchers of the present. Key sites of interest include:
- Weald Country Park, 202.34 hectares (500 acres) of parkland, which had a deer park from 1063 along with Remains of an Iron Age settlement dating back to the 1st century BC.
 - Thorndon Park, Comprising of 142.85 hectares (353 acres), smaller now than when it was first recorded before the Norman Conquest. At the heart of the park is an ancient deer enclosure.
 - Hylands Estate, The house is surrounded by 242.81 hectares (600 acres) of parkland, ancient woodland and lakes.
 - Marine Lake. Europe's largest marine lake, formally opened in 1905, but having many additions to it throughout the 20th century.

Agriculture

- 2.3.22 The adoption of agriculture and its development from the Neolithic to today has been a significant influence on the character of the landscape. Prehistoric agricultural practices took place in a variety of field systems and open landscapes, where people used, reused and abandoned areas across generations. Prehistoric and Roman field systems are very difficult to detect, however it is possible that fields retain some or all of their early pattern and form.
- 2.3.23 Both during and after the medieval period, much of the landscape underwent piecemeal enclosure, whereby the land had been rationalised into consolidated private ownership through a series of private land exchanges and through gradual enclosure of woodland, forest, heath and common. This is also true for parkland such as Thorndon Park, which although not imparked until 1414, it had been a park since before the Norman Conquest.

Communications

- 2.3.24 People have always moved within the landscape for activities such as hunting, trading and social meetings. Trackways, rivers and the coastal shores formed the earliest forms of communication networks from prehistory onwards. Historic routeways are important as the precursors of the modern communication system, but also as a significant influence on the sitting of later settlement and other features within the landscape. Key historical communication routes in the Study Area include:
- Blackwater River in Maldon.
 - Roman roads from Maldon to Colchester.
 - Railway.
 - Routes of modern roads (M11, A12, A120 and A131 for example).

Historic Landscape Character

- 2.3.25 The historic land use features in the present day landscape within the Study Area are mapped on Figure 2.4, taken from the Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Study². This shows the extent and distribution of historic field systems and settlements, and other features, that together create the cultural dimension of the existing landscape character.

² Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (July 2002).

Historic Environment Designations

- 2.3.26 A variety of historic environment sites and features within the Study Area are protected in recognition of their historical, archaeological and/or architectural value. These are described below:

Scheduled Monuments

- 2.3.27 There are 145 nationally important archaeological sites within Study Area (compared to 297 in Essex as a whole), which are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979). These include:

- Braintree - 36 Scheduled Monuments
- Brentwood - 12 Scheduled Monuments
- Chelmsford - 13 Scheduled Monuments
- Maldon - 15 Scheduled Monuments
- Uttlesford - 72 Scheduled Monuments

Conservation Areas

- 2.3.28 There are 122 Conservation Areas of special architectural or historical interest within the Study Area (compared to 209 in Essex as a whole) protected under the *Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act 1990*. These include:

- Braintree - 39 Conservation Areas
- Brentwood - 13 Conservation Areas
- Chelmsford: 24 Conservation Areas
- Maldon - 11 Conservation Areas
- Uttlesford - 35 Conservation Areas

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

- 2.3.29 There are 27 designed landscapes with the Study Area (compared to 37 in Essex as a whole), which are included on the English Heritage non-statutory national Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. These include:

- Braintree - 9 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens (Belchamp Hall, Faulkbourne Hall, Glazenwood, Gosfield Hall, Hatfield Priory, Saling Grove, Saling Hall, Spains Hall and Terling Place).
- Brentwood - 3 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens (Thorndon Park, Warley Place and Weald Park).
- Chelmsford - 6 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens (Boreham House, Danbury Park, Hylands Park, Langleys, New Hall, Boreham and Riffhams).
- Maldon - 1 Registered Historic Parks and Garden (Braxted Park).
- Uttlesford - 7 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens (Audley End, Bridge End Gardens, Down Hall, Easton Lodge, Quendon Park, Shortgrove Park and The Maze, Saffron Walden).

2.4 Key Forces for Change in the Landscape

- 2.4.1 Use of land for housing, minerals, recreation, energy generation and other activities have resulted in some places in a general erosion of the character, quality and diversity of the landscapes within the Study Area since the mid-twentieth century. The cumulative effects of

small-scale and incremental changes have had a particularly marked effect on the character of the landscape.

- 2.4.2 The pace, mixture, and scale of landscape will continue to change in the future, which may impact, positively or negatively, upon those qualities that make the landscape special. A key challenge is to understand, manage and direct future positive change in the landscape in ways that conserve and enhance its essential characteristics and valued attributes, whilst enabling sensitively designed development to be accommodated to meet social and economic needs.
- 2.4.3 The key global, national and local forces for change that affect the character of the Study Area's landscapes are considered under the following main headings:
- Agriculture, Land Management and Diversification
 - Socio-Economic Characteristics
 - Infrastructure, Transport and Traffic
 - Built Development
 - Recreation and Tourism
 - Mineral Extraction and Waste
 - Climate Change

Agriculture, Land Management and Diversification

- 2.4.4 Agricultural activity is a vital aspect of the rural environment within the Study Area and is a primary factor in shaping the character of the landscape. Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Districts form a highly productive arable farming area. Pasture is not extensive, except in the river valleys where drainage is a constraint on cultivation.
- 2.4.5 Agriculture has the ability to substantially enhance and detract from the character of the landscape in a relatively short period of time, primarily due to an increase in mechanisation and intensive practices. These have, over the last fifty years, contributed to the changes in the rural environment through intensive cropping, loss of field boundaries, introduction of a larger-scale field pattern, drainage of marshes/wetlands, and the introduction of new farm buildings. Pastures and coastal grazing marshes are dependent on appropriate livestock grazing practices. On some coastal grazing marshes scrub encroachment is becoming a problem due to lack of grazing/management.
- 2.4.6 Changes in farming practice and fluctuations in the agricultural economy have an important impact and these changes will only increase, as global markets become a major influencing factor. Whilst the effects of post-1945 agricultural change on landscape character are well understood, future changes may result from increasing competition in a global market place, ongoing from the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the proposals of the Government Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, including proposed Entry-Level Agri-Environment Scheme (ELS) and Higher Tier Scheme, are yet to become clear. There may be ongoing adverse effect on character, as well as important opportunities to enhance and restore character as a result of changes in policy.
- 2.4.7 The area was affected by Dutch Elm disease and there has been a gradual decline in traditional hedge-laying and coppicing creating more fragmented and gappy hedgerows.
- 2.4.8 Historically the marshes on the coastal fringe of Maldon District (aligning the Blackwater Estuary) were utilised for purposes other than agriculture. The diverse saltmarshes provided a rich food resource (oysters) and were also utilised in early industrial activity (salt-making). With gradual agricultural and industrial change, there was pressure for more pasture and agricultural land within the coastal margins. This led to the enclosure of areas of saltmarsh

and drainage of other coastal wetland areas (through installation of a sea wall) to create areas of grazing marsh behind the sea wall. There is future pressure for further intensification of the coastal grazing marsh habitat, however, there is also possible future potential for saltmarsh habitat creation and restoration through managed realignment along certain stretches of the coastline (with regard to information set out within the Shoreline Management Plan and the Colne and Blackwater Estuary Flood Management Strategy).

2.4.9 There is also potential through agri-environmental schemes such as Environmental Stewardship to encourage farmers to make changes to their farming practices that would help restore the loss of important habitats and features within the landscape.

2.4.10 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Decrease in woodland and tree cover.
- Continuing decline/loss of landscape features such as hedgerows, field margins and farm ponds as a result of maximising field size, lack of appropriate management and spray drift.
- Loss of elms in past reducing sense of intimacy and enclosure.
- Soil erosion as a result of autumn cultivation of arable crops.
- Increased pressure for new uses of 'marginal' land, including small holdings, leisure uses and pony paddocks.
- Increase in pony paddocks giving rise to poor hedgerow and grassland management and intrusive post and wire fencing/ranch fencing, stable facilities and ménages.
- Loss of grazing marsh in past through arable conversion.
- Potential loss of limited grazing marsh back to salt marsh through managed retreat.
- Loss of salt marsh through coastal squeeze.
- Increase in large arable farm units which may lead to further homogenisation of the landscape, reduction in biodiversity and potential demand for more centralised and large-scale buildings such as grain storage facilities.
- Farm diversification such as the adoption or reuse of farm buildings for commercial, industrial and storage uses which may conflict with historical/architectural character and the introduction of new industrial crops.

Socio-economic characteristics

2.4.11 The social and economic characteristics of the towns in the Study Area, including Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon, Brentwood, Witham, Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden play an important role in the process of future change and regeneration within the region. In recent years there has been a change in the structure and type of employment away from traditional manufacturing and agriculture to the service industries including retail, office employment and the high tech sector. Tourism is also a source of rural employment especially in the river valleys of the Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and Brain. Commuting out of the Study Area, including to London and to Stansted Airport for employment, is also significant.

2.4.12 The town centres, local centres within urban neighbourhoods and village shops provide the social economic focus of their communities. The last ten to fifteen years have seen many changes in retailing, including the growth of regional shopping centres, the growth of out-of-town retail parks, extended opening hours and Sunday trading, and more recently internet shopping. All of these changes have had an effect on existing town and local centres. In particular employment opportunities have increased significantly in the East Braintree area following the success of the Single Regeneration Budget project. This has revitalised the whole area, modernising the infrastructure, building new roads, bridges and cycleways, achieving environmental improvements and creating over 1,000 new jobs including those at the Freeport Designer Outlet.

2.4.13 Key socio-economic characteristics of the districts include:

Braintree District

- In mid-2003 there was an estimated 134,900 residents with a population structure of 49% male and 51% female, which was about average for the East of England region.
- The population density in 2002 averaged 220 people per square kilometre which is below average for the region.
- In 2001 there was an unemployment rate of 2.3% of all economically active people aged 16-74.

Brentwood Borough

- In mid-2003 there was an estimated 69,500 residents with a population structure of 49% male and 51% female which is average for the East of England Region.
- The population density of Brentwood in 2002 averaged 448 people per square kilometre which is higher than the average for the region.
- An unemployment rate of 1.9 per cent of all economically active people aged 16-74.

Chelmsford Borough

- In mid-2003 Chelmsford had an estimated 158,500 residents with a population structure of 49% male and 51% female which is average for the East of England Region.
- The population density of Chelmsford in 2002 averaged 465 people per square kilometre which is higher than the average for the region.
- An unemployment rate of 2.1 per cent of all economically active people aged 16-74.

Maldon District

- In mid-2003 Maldon had an estimated 60,000 residents with a population structure of 50% male and 50% female which is similar to the average for the East of England Region.
- The population density of Maldon in 2002 averaged 168 people per square kilometre which is below the average for the region.
- An unemployment rate of 2.2 per cent of all economically active people aged 16-74.

Uttlesford District

- In mid-2003 Uttlesford had an estimated 70,000 residents with a population structure of 50% male and 50% female which is similar to the average for the East of England Region.
- The population density of Uttlesford in 2002 is below average for the region with an average of 108 people per square kilometre.
- An unemployment rate of 1.7 per cent of all economically active people aged 16-74.

2.4.14 Key issues affecting landscape character include:

- The expansion of regional and out of town shopping centres into the surrounding countryside with the associated loss of characteristic farmland.
- Increase in congestion surrounding routes to key employment and residential areas..

Infrastructure, Transport and Traffic

2.4.15 Reflecting the national trend, the Study Area has seen increasing levels of car usage. This is leading to major congestion, pollution problems, and pressures for new road schemes in the countryside between the towns and road improvements that significantly affect landscape

character. Upgrading of the rail network may create new types of pressure and the building of new multi-modal transport interchanges.

- 2.4.16 Throughout the Study Area there is a comprehensive network of major roads, which provide connections between the towns in the area including Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Uttlesford and Maldon and also outside the area including London, Harlow and Cambridge. The A12 (two lane dual carriageway) connects Witham, Chelmsford and Brentwood with the M25, the City (city airport) and Central London to the west. Further north the A120 (two lane dual-carriageway) crosses the Study Area connecting Braintree with Stansted Airport and the M11. The A12 and A120 and several of the minor roads can also become congested during peak periods especially around the towns of Braintree, Brentwood and Chelmsford.
- 2.4.17 There are several cycle trails within the Districts with more being planned in and around the towns. In Braintree, Uttlesford and Chelmsford districts cycleways are proposed to be constructed as segregated footways and cycleways separated by a raised white line or kerb, thereby making walking a more attractive option.
- 2.4.18 There are also rail links between the towns and linking the districts with London and beyond. The opportunities for travelling to work by rail have recently increased since the opening of the new station at Braintree Freeport. The train links between the towns in the Study Area and London take less than one hour and can be as little as 20 minutes from Shenfield Station in Brentwood. Significant traffic build-up frequently occurs during peak times around the stations.
- 2.4.19 The Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership has been established to enhance patronage and the long-term future of branch lines. The proposal for Shenfield Station in Brentwood as the eastern terminus for Crossrail will increase the frequency of services into London.
- 2.4.20 The key issues affecting landscape character include:
- Construction of new roads, bypasses and service stations, include the introduction of new structures, lighting, and earthworks into the landscape.
 - Road improvements that can have an urbanising effect, especially on rural lanes, by road widening, straightening and introduction of features such as kerbs, paving, highway lighting, visibility splays and signage.
 - Increased requirement for parking provision in villages and towns popular with tourists, such as Chelmsford, Coggeshall and Maldon.

Built Development

- 2.4.21 The pressures of development are a result of locally generated needs for requirements such as a strong housing market, jobs and transport. They are also a product of externally generated growth factors such as Stansted Airport and the M25/M11 corridor. Urban development has placed an increasing pressure on all aspects of the landscape over the last fifty years in particular. This has resulted in urban expansion into undeveloped rural areas, redevelopment and intensification of urban areas, increasing urbanisation and development of rural villages. The urban fringe is often used to locate access roads, sewage works, waste disposal facilities and intensive recreation uses. However the urban fringe also provides a setting for urban areas, and often contains important landscape features/habitats.

2.4.22 Relatively high levels of development have been absorbed by Braintree, Chelmsford and Brentwood and the surrounding rural landscape over the last thirty years but there is a constant need for the provision of new houses and services. However, Green Belt policy has helped to constrain development and control the expansion of settlements in the south-west of the Study Area. Some scope for new development can be accommodated through the re-use of industrial sites and brown field sites within the towns such as along the River Pant river bank to the north of Braintree. Other key potential development areas include the settlements of Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet and A120 corridor.

2.4.23 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Quality of built environment.
- Loss/erosion of urban open spaces and of tree cover.
- Night-time remoteness damaged by lighting at urban fringes.
- Decline in the condition of landscapes in the urban fringe, with problems such as lack of management of hedgerows/trees, poorly managed horse paddocks and fly-tipping.
- Housing growth at the periphery of towns can extend the urban character of these areas into the landscape, as increased noise and light pollution and development leads to an urbanising effect on the rural landscape and loss of tranquillity.
- New strategic initiatives to maintain and enhance existing green spaces and corridors and to create new provision of green infrastructure, as an integral part of new development.

Recreation and Tourism

2.4.24 In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the number and proportion of people playing sport and taking part in recreational activities. Tourism, leisure and the boating industry make a vital contribution to local employment. In addition the many ‘traditional’ villages and the countryside in the Study Area are an attraction in their own right. The Rivers Brain, Colne, Blackwater, and Chelmer and their valleys are important for informal recreation such as angling, canoeing, cycling and walking along set routes. Other key facilities for informal recreation include Country Parks within the Study Area – such as Thorndon and Weald in Brentwood Borough for example.

2.4.25 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Disturbance of habitat by inappropriate recreation.
- Increased desire for public access to the coast which would potentially lead to increased disturbance and truncation of habitats such as salt marsh.
- Increased desire for water-based activities, including boat trips.
- Pressure from tourism to increase the capacity and size of caravan and camping areas and their associated facilities.
- Continued demand for golf courses, driving ranges and associated facilities.
- Increased desire for public access to river valleys and ‘traditional’ valleys would potentially lead to creation of footpaths and cycleways that cause scarring and erosion to the landscape.
- Localised fence clutter through management for recreation.

Mineral Extraction and Waste

2.4.26 Mineral extraction occurs in Chelmsford and Braintree Districts as the area is rich in deposits of sand and gravel. Essex as a whole is the largest producer of sand and gravel in the South East Region, regularly producing over 20% of the Regions output. Clary, brickearth and small quantities of silica sand are also extracted. The extent to which mineral extraction continues to impact on the landscape may depend upon whether more recycled aggregates or

alternative sources from outside the area are used. Once the sand and gravel pits are closed, restoration of the landscape occurs in places such as surrounding Hatfield Peverel Gravel pits where they have been filled with water and the surroundings planted with trees and landscaped. With regard to waste, despite moves away from landfill as the primary means of waste disposal, this is likely to continue for some time, such as at Rivenhall disused airfield, and other methods of waste management may create new pressures on the landscape.

2.4.27 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- The effects of minerals/landfill operations including changes to field pattern, loss of landscape features, introduction of alien landforms, land raising, haulage routes and lighting.
- The effects of restoration schemes depending on restoration to agriculture, woodland or other uses, and whether these are sympathetic to landscape character.
- Extensive quarrying and inappropriate restoration causing loss of hedgerow pattern and uncharacteristic landform.

Climate Change

2.4.28 It is widely acknowledged that global climate change is inevitable, and that it is likely to have significant physical impacts on the landscape. The South East region including Essex is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change. Changes in the form of increased temperatures, wetter winters, and more extreme weather events have been identified in the last 10 years. The scenarios produced by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP02) suggests by 2080 the UK is likely to experience:

- Annual temperature rises by between 2 and 3.5°C.
- More frequent high summer temperatures and very cold winters becoming increasingly rare.
- Winters becoming wetter and summers becoming drier.
- More frequent summer droughts, winter flooding and storms.
- Sea-levels rising between 26 and 86 cm above the current level in South East England.

2.4.29 Whilst there are still uncertainties regarding exact changes at regional and local levels, it is clear there could be both direct and indirect impacts on landscape character. The coastal area is a critical and irreplaceable natural asset supporting diverse internationally important habitats. The potential implications for landscape character includes changes in habitats, and species composition, habitat fragmentation, water resources, soils, agricultural land use, recreation and tourism and cultural heritage.

2.4.30 There is future pressure for further intensification of the coastal grazing marsh habitat, however, there is also possible future potential for saltmarsh habitat creation and restoration through managed realignment along certain stretches of the coastline (with regard to information set out within the Essex Estuarine Strategy). This strategy (commissioned by the Environment Agency) states that, whilst there will *'always be locations that must be protected by traditional hard defences, Managed Realignment can also be seen as important in terms of creating new habitats, providing new recreational areas, and producing local economic gain.'*

2.4.31 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Increases in sea levels, especially if coupled with increases in storm activity, may cause greater erosion of habitats such as intertidal mudflats and salt marsh.

- Rising sea level may also affect agricultural land which is currently located on reclaimed marshland.
- Rich agricultural land below 5m AOD is at risk of saline intrusion from rising sea levels. There may be an increased requirement for irrigation reservoirs to store winter rainfall and for use of sprinkling equipment etc. in summer. Traditional arable crops may also be replaced by more summer drought tolerant species such as sunflowers and maize.
- Damage to historic landscapes and archaeological sites may occur through erosion from sea level rise and flooding, as well as through changes in farming practice and soil desiccation.
- Transference of water via the River Stour due to reduced rainfall.
- Creation of reservoirs such as at Halstead which may involve loss of agricultural land.

2.5 Landscape Character in The Study Area – An Overview

- 2.5.1 This section describes the context for the Borough/District Landscape Character Assessments provided by the hierarchical classification of Landscape Character Areas and Types defined at the national and county levels.

National Level

- 2.5.2 The national context for defining the boundaries of the different Landscape Character Units within the Study Area is provided by the Joint Character Areas from the Character of England Map³ and the National Landscape Typology⁴ – as illustrated on Figures 2.5 and 2.6 respectively.

National Joint Character Areas

- 2.5.3 The Study Area contains part of the following three national Joint Character Areas defined at 1:250,000 scale (see Figure 2.5):
- South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (86)
 - East Anglian Chalk (87)
 - Northern Thames Basin (111)

- 2.5.4 The character of these Joint Character Areas is described in Countryside Character Volume 6, published by the Countryside Agency⁵.

National Landscape Typology

- 2.5.5 The National Landscape Typology is a hierarchical classification of Landscape Character Types being developed by the Countryside Agency and English Nature. The Typology has produced a national classification of ‘Level 1’ Landscape Character Types⁶ defined at a 1:250,000 scale. These are homogenous units of land with a uniform character that are distinct from each other on the basis of definitive natural and cultural attributes.

- 2.5.6 The Study Area contains part of the six national Landscape Character Types shown on Figure 2.6, each of which share similar physiography, landcover and cultural patterns.

³ Character of England Map (Countryside Agency, English Nature, Rural Development Service, English Heritage, updated 2006).

⁴ National Landscape Typology (Living Landscapes Project for the Countryside Agency & Partners, 2002).

⁵ Countryside Character Volume 6 – East of England (Countryside Agency, 1999).

⁶ Level 1 Landscape Character Types – 1:250,000 Scale (Developed for the Countryside Agency/English Nature by Steven Warnock/the Living Landscapes Project/Entec Ltd, 2002).

- 2.5.7 Together with the Joint Character Areas, the national Landscape Character Types provide the contextual framework within which more detailed classifications of Landscape Character Units at 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scale can be defined.

County Level

- 2.5.8 Within the framework provided by the Joint Character Areas, the Essex Landscape Character Assessment⁷ identifies Landscape Character Types and Areas defined at 1:50,000 scale. The definition of these landscape units was not informed by the National Landscape Typology classification.
- 2.5.9 The distribution of the County Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas within the Study Area is illustrated on Figure 2.7.

District/Borough Level

- 2.5.10 The County Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas provides the framework for the more detailed classification Landscape Character Assessments of the District/Borough within the Study Area at 1:25,000 scale.
- 2.5.11 The distribution of the eight separate Landscape Character Types defined at 1:25,000 scale within the Study Area are shown on Figure 2.8. Landscape Character Types are generic and have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field systems. Their key characteristics are summarised below:

A - River Valley Landscapes

- 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

B - Farmland Plateau Landscapes

- 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)

C – Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats Landscapes

- Flat, low-lying and open landscape.
- Areas of saltmarsh, mudflats, shingle spits and tidal creeks adjacent to the coast.
- Generally tranquil and undisturbed character.
- Sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Visible sea walls separate drained former marshland and current saltmarsh/mudflats.
- Lack of trees or hedgerows.

⁷ Essex Landscape Character Assessment (Essex County Council & Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, July 2002).

D – Drained Estuarine Marsh Landscapes

- Areas of flat, artificially drained former saltmarsh currently grassland and cultivated fields
- Visible sea walls separate drained former marshland and current saltmarsh/mudflats
- Lack of large areas of trees or woodland
- Network of visible drainage ditches

E – Coastal Farmland Landscapes

- Predominantly flat, low-lying landscape, sloping gradually upwards to the north
- Views of river estuaries and coastline from several locations
- Arable farmland on underlying heavy clay soils
- Lack of large patches/areas of woodland
- Relatively sparse settlement pattern

F – Wooded Farmland Landscapes

- Elevated undulating hills or ridges and slopes
- Mixture of arable and pasture farmland
- Pockets of common and pasture
- Views to wooded horizons
- Well wooded with blocks of mature mixed and deciduous woodland (including areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland); copses, hedges and mature single trees
- Mature field boundaries
- Framed views to adjacent character areas
- Enclosed character in places
- Network of quiet, often tree-lined narrow lanes

G – Fenland Landscapes

- Level relief
- Open, exposed landscape
- Large-scale arable and pasture farmland
- Gappy hedges
- Linear roads on causeways

H – Chalk Upland Landscapes

- 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

2.5.12 Within the eight generic Landscape Character Types, seventy Landscape Character Areas have been identified at 1:25,000 scale within the Study Area (see Figure 2.8). The Landscape Character Areas reflect distinctive variations in local character within each Landscape Character Type based on visual analysis of how different combinations of physical features and perceptual qualities such as scale, pattern, tranquillity, cultural associations, etc. create areas of distinctive landscape character.

2.5.13 The seventy Landscape Character Areas are:

A - River Valley Landscapes

- A1 - Cam River Valley
- A2 - Stour River Valley
- A3 - Stort River Valley
- A4 - Colne River Valley
- A5 - Pant River Valley
- A6 - Upper Chelmer River Valley
- A7 - Lower Chelmer River Valley
- A8 - Can and Wid River Valley
- A9 - Blackwater River Valley
- A10 - Brain River Valley
- A11 - Roding River Valley
- A12 - Pods Brook River Valley

B - Farmland Plateau Landscapes

- B1 - Ashdon Farmland Plateau
- B2 - Hempstead Farmland Plateau
- B3 - Bumpstead Farmland Plateau
- B4 - Belchamp Farmland Plateau
- B5 - Yeldham Farmland Plateau
- B6 - Wickham Farmland Plateau
- B7 - Debden Farmland Plateau
- B8 - Thaxted Farmland Plateau
- B9 - Stambourne 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
- B17 - Terling Farmland Plateau
- B18 - Silver End Farmland Plateau
- B19 - Langley Green Farmland Plateau
- B20 - Writtle Farmland Plateau
- B21 - Boreham Farmland Plateau

C - Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats Landscapes

- C1 - Tollesbury Fleet Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats
- C2 - Blackwater Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats
- C3 - Dengie Flats Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats
- C4 - Fleet Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats
- C5 - Bridgemarsh Island Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats

D - Drained Estuarine Marsh Landscapes

- D1 - Old Hall Marshes and Tollesbury Wick Drained Estuarine Marsh
- D2 - Maldon Drained Estuarine Marsh
- D3 - Northey Island Drained Estuarine Marsh
- D4 - Osea Island Drained Estuarine Marsh

D5 – Mundon Drained Estuarine Marsh
 D6 - Ramsay Drained Estuarine Marsh
 D7 - Bradwell Drained Estuarine Marsh
 D8 - Dengie Drained Estuarine Marsh
 D9 - Farnbridge Drained Estuarine Marsh

E - Coastal Farmland Landscapes

E1 - Tolleshunt Coastal Farmland
 E2 - Tillingham and Latchingdon Coastal Farmland

F - Wooded Farmland Landscapes

F1 - Gosfield Wooded Farmland
 F2 - High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland
 F3 - Totham Wooded Farmland
 F4 - Tolleshunt Knights Wooded Farmland
 F5 - Little Baddow and Danbury Wooded Farmland
 F6 - Woodham Wooded Farmland
 F7 - Blackmore Wooded Farmland
 F8 - Doddinghurst Wooded Farmland
 F9 - Little Warley Wooded Farmland
 F10 - Heybridge Wooded Farmland
 F11 - South Hanningfield Wooded Farmland
 F12 - East Hanningfield Wooded Farmland
 F13 - Great Warley Wooded Farmland
 F14 - Ingrave and Herongate Wooded Farmland
 F15 - Weald Wooded Farmland
 F16 - Galleywood Wooded Farmland

G – Fenland Landscapes

G1 – Horndon Fenland

H - Chalk Upland Landscapes

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

- 2.5.14 As acknowledged by the Countryside Agency's guidelines, landscape is a continuum and character does not in general change abruptly on the ground. More commonly, the character of the landscape will change gradually rather than suddenly, and therefore boundaries drawn between Landscape Character Types and Areas shown on Figure 2.8 should be considered to reflect zones of transition in many cases. In addition, the boundaries drawn around Landscape Character Types and Areas has been defined and mapped at a scale of 1:25,000, and the assessment is therefore only suitable for use at this scale. This should be taken into consideration when the assessment is being used to inform decision making in relation to development and land management proposals.

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHELMSFORD BOROUGH

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF CHELMSFORD BOROUGH

5.1 General

5.1.1 This section of the report provides the detailed ‘profiles’ of Landscape Character Areas within Chelmsford Borough, 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).

5.1.2 The following Landscape Character Types and Areas have been identified within Chelmsford Borough (see Figure 5.1), and are described in the following sections:

A - River Valley

A6 - Upper Chelmer River Valley
 A7 - Lower Chelmer River Valley
 A8 - Can and Wid River Valley

B - Farmland Plateau

B15 - Pleshey Farmland Plateau
 B16 - Felsted Farmland Plateau
 B17 - Terling Farmland Plateau
 B20 - Writtle Farmland Plateau
 B21 - Boreham Farmland Plateau

D - Drained Estuarine Marsh

D9 - Fambridge Drained Estuarine Marsh

F - Wooded Farmland

F5 - Little Baddow and Danbury Wooded Farmland
 F6 - Woodham Wooded Farmland
 F7 - Blackmore Wooded Farmland
 F10 - Heybridge Wooded Farmland
 F11 - South Hanningfield Wooded Farmland
 F12 - East Hanningfield Wooded Farmland
 F16 - Galleywood Wooded Farmland

5.2 River Valley Landscapes

5.2.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

- 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

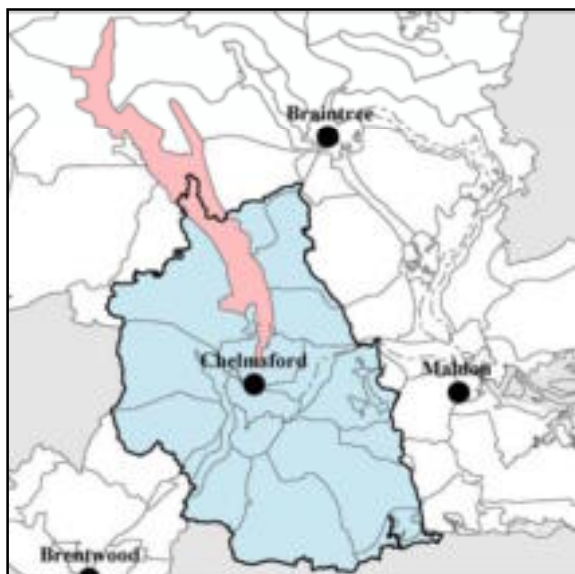
5.2.2 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Landscape Character Areas:

A6 - Upper Chelmer River Valley

A7 - Lower Chelmer River Valley

A8 - Can and Wid River Valley

A6 UPPER CHELMER RIVER VALLEY (shared with Uttlesford District)

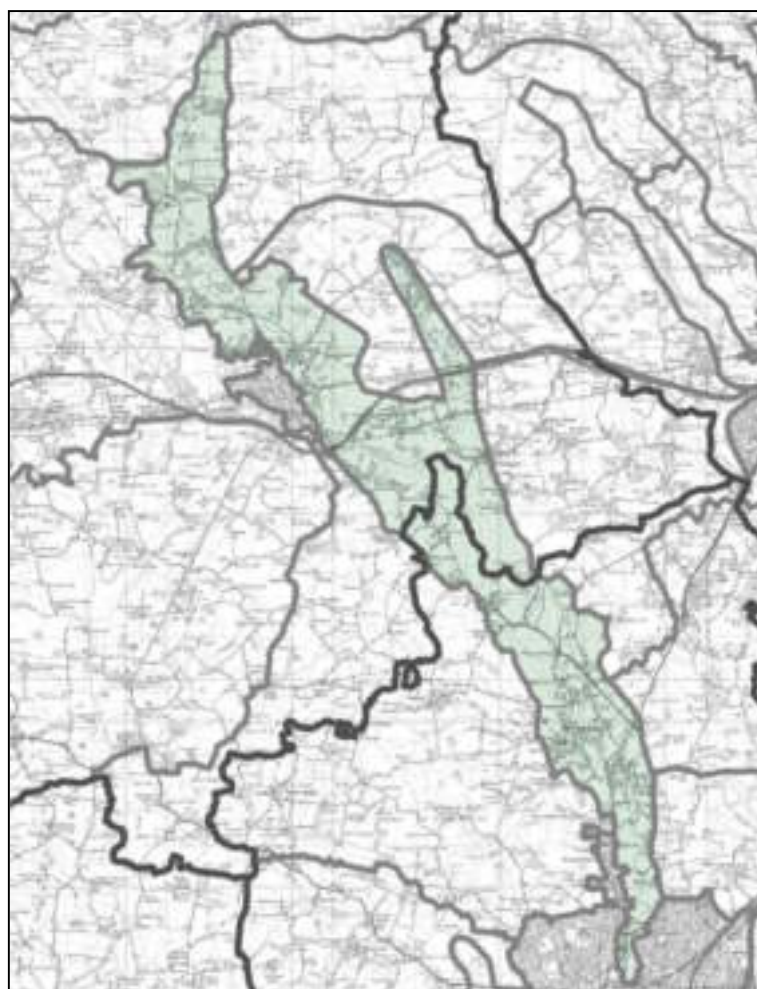


Key Characteristics

- 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 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 Flitch 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, especially during busy tourist periods.
- 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

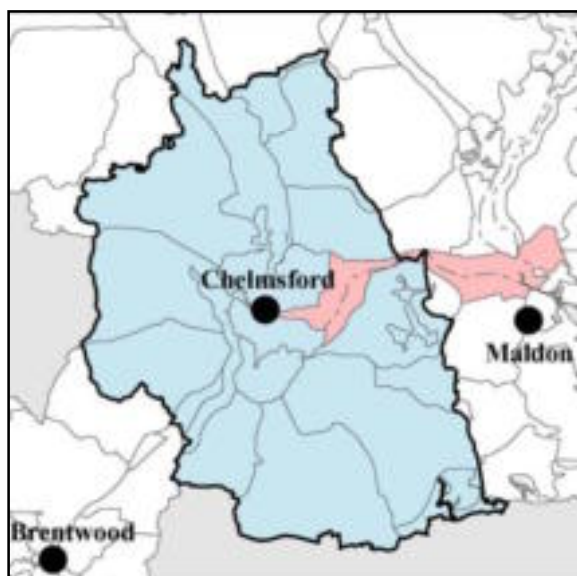
- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon valley sides.
- Conserve and enhance cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape 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.

A7 LOWER CHELMER RIVER VALLEY (shared with Maldon District)

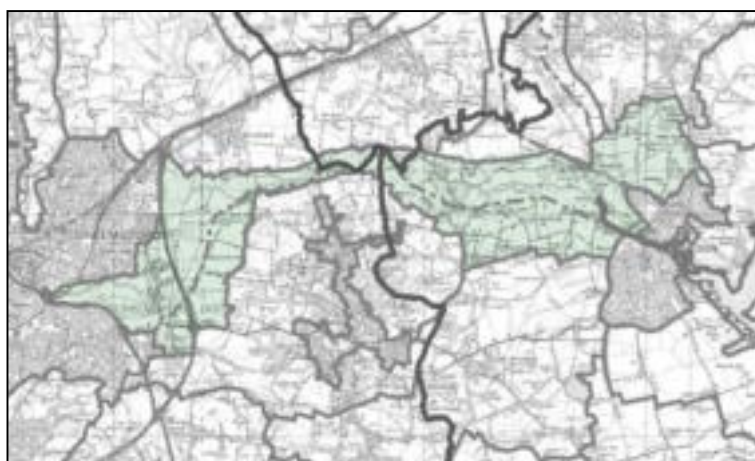


Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley.
- Predominantly arable farmland on the valley slopes.
- The Lower Chelmer where it meets the River Blackwater has gentle valley sides.
- Overall strong sense of place and tranquillity away from Maldon and the A12 and the railway line.

(Sub-Unit A7a)

- Mixture of arable and pastoral fields on the valley floor.
- The Lower Chelmer where it meets the River Blackwater has a wide flat valley floor
- Extensive linear poplar and willow plantations are a distinctive feature in close proximity to the river.



Overall Character

The lower reaches of the River Chelmer between Chelmsford and Maldon are open in character, with a wide floodplain and gently sloping valley sides. South of Langford the narrower meandering River Blackwater joins the wider more mature River Chelmer to flow towards Maldon. Medium to large scale arable and pastoral fields with a regular pattern dominate its length. Hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees delineate their boundaries. In places the hedgerows are thick but fragmented. Where roads cross the river valley ditches with banks that are often vegetated with hedgerows bound them. Tree cover is high along the banks of the river with willow and poplar plantations common as well as pockets of wet alder/willow woodland. The majority of the river valley floor is sparsely populated adding to its open character. Small settlements are dispersed along valleysides or clustered around the few bridging points. Maldon occupies a valley-side location at the mouth of the river, but along with major roads that cross the area there is a limited impact on character. Within the valley floor are a

series of reservoirs in proximity to the river. There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area, with several quiet rural lanes winding through the landscape.

Visual Characteristics

- The views are open and occasionally panoramic in the lower reaches of the river valley where they are unconstrained by hedgerow trees.
- Views along the valley corridor are framed.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a predominance of medium to large pre-18th century fields with straight boundaries, including 18th to 19th-century enclosure in the south of the area, and with a pocket of small irregular fields to the northeast. On a micro-scale there is a considerable degree of co-axiality in their layout, usually relating directly to the immediate topography. The river valleys are marked by enclosed water meadows. Historic dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, isolated manors with some nucleated hamlets.

Ecological Features

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

- Ten CWS along and including the River Chelmer of running water, wetland, grassland and semi-natural woodland habitats.
- Four areas of ancient woodland.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and the River Chelmer from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from the surrounding agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and houses within the open landscape, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads including large lorries and HGVs.
- 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 linear poplar and willow plantations and pockets of wet alder/willow woodland, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area would potentially be affected by new development. The skyline of the slopes of the lower valley are moderately visually sensitive, with open (and occasionally panoramic views) gained to and from the river corridor, which could be affected by new development. There is a sense of historic continuity resulting from water meadows along the river valley and a historic dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and isolated manors with some isolated hamlets. Wildlife habitats are scattered throughout the area (including 10 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, running water, wetland and grassland). Overall, this 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.

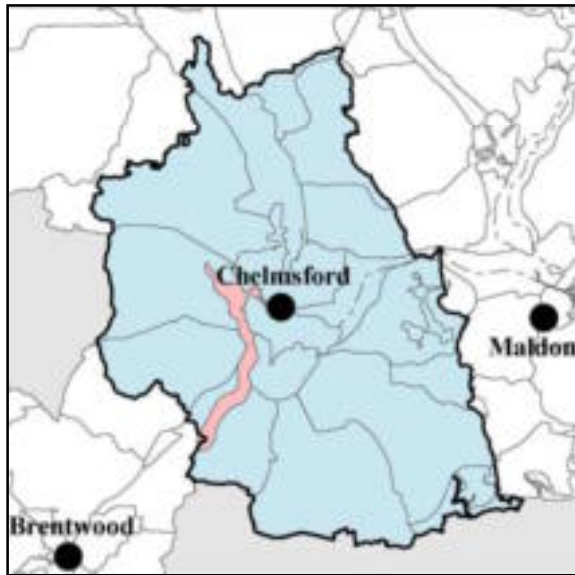
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Manage the traffic flows along the minor roads especially those not suitable for HGVs and lorries due to narrow bridges.
- Ensure that new built development is in keeping landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Enhance the screening of the A12 and the railway line.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

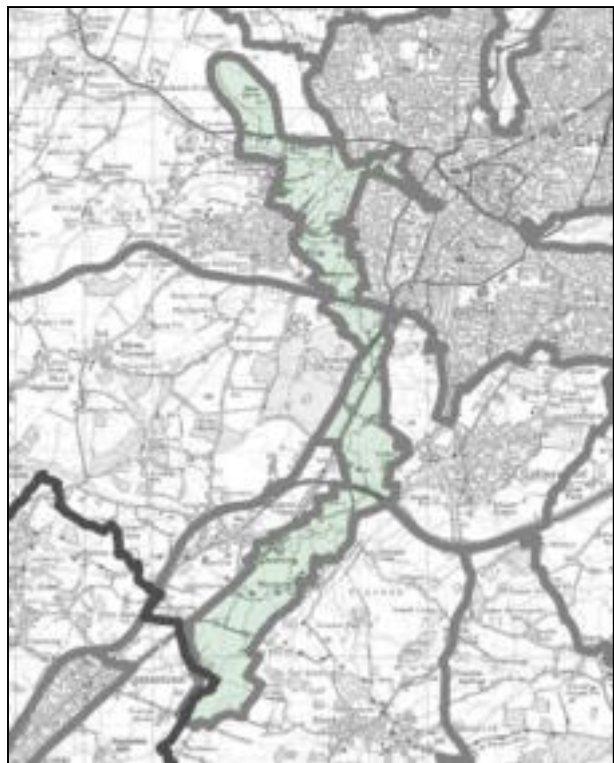
- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges and ditches within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which area in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

A8 CAN AND WID RIVER VALLEY



Key Characteristics

- Confluence of the relatively shallow U-shaped valleys of the Can and Wid rivers.
- Human-influenced/course of River Can as it flows into Chelmsford's urban area.
- Can river channel surrounded by designed parkland/amenity landscape (Admiral's Park).
- Sense of enclosure provided by diverse mature vegetation lining the Can (within the built area).
- Relatively open nature of the floodplain and slopes of the River Wid.
- Patchwork of riverside habitats, including pasture and arable fields, interspersed with riverside poplars and other patches of vegetation lining the Wid.
- River valleys overlooked by Chelmsford Urban Edge.
- Dispersed settlement pattern, with occasional single farmsteads within the floodplain and on the slopes.



Overall Character

This character area is situated adjacent to the western edge of Chelmsford and encompasses the confluence of the relatively shallow U-shaped valleys of the Can and Wid. The Can valley flows into the area through farmland plateau to the northwest, where the course of the river does not dominate the character of the landscape. As the river valley gently meanders into the fabric of Chelmsford urban area to the east, the character of the valley is more greatly influenced by human interaction as it flows through Admiral's Park, (than in its upper reaches). At this point, diverse riverside vegetation and mature trees line the river (which is straightened in places). Immediately adjacent to the river, areas of open amenity grassland, dotted with single mature (predominantly deciduous) parkland trees contribute

to designed character and sense of place. Although the river is crossed by several bridges and surrounded by an inter-connecting network of public footpaths and several public sports facilities within the park, there is a sense of tranquillity within pockets of Admiral's Park. Views are generally restricted and channelled (by vegetation) along the river corridor, leading to a sense of enclosure. In contrast the Wid valley has a more open character, with views across and along the course and also to adjacent areas of farmland plateau and wooded farmland. The Wid valley flows into the area through wooded farmland to the south and converges within the Can to the northeast of Writtle and west of Chelmsford. The eastern and western slopes of the valley are relatively steep, rising towards Hylands Park in the west and wooded farmland to the east. There are a few patches of woodland on the slopes of the valley, with character determined by a patchwork of riverside habitats, including pasture and arable fields, interspersed with riverside poplars and other patches of vegetation. As the Wid valley curls around the western edge of Chelmsford, commercial and industrial units at the urban edge overlook the open floodplain.

Visual Characteristics

- Open views to Hylands Park and house from the eastern slopes of the Wid valley and also from within the floodplain.
- Open views to the wooded horizons of farmland to the west of the area.
- Open views to the urban edges of Chelmsford.
- Open views of farmland plateau to the north of the River Can.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a rather mixed field pattern consisting of many small fields of ancient origin, both grid-like co-axial and irregular in shape. The historic settlement was very dispersed with scattered farmsteads in an irregular field and woodland pattern, some of the settlement being focussed on greens and commons, which lies along the highest ground. The main historic landscape features include:

- Some patches of enclosed meadow along the valley floors.
- A few small areas of parkland attached to mansion houses.
- Many small patches of ancient woodland through the area.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 3 sites of nature conservation value including:

- A CWS near the River Car of wetland and grassland habitat.
- Two CWSs comprised of ancient and semi-natural habitats.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential expansion of the Chelmsford urban edge (to the east) and Writtle urban edge (to the west).
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with the A414 and A12 road corridors and also the railway corridor.
- Visual intrusion of large-scale industrial and commercial warehouse units within Chelmsford urban area (to the east of the character area).
- Re-use of past mill sites.
- Management and maintenance of the Can river corridor as a recreational and leisure resource (particularly along stretches within the urban area).

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include mature vegetation lining the River Can, and a patchwork of riverside habitats, including pasture and arable fields, interspersed with riverside poplars, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Single

(predominantly deciduous) parkland trees within Admiral's Park are also sensitive landscape features. The skyline of the slopes of the Wid valley is visually sensitive, with potential new development being visible within several views to and from adjacent Landscape Character Areas. There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed and scattered settlement pattern, patches of enclosed meadows along the valley floor and a few small areas of parkland. This landscape is moderately to - highly sensitive to change or new development.

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 relatively tranquil and undeveloped character of the floodplain of the River Wid.
- Consider the visual impact of new farm buildings or extensions to existing settlements upon valleys slopes.
- Conserve the western landscape setting of Chelmsford and the eastern landscape setting of Writtle.
- Maintain cross-valley views and conserve characteristic views along the valleys.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale and responds to historic settlement pattern, form and building materials.
- Maintain views to Hylands Park and House to the west.
- Screen visually intrusive urban-edge development within Chelmsford (especially large warehouse buildings within the industrial estate at the eastern edge of the town) with selective tree planting which is appropriate to local landscape character.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage existing hedgerows.
- Seek to manage and control potential fertiliser run-off from nearby farmland.
- Seek to enhance existing floodplain habitats.
- Encourage the planting of native alder, willow, ash and oak in groups along the riverside where appropriate.

5.3 Farmland Plateau Landscapes

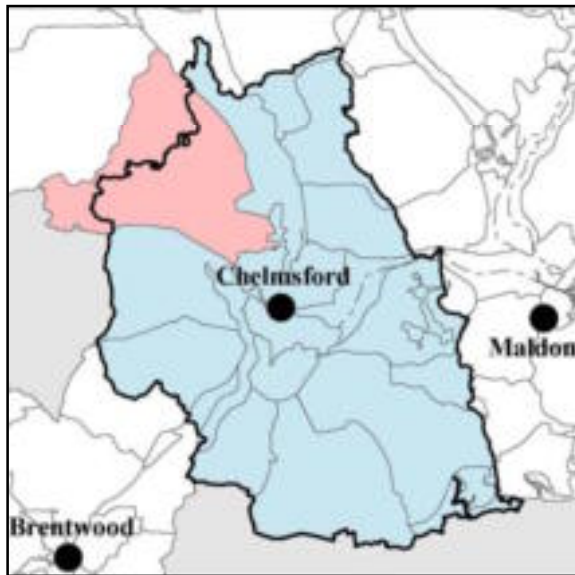
5.3.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

- 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)

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

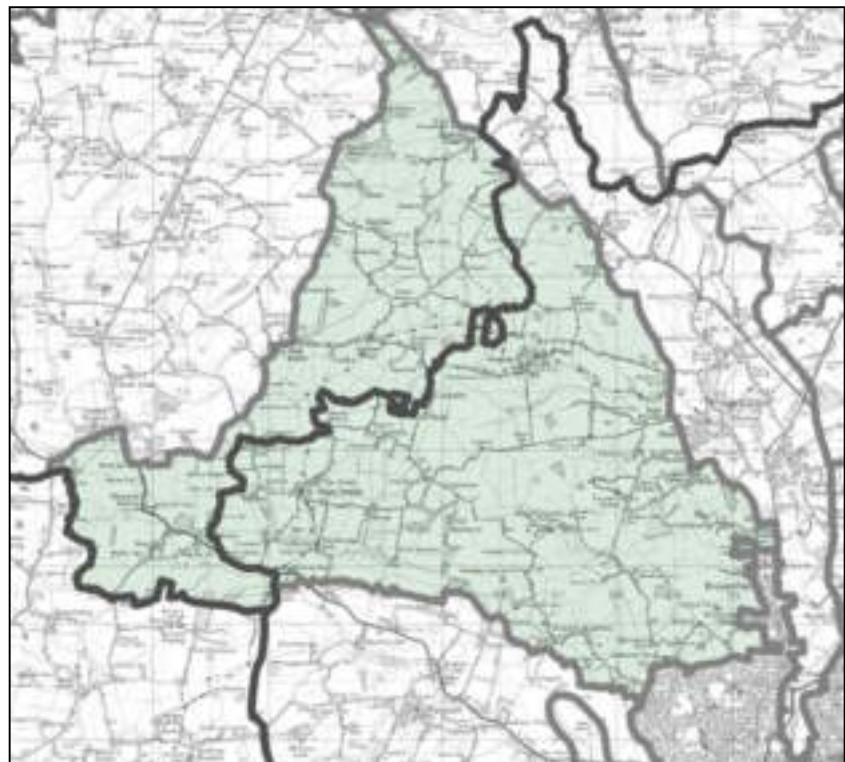
B15 - Pleshey Farmland Plateau
B16 - Felsted Farmland Plateau
B17 - Terling Farmland Plateau
B20 - Writtle Farmland Plateau
B21 - Boreham Farmland Plateau

B15 PLESHEY FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Uttlesford District)



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.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.



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.

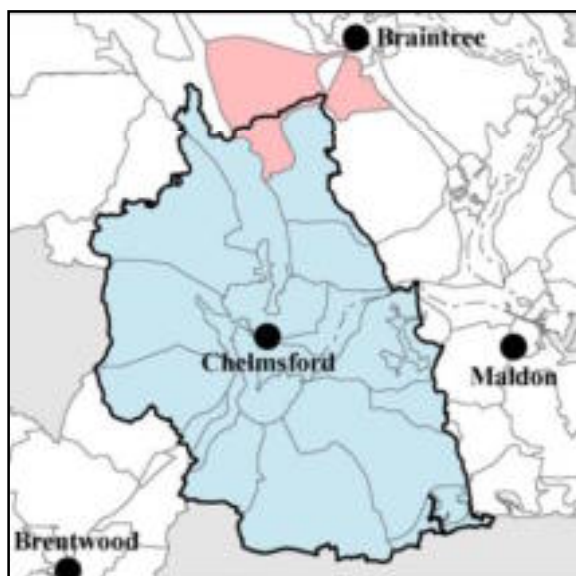
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- 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 Uttlesford District)

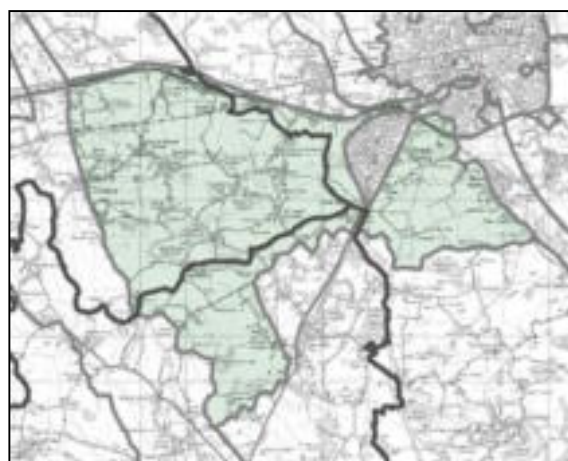


Key Characteristics

- 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 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 - Flitch 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.

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.

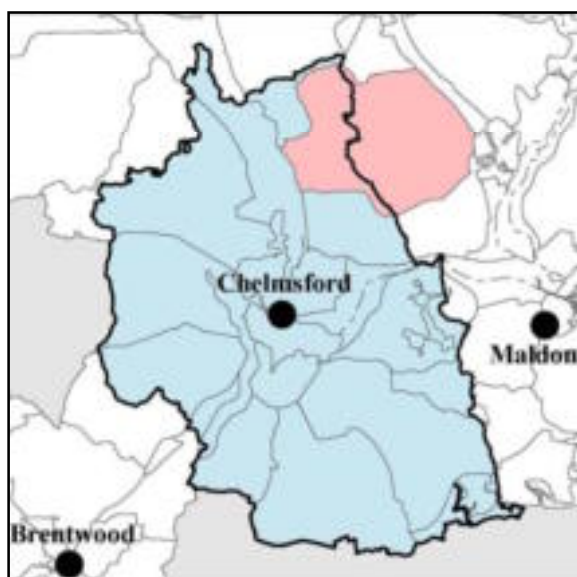
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- 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.

B17 TERLING FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Braintree District)

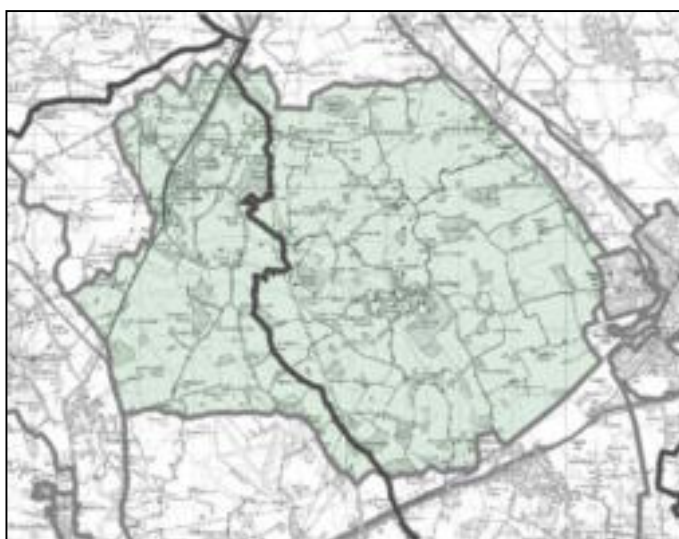


Key Characteristics

- Rolling arable farmland.
- Irregular pattern of medium to large scale fields.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and ponds.
- Network of narrow winding lanes.
- Mostly tranquil away from the A12 and A131.

Overall Character

The farmland plateau surrounding Terling between the A12 and A131 is on rolling hills and valleys especially in the west. North east of Terling the farmland



becomes flat and very open overlying deep well drained fine loams. The land is mainly arable with an irregular pattern of medium to large scale fields. Thick but intermittent hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees often delineate the field boundaries. In the north east of the area the grassy banks and ditches often mark field boundaries. There are many pockets of predominantly deciduous woodland with occasional mixed woodland. Some of these pockets form the remnants of ancient woodland. In addition there are several ponds or depressions in the middle of the larger fields that tend to be surrounded in trees. In long views these scattered small woods and copses, and hedgerow trees coalesce to create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The farmland is crossed by a comprehensive network of winding narrow lanes that are often bound by tall hedgerows and trees or where they are sunk below the surrounding fields by ditches and banks. In addition the Essex Way and the East Anglian Farm Rides Horse Riding Trail along with a network of footpaths cross the fields. Pylons cross the farmland creating a strong linear feature within the skyline. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small isolated hamlets and farmsteads that are occasionally moated, often dispersed along lanes, with the larger village of Terling in the centre of the area. Away from the A12 and A131 there are areas with a tranquil character.

Visual Characteristics

- Key Focal features are the Terling Church Spire which towers over the surrounding countryside and Terling Place.
- Views in the area vary between open and panoramic depending on the locality and density of trees within the view.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a historic pattern of irregular fields of various sizes. The historic pattern of dispersed settlements and scattered farmsteads survive. Some settlements would have been focussed on greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- Despite moderate to significant boundary loss, the field boundary pattern survives.
- Several areas of ancient woodland.
- The line of the Roman road from Chelmsford to Braintree, which bisects the Character Area.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 35 sites of nature conservation value:

- The River Ter SSSI and associated wetland habitats.
- 34 CWSs, including 25 with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitat.

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.

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.

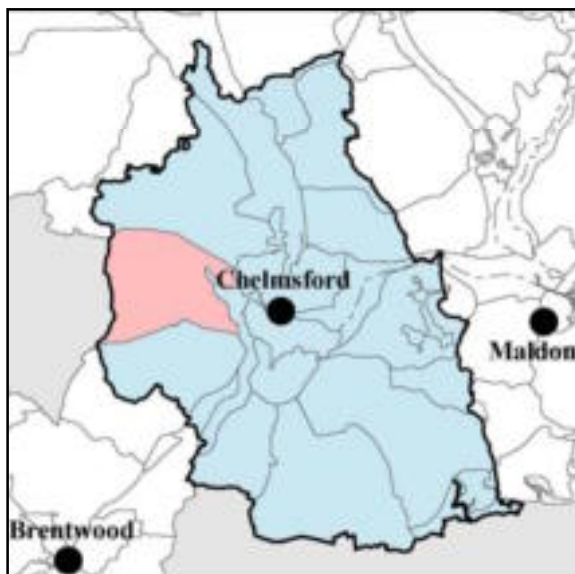
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Ensure that new build is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Ensure any new development within the farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

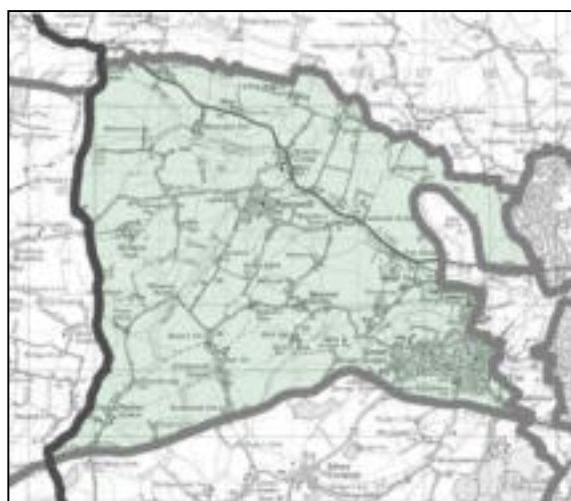
- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure 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.

B20 WRITTLE FARMLAND PLATEAU



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating glacial till farmland plateau landscape.
- Predominantly arable farmland, with patches of pasture in close proximity to settlements.
- Predominantly irregular field pattern.
- Fields generally delineated by gappy hedges, often containing single mature deciduous trees.
- Scattered settlement pattern, dominated by Writtle in the east.
- Several halls and associated designed/parkland landscapes.
- Network of narrow, winding lanes.



Overall Character

Situated to the west of Chelmsford, this gently undulating area of glacial till plateau is dissected by a number of small brooks (including Newlands and Roxwell Brook) and overlooks the confluence of the Rivers Can and Wid to the east. Character is dominated by an irregular arrangement of predominantly arable fields, with smaller pasture fields and paddocks in close proximity to settlements. Medium-sized arable fields are generally delineated by gappy hedges, which contain several single mature deciduous trees and also ditches. Other than Writtle (a large village in the east of the area, and Roxwell (a smaller hamlet to the north), settlement pattern consists of scattered farmsteads and hamlets, which are sprinkled across the landscape. Writtle¹ is separated from Chelmsford further to the east by the floodplains of the Rivers Can and Wid (LCA A8). A number of halls (including Newney Hall, Moor Hall and Newland Hall), often areas of designed parkland landscape, are peppered across the landscape. The character of the heart of Writtle is influenced by several historic buildings which are clustered around a village green, delineated by mature deciduous trees and was described by Pevsner as ‘one of the most attractive village greens of Essex’². Although the main road corridors of the A414 and A1060 road run through the area, there is a sense of tranquillity away from these routes.

¹ Writtle Village Design Statement (Writtle Parish Council, 2004).

² The Buildings of England: Essex (Pevsner, N. 2003).

A network of narrow winding lanes also cross the plateau, providing differing views across the undulating landscape. Open views across the Wid valley to wooded horizons in the east and south from the southeastern half of the area; give a sense of the raised nature of this area of farmland plateau.

Visual Characteristics

- Open views across the Wid valley to wooded horizons in the east and south from the southeastern half of the area.
- Open views into the floodplain of the Rivers Can and Wid from eastern edge of the area.
- Open views to the western urban edge of Chelmsford from the eastern edge of the area.
- Landmark church spires of Writtle and Roxwell churches visible across the farmland plateau.

Historic Land Use

- Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by any small irregular fields of ancient origin, with pockets of sinuous co-axial fields. This area was part of Writtle Forest, a medieval hunting forest. Substantial pockets of ancient 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. Only within Writtle itself has development gradually spread to encompass two greens and take on the characteristics of a nucleated settlement in relatively modern times.

Ecological Features

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

- Three CWSs with ancient woodland habitat.
- Seven CWSs comprised of grassland, semi-natural woodland habitats.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Visually intrusive signage associated with garden centres and nurseries.
- Highway improvements or potential widening of the A414 and A1060.
- Disturbance of sense of tranquillity as a result of noise and traffic associated with the A414 and A1060.
- Potential pressure for expansion of Writtle settlement.
- Potential future decline and loss of field boundaries through lack of management and further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Increased pressure on minor roads and rural lanes.
- Potential for the introduction of new visually intrusive farm buildings.
- Ensure any extensions to existing housing developments avoid visual intrusion.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include single mature deciduous trees within hedgerows and ditches at field boundaries, (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 and also within views to and from the Wid Valley. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern of small hamlets and villages and several visible historic features (including Newney Hall, Moor Hall and Newland Hall). The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 10 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland and grassland 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.

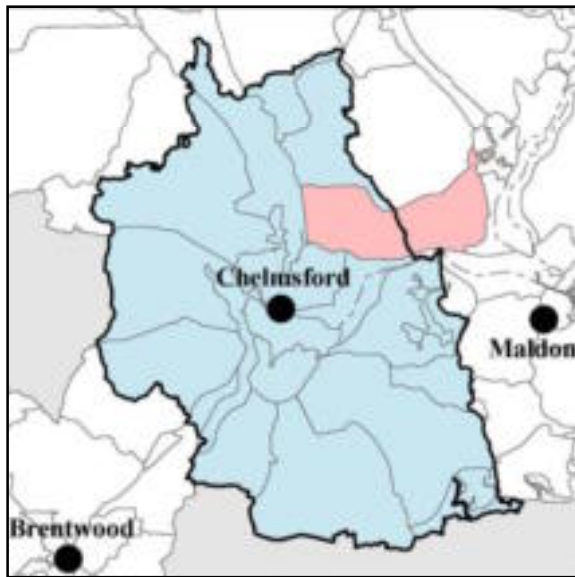
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Protect the setting of Writtle (including the floodplains of the Can and Wid to the east), which separates the settlement from Chelmsford.
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to the historic settlement pattern and uses materials which are appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve views into the Can and Wid valleys from the eastern edge of the area.
- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

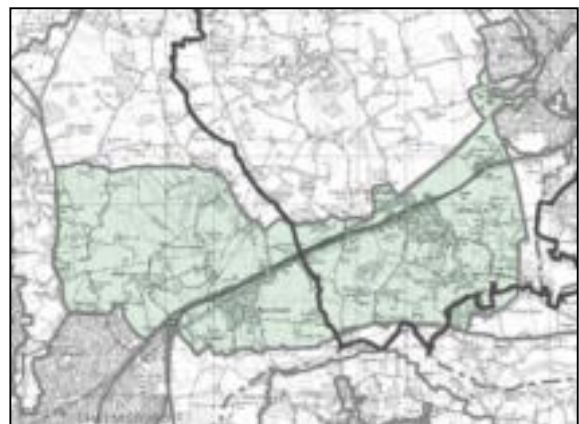
- Conserve and enhance existing hedgerow network by planting hawthorn and strengthening elm.
- Establish arable field margins as an important nature conservation habitat.
- Seek ways to reduce the visual impact of the main road corridors (A414 & A1060), through introducing new and strengthening existing parallel shelterbelts where appropriate.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.

B21 BOREHAM FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Braintree District and Maldon District)



Key Characteristics

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable and pastoral fields, marked by hedgerows, banks and ditches.
- Small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets.
- A concentration of isolated farmsteads.
- Network of narrow winding lanes.



Overall Character

Boreham Farmland Plateau is centred on Boreham and the A12 dual carriageway. The gently undulating landscape is fairly densely populated with the large settlements of Hatfield Peveral and Boreham and the scattered smaller villages and hamlets such as Nounsley. Farmsteads line the roads outside of the main settlements. To the east and north of Boreham there are several disused sand and gravel pits. The pits have predominantly been filled in with water, the surrounding areas landscaped and trees have been planted. Some of these new lakes are used as fisheries and are surrounded by rough grassland and wire fences. Surrounding the settlements pastoral fields tend to be small to medium with their boundaries delineated by gappy and fragmented hedgerows with hedgerow trees. In the south west of the area are large open arable fields separated by banks and ditches providing extensive long distance views across the River Chelmer Valley. In these areas there are a few isolated dwellings and farmsteads and trees scattered across the landscape. Throughout the area outside the built up areas the roads tend to be sunk below the surrounding fields and lined with banks topped with tall hedges and hedgerow trees. The A12 dual carriageway splits the area visually into two with only a few crossing points to join the areas. The road is a very dominant feature as the traffic noise carries across large swathes of the area reducing the sense of tranquillity.

Visual Characteristics.

- The A12 forms the key landmark in the area as it is raised above the surrounding landscape and is visible over a long distance.
- The views in the area are generally short distance and constrained by the tall hedges and small woodlands, however in the south and west of the area, the large arable fields provide very open panoramic views.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a predominance of medium to large fields with straight boundaries, including 18th to 19th-century enclosure, with a pocket of small irregular fields to the northeast. Historically there is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, with nucleated settlement at Boreham. The main historic landscape features include:

- The Roman roads of Stane Street and the former A12 which have left their imprint on the modern landscape, influencing field alignment and settlement distribution.
- Modern development that is focussed around Boreham, but also within the Character Area there is also an airfield, the modern arterial route of the A12, and areas of gravel extraction.
- Water meadows along the river valleys.
- Historic park and gardens surrounding Boreham House.

Ecological Feature

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture with small pockets of woodland and narrow lanes. The area contains 9 sites of nature conservation value including two with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitat. Ecological features also include ditches, reservoirs, streams and rivers and gravel and sand Pits.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the streams, rivers and ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings in the open agricultural land, which would be conspicuous on the sky line.
- Potential residential expansion of villages and towns, which would be conspicuous on the surrounding rural landscape.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during 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 hedgerows, banks and ditches at field boundaries (which are sensitive to changes in land management). There is a sense of historic integrity, with a dispersed historic settlement pattern visible in places and occasional historic features such as New Hall and/or Boreham House and historic park/gardens visible within the landscape. Overall, this character area has low to- 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 in the surrounding agricultural fields.
- 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 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 water filled sand and gravel pits.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

5.4 Drained Estuarine Marsh Landscapes

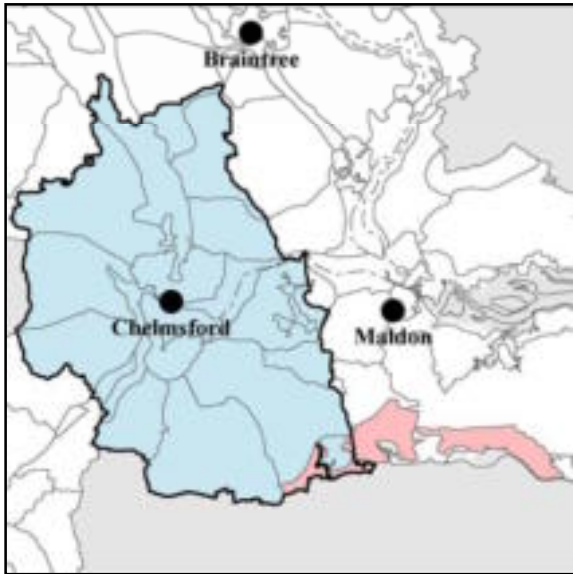
5.4.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

- Areas of flat, artificially drained former saltmarsh currently grassland and cultivated fields
- Visible sea walls separate drained former marshland and current saltmarsh/mudflats
- Lack of large areas of trees or woodland
- Network of visible drainage ditches

5.4.2 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Landscape Character Area:

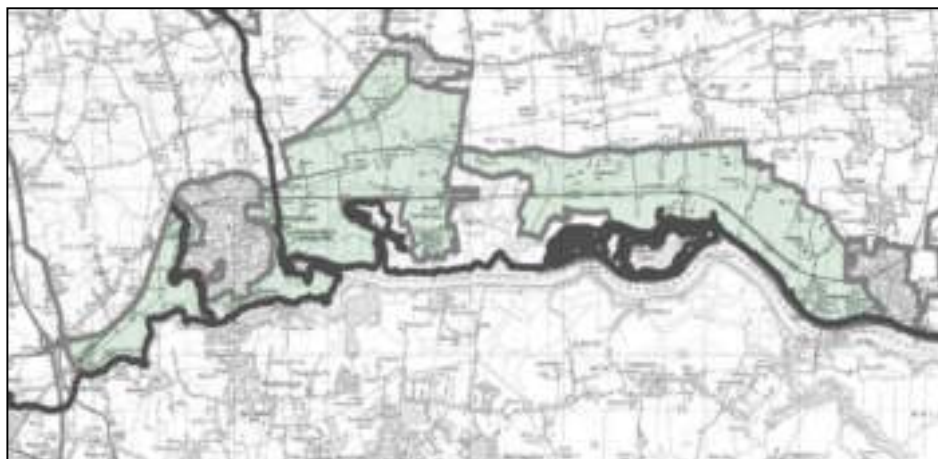
D9 - Fambridge

D9 FAMBRIDGE DRAINED ESTUARINE MARSH (shared with Maldon District)



Key Characteristics

- Low-lying flat drained marsh hinterland north of River Crouch that become gently rolling further inland.
- Predominantly open, arable fields with a regular, rectilinear field pattern.
- Steeply rising land above Creeksea and North Fambridge
- Extensive grazing marsh.
- Sense of isolation and openness near the sea wall.



Overall Character

This character area is the hinterland of the marshes on the north shore of the narrow River Crouch. This drained marshland is now primarily arable, although extensive grazing is apparent near the sea wall. Gently rising from the marsh levels, the landform is gently rolling country indented by many creeks, with scattered blocks of trees, linear tree belts, scrub and formerly elm-dominated hedgerows around pastures. The narrow estuary penetrates far inland at Bridgemarsh Creek, Althorne Creek, Fenn Creek and Clementsgreen Creek. Drainage ditches and relic dykes accentuate the medium to large-scale field pattern, and sinuous ditches are visible near Bridgemarsh Creek. Small blocks of woodland are visible west and north of North Fambridge and west of Burnham-on-Crouch, but most other tree cover is usually near farmsteads. The land rises dramatically at Creeksea in a broad ridge that stretches northwest. Pylons dominate the horizon to the north, and the only road through the area, the B1012/1010, follows the right-angled pattern found elsewhere on the Dengie Peninsula which suggests ancient planned landscape here also. The railroad between South Woodham Ferrers and Burnham is

well screened in the landscape. Pedestrian access to the sea wall and marsh landscape is limited, with only a few tracks and lanes leading to the river from North Fambridge, Althorne and Creeksea. There is a public footpath along the sea wall between Burnham and North Fambridge, Little Hayes. The Marsh Farm Country Park also provides public access to the river. Settlement pattern is linear along the main road, with scattered farms on the slopes. Woodham Ferrers is a large new town with a well-screened wooded perimeter, but it appears out of character with such dense planting in an open marshland landscape. Historic buildings are less visible here than elsewhere on the Dengie Peninsula but some examples are seen at North Fambridge and occasionally elsewhere, including Creeksea Place. Local vernacular is primarily weatherboarding, painted white with black trim. The Ferryman Pub at North Fambridge highlights the former importance of the area for the ferry landing across the river here. Overall, this landscape character appears sandwiched between two urban centres, historic but expanding Burnham and modern South Woodham Ferrers, and yet due to its lack of access across the farmland, it retains a strong sense of place and offers many opportunities, especially along the sea wall, to find places with a great sense of isolation and tranquillity.

Visual Characteristics

- Historic pub at North Fambridge where ferry used to cross the river.
- Panoramic views across adjacent saltmarsh and mudflats down the river and across large farmland fields to the south shore of the river at North Fambridge.
- Short-distance views across Althorne Creek to Bridgemark Island.
- Long views down Clementsgreen Creek to Brandyhole Reach.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a distinctive co-axial rectilinear field pattern (known as Dengie-form after this area). Historically settlement is scattered along the roads along the top of the ridge and on smaller peninsulas protruding out to the coast. The main historic landscape features include:

- Areas of salt marsh and grazing marsh adjacent to the River Crouch within Marsh Farm Country Park.
- Field systems of considerable antiquity, that may have their origins in the middle Saxon period, if not before.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by arable farmland and extensive grazing marsh. The area contains numerous sites of nature conservation value and other ecological features. These include:

- Crouch & Roach Estuaries Ramsar and SPA - supports internationally and nationally important numbers of wildfowl.
- Essex Estuaries cSAC - supports variety of internationally important habitats including estuarine, mudflats, sandflats, *Salicornia* colonising mud, *Spartina* swards and Atlantic salt meadows.
- Croach and Roach Estuaries SSSI – tidal mud, saltmarsh and grazing marsh which support internationally important numbers of dark-bellied Brent geese, and nationally important numbers of black-tailed godwit, shelduck and shoveler plus other wildfowl and uncommon flora.
- Ancient woodland at North Fambridge Hall Wood.
- Fen, saltmarsh and mudflats.
- Riverside creek margins and banks of the River Crouch.

Key Planning and land Management Issues

- Encroaching urban edge at South Woodham Ferrers very abrupt.
- Potential growth in water sports, especially sailing and pleasure craft, with inherent demand for more marinas and river moorings.
- Sea-level rise and erosion could lead to the loss of existing saltmarsh within the Crouch Estuary channel.

- Risk of erosion due to wash from motorised craft.
- Potential for damage to diverse, important saltmarsh and bird habitats with a potential increase in tourism and accessibility to visitors.
- Further development, including caravan parks as at Creeksea could erode the generally undisturbed character of the area and adversely affect saltmarsh.
- Pressure for change of use from arable for development, which may have a visually intrusive impact on landscape character.
- Pressure from development within this, and adjacent character areas.
- Continuing loss of hedges and field boundary vegetation with subsequent loss of historic pattern, sense of enclosure and ecological habitat.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include areas of drained grazing marsh close to the sea wall, ditches, dykes and sea walls, scattered blocks of trees and linear tree belts (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open nature of the area is visually sensitive to new development (especially in close proximity to the sea wall), which would be visible within views from adjacent character areas. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a distinctive co-axial rectilinear field pattern and a dispersed historic settlement pattern. Potential new development either within the area, or within adjacent character areas, may also disturb the strong sense of tranquillity. The area also contains several internationally and nationally important sites for wildlife (in particular, wildfowl). Overall, this character area has 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

- Loss of hedgerows due to agricultural intensification.
- Ensure that any new development is well integrated into the surrounding landscape, responds to historic settlement pattern and scale, and uses materials which are appropriate to the local landscape character.
- Conserve the rural character of the area.
- Ensure that new farm buildings are sensitively designed and located within the landscape to accord with existing character.
- Conserve panoramic long distance views to adjacent character areas of drained and open estuarine marsh to the south.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and restore the existing hedgerow network with particular emphasis placed on the planting and management of elm.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of North Fambridge, Creeksea and other villages.

5.5 Wooded Farmland Landscapes

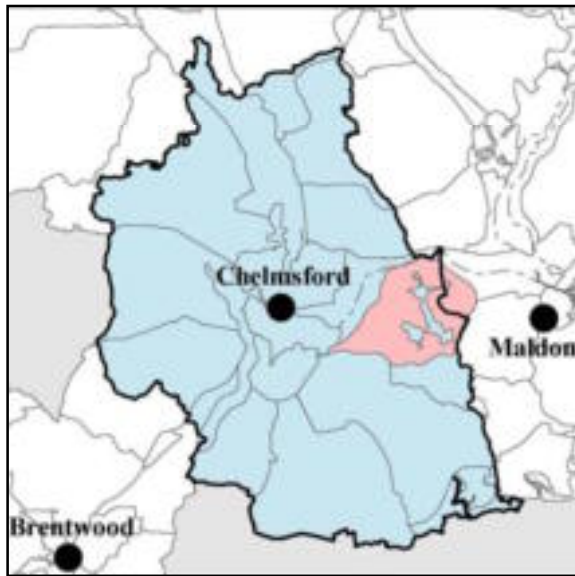
5.5.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

- Elevated undulating hills or ridges and slopes
- Mixture of arable and pasture farmland
- Pockets of common and pasture
- Views to wooded horizons
- Well wooded with blocks of mature mixed and deciduous woodland (including areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland); copses, hedges and mature single trees
- Mature field boundaries
- Framed views to adjacent character areas
- Enclosed character in places
- Network of quiet, often tree-lined narrow lanes

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

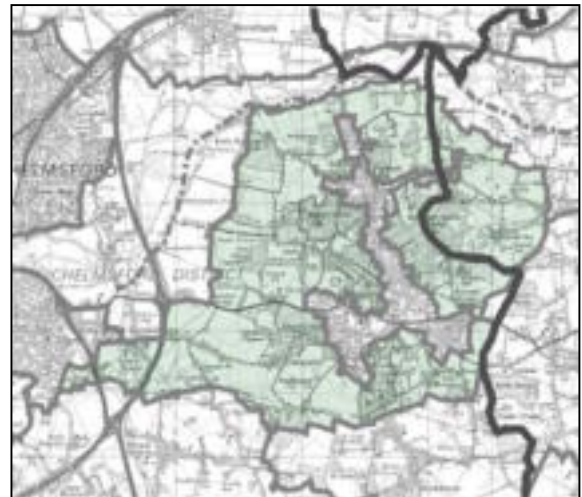
F5 - Little Baddow and Danbury Wooded Farmland
 F6 - Woodham Wooded Farmland
 F7 - Blackmore Wooded Farmland
 F10 - Heybridge Wooded Farmland
 F12 - East Hanningfield Wooded Farmland
 F16 - Galleywood Wooded Farmland

F5 LITTLE BADDOW AND DANBURY WOODED FARMLAND (shared with Maldon District)



Key Characteristics

- Wooded hill and ridge housing the linear settlements of Little Baddow and Danbury.
- Sense of enclosure provided by large areas of dense deciduous and mixed woodland.
- Intricate landscape pattern consisting of commons, pasture, heathland and woodland habitats.
- Arable farmland fringing the outer edges of patches of woodland.
- Series of narrow lanes winding down the hillsides and facilitation views into and across the Chelmer/Blackwater valley to the north and east.
- Views to wooded horizons within adjacent wooded farmland to the south.
- Predominantly linear settlement pattern.



Overall Character

This character area encompasses a distinctive area of wooded hills to the east of Chelmsford. The relatively large linear villages of Little Baddow form a crossroads upon a very large, gently domed hill and connecting ridge. Within the settlements, a strong sense of enclosure is provided by extensive dense patches of deciduous and mixed woodland (e.g. Birch Wood, Pheasant House Wood, Spring Wood, Blake's Wood, Belhill Wood) within the surrounding landscape setting. These woodland patches are interspersed with an intricate, diverse and interesting mosaic of commons (e.g. Danbury, Woodham Walter and Lingwood) heathland (Little Baddow – containing several mature oak pollards) and pasture. Relatively open arable farmland, which is punctuated by single mature deciduous trees and has mature field boundaries, provides the setting for this patchwork of habitats. Narrow lanes (several of which are tree-lined) wind down the hillsides, facilitating panoramic views across and into the Chelmer/Blackwater valley to the north and east. Character is also influenced by views to wooded horizons within adjacent wooded farmland Landscape Character Areas to the south. There is a sense of

enclosure and tranquillity and an intimate character within pockets of the area (away from the main A414 corridor). The area also has a strong sense of place and historic continuity. Settlement pattern is predominantly linear, with a cluster of attractive vernacular buildings at Horne Row and housing arranged around a triangular village green within Danbury.

Visual Characteristics

- Open and framed panoramic views into and across the Chelmer/Blackwater valley and floodplain to the north and east.
- Framed views to adjacent arable farmland.
- Open and framed views to wooded horizons of adjacent wooded farmland to the south.
- Patches of woodland create a sense of enclosure and restrict views out from Little Baddow and Danbury.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by small and irregular fields of ancient origin. Historically settlement was dispersed around several commons and greens, with a small nucleation around the church in Danbury. This original settlement pattern has been extended, mostly along the roads, with the commons preserved as nature reserves. The main historic landscape features include:

- The prominent Iron Age hill fort, covering an area of 25 hectares.
- Areas of ancient woodland, surrounding Danbury.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture with woodland areas surrounding the urban area of Danbury. The area contains 23 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Blake's Wood & Lingwood Common SSSI (90 hectares) comprising woodland and grassland habitats.
- Danbury Common SSSI (70- hectares) of woodland and grassland habitats.
- Woodham Walter Common SSSI (80 hectares) comprising woodland and grassland habitats.
- Twenty CWS sites comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland, wetland and grassland habitats.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Pressure of increasing traffic on minor rural roads.
- Management of common land and heathland for nature conservation and recreational purposes.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with the A414 road corridor.
- Potential loss of mature field boundaries as a result of lack of management or further intensification of agricultural practices.
- Management and maintenance of patches of mature deciduous and mixed woodland.
- Potential new development at the fringes of Little Baddow or Danbury, or on the slopes of the hill, which may be highly visible from surrounding character areas, including the Chelmer/Blackwater valley to the north.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include large areas of dense deciduous and mixed woodland, an intricate mosaic of commons, pasture and heathland spread throughout the area and several mature field boundaries (containing several mature trees), all of which are sensitive to changes in land management. The network of quiet rural lanes is also sensitive to change or increased traffic associated with new development. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from patches of ancient woodland and a prominent Iron Age hill fort (which is a visible historic feature). There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 20 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, grassland and commons),

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.

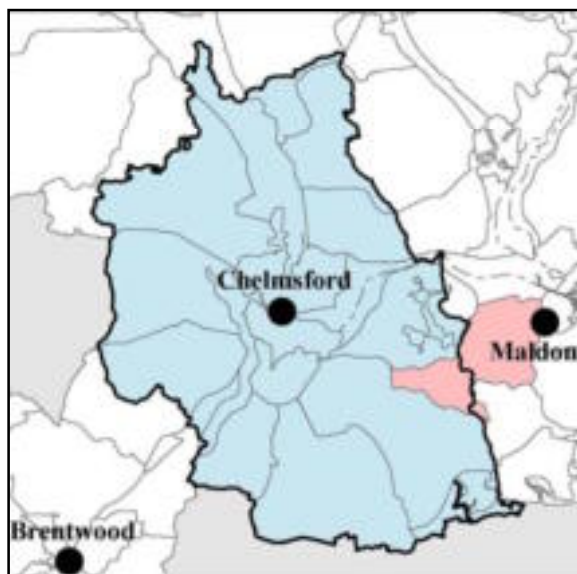
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Little Baddow and Danbury settlements.
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials which are appropriate to local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated within the surrounding landscape.
- Potential new development should be carefully sited in relation to the ridge and hillsides (taking into account possible visual intrusion when viewed from adjacent character areas).
- Conserve the open and framed nature of views into and across the Chelmer/Blackwater valley to the north and also to wooded horizons to the south.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

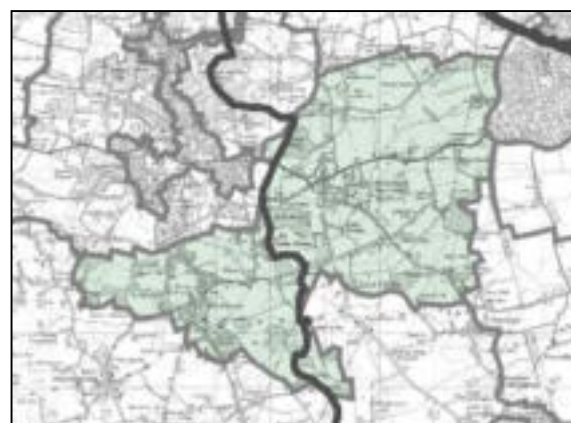
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland within the area as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and restore pastures.
- Conserve and manage the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen where appropriate through planting.
- Conserve the predominantly rural character of the area.
- Conserve, enhance and manage areas of common land through appropriate management/nature conservation strategies.
- Conserve and manage areas of heathland as important historic, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve historic tree-lined lanes and unimproved roadside verges.

F6 WOODHAM WOODED FARMLAND (shared with Maldon District)



Key Characteristics

- Sands and gravels over London Clay.
- Broad wooded east-west ridge descending from Danbury.
- Distinctive small rounded hills visible where ridge has eroded in southeast.
- Open landscape of arable farmland framed by woodland and hedgerows on the lower ground.
- Enclosed to semi-enclosed commons, small irregular fields and pasture on the wooded ridge.



Overall Character

This character area encompasses the gently undulating wooded hill and ridge landscape southwest of Maldon and south of Danbury. Part of the Danbury Hills, this ridge landscape runs above the Chelmer Valley and stretches south from Curling Tye Green to Cock Clark's. The southwestern portion of the area centres on Bicknacre (outside the district boundary), and extends across Hyde Chase to Rudley Street in the east. The distinctive landform of nearby Danbury, with its very large gently domed hill, is often visible on the horizon. A connecting ridge runs southwest from Danbury across this character area, and erosion has created some visually dramatic small rounded hills in the southeast, at Hazeleigh. This heavily wooded landscape is characterised by trees: tree-lined roads, lanes, and tracks, tree-enclosed fields and many dispersed fragments of ancient oak-hornbeam woodland that merge with newer plantings. Hedgerows and hedgebanks are often lined with oaks along the lanes, and in some field boundaries. Small to medium-scale irregular arable fields, some pasture and wooded commons on the slopes are interspersed among the woodland south of Danbury. More open medium- to-large scale arable farmland is visible to the south in adjacent area F12, around Bicknacre, and in the northern parts of this area. Here the hedgerows are more gappy. The busy A414 winds through this countryside, as well as many lanes and secondary roads including the B1010. Pylons march across the landscape from Cock Clark's in a northeast direction towards Maldon. Settlement pattern consists of small villages, hamlets and dispersed farmsteads, with larger settlements in adjacent areas. Traditional colour-washed plaster or half-timbered buildings are noticeable in the old villages, but most settlements have predominantly 20th century buildings. Historic churches are visible on higher ground, as at Woodham Walter. Many

footpaths crisscross the area, including St Peter's Way. Other land use is visible that extends from the proximity to Danbury and Maldon: sand and gravel pits, nurseries, agricultural storage and other commercial activity. This is a varied and interesting landscape, where the enclosed, intimate character in the wooded hills contrasts with the semi-enclosed, more open views surrounding it on the lower ground. Heavy traffic detracts from the overall tranquillity of the area, but in the wooded hills and in the lanes south of Danbury there are still areas with a strong sense of tranquillity and a strong sense of place.

Visual Characteristics

- Long views of the Chelmer Valley framed by woodland open up on the edges of the ridge in the north, whereas more open views across arable fields are possible on the lower ground around Bicknacre and Cock Clarke's.
- Intimate character in the wooded areas.
- Occasional views to churches that sit on higher ground.
- Dramatic small rounded hills at Hazeleigh.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18th century fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, mostly regular in plan. Historically, the settlement pattern was dispersed, some of it being focussed on commons. This pattern has survived with a more recent nucleation at Bicknacre. The main historic landscape features include:

- Co-axial field layouts, usually relating directly to the immediate topography.
- River valleys marked by enclosed meadow.
- Areas of ancient woodland, primarily along the eastern side of the area.
- A number of parks of medieval origin.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture with large blocks of woodland. The area contains 9 sites of nature conservation and a further four areas of ancient woodland areas, including:

- Thrift Wood, Woodham Ferrers SSSI, comprised of ancient and semi-natural woodland.
- Eight CWSs comprised of ancient and semi-natural woodland and grassland habitats, including Hyde Wood, Thrift Wood, Folks Wood, Parsonage Wood, Hazeleigh High Wood, Slough House Wood, Jackletts Wood, New England Wood, Round Wood, Squeaking-Gate Wood, Cank Wood, and Great Wood.
- Other ecological features, including small streams, ditches, irrigation reservoirs, Hedgerows and a few unimproved meadows.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Pressure of increased traffic on rural and minor lanes.
- Potential visually intrusive development along A414.
- Potential for visually intrusive expansion to the settlement edges of Maldon.
- Potential for visually intrusive development of new farm buildings.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the wooded, east-west ridge, tree-lined road, lanes and tracks, tree-enclosed fields and many dispersed fragments of ancient oak-hornbeam woodland, all of which are sensitive to changes in land management. The network of quiet rural lanes (including lining hedgebanks and hedgerows) is also sensitive to change or increased traffic associated with new development. There is a relatively strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed settlement pattern (with more recent nucleation at Bicknacre),

enclosed meadows within river valleys and a considerable degree of co-axiality within fields (on a local-scale, usually relating directly to the immediate topography). 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 mostly rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials which are appropriate to the local landscape character; such development should be well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Ensure that new farm buildings are sensitively designed and located within the landscape to accord with existing character

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

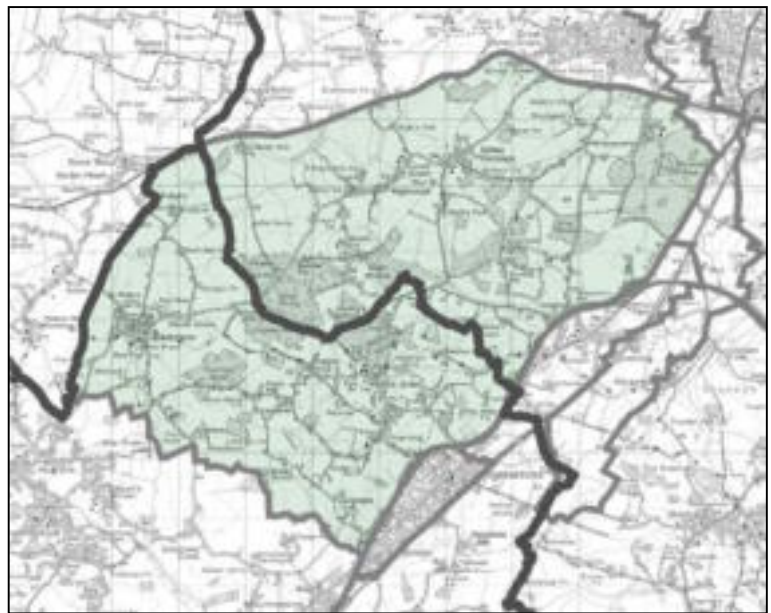
- Conserve and restore existing hedgerow network where gappy and depleted especially on property boundaries or on field margins.
- Conserve, manage and enhance areas of semi natural and ancient woodland as important heritage, nature conservation and landscape features.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Introduce arable field margins as a means to ensure that mature trees within hedgerows are not disturbed by ploughing.
- Introduce a planting management programme to ensure future trees within field hedgerow boundaries will succeed mature trees.
- Safeguard Woodham Walter Common SSSI.

F7 BLACKMORE WOODED FARMLAND (shared with Brentwood Borough)



Key Characteristics

- Undulating wooded farmland.
- Medium to large-scale patches of woodland interspersed with irregular arable fields.
- Mature hedgerows and deciduous treed field boundaries.
- Patches of smaller-scale pasture fields and pony paddocks.
- Views to wooded horizons.
- Several small hamlets and farmsteads lining routes through the area.
- Sense of tranquillity away from major roads.
- Network of narrow lanes.



Overall Character

The character of this area of undulating farmland is dominated by a wide belt of medium to large-scale woodlands stretching from Fryerning Wood in the southwest to South Wood (on the fringes of Hylands Park) in the northeast. Patches of predominantly deciduous woodland are interspersed with and irregular arrangement of medium to large-scale fields. Smaller-scale pasture fields and pony paddocks are also dotted within the landscape, particularly within woodland clearings to the north of Fryerning. Fields are generally delineated by mature hedges and deciduous treed field boundaries, which are usually in good condition but occasionally gappy in places. Within fields surrounding the patches of woodland, recognisable sense of place and character is provided by views to wooded horizons, both within the character area and also within adjacent character areas. Settlement pattern is scattered and consists of two main nucleated villages (Blackmore to the west and Fryerning to the east) and several small hamlets and farmsteads, which generally line routes through the area. St. Mary the Virgin church, Fryerning post mill and the tower of St. Lawrence church, Blackmore (which Pevsner describe as 'one of the most, if not the most impressive of all timber towers in England') are visible landmarks within the landscape. The main A414, A12 and A1016 road corridors line this character area to the

north, south and east. Therefore, although within patches of landscape enclosed by woodland there is an intimate character with a relatively strong sense of tranquillity; in proximity to road corridors this character is disturbed by constant background traffic noise. Views across the landscape generally unfold, enclosed by the rolling topography and patches of woodland. A network of narrow lanes, often covered by canopies of mature trees traverse the area, providing a sense of seclusion. The mature, designed parkland landscape of Hylands Park, containing several mature trees, and associated with Hylands House (a neo-classical mansion, built around 1730) dominates the character of the eastern part of this character area.

Visual Characteristics

- Open views to wooded horizons, both within the character area and also within adjacent LCA.
- Long-distance views across farmland enclosed by patches of woodland.
- Unfolding views, moving through the undulating landscape and patches of woodland.
- Open views to the Chelmsford's south-western urban edge from Hylands Park.
- St. Mary's Church (Widford) is landmark within views north-eastwards from Hylands Park.
- St. Mary the Virgin church, Fryerning post mill and the tower of St. Lawrence church, Blackmore are landmarks within views across the character area.

Historic Land Use

Anciently, parts of this Character Area were within Writtle Forest, a medieval hunting forest. 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 field pattern is rather mixed: to the east and south is an extensive area of pre-18th century co-axial enclosure; to the north and north-east is an area of pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, some of which may be the result of intermittent woodland clearance along the edges of Writtle Forest. Historically the settlement pattern has been very dispersed. The main historic landscape features include:

- Areas of large, irregular fields.
- Hylands Park, a medieval parkland.
- A single Saxon estate, the place-name evidence suggests that the area encompassed Ingatestone and the adjoining parishes of Mountnessing (F8), Margaretting, Fryerning and Buttsbury in the upper Wid valley.
- A number of areas of ancient woodland.
- A few small areas of parkland attached to mansion houses.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable and pastoral agriculture interspersed with deciduous woodland. The area contains 18 sites of nature conservation value including:

- Hylands Park SINC with unimproved grassland and woodland habitats and a further 17 sites with ancient and semi-natural woodland.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Pressure of increased traffic on major roads, rural and minor lanes.
- Potential for visually intrusive development around the edges of Chelmsford (for example within the floodplain of the River Wid to the west of Chelmsford).
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A414, A12 and A1016 road corridors,
- Potential major road improvements (A414, A12 and A1016).
- Potential visually intrusive development of new farm buildings.
- Deterioration and eventual loss of mature treed hedgerows and single mature trees through lack of appropriate management.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include medium to large-scale patches of woodland, mature hedgerows and deciduous treed field boundaries, and patches of small-scale pasture fields and paddocks, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The overall sense of tranquillity within parts of the character area (away from main road corridors) is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. Open views to wooded horizons (where gained) are sensitive to potential new development, which may interrupt or block such views. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages, focussed on greens and commons and scattered farmsteads in an irregular field and woodland pattern. This pattern is particularly sensitive to large-scale new development. Sensitive visible historic features also include Hylands Park (a medieval parkland) and a few smaller areas of parkland attached to mansion houses. The network of quiet rural lanes is also sensitive to change or increased traffic associated with new development along with the sense of tranquillity away from major road corridors. There are several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 18 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising unimproved grassland woodland habitats 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.

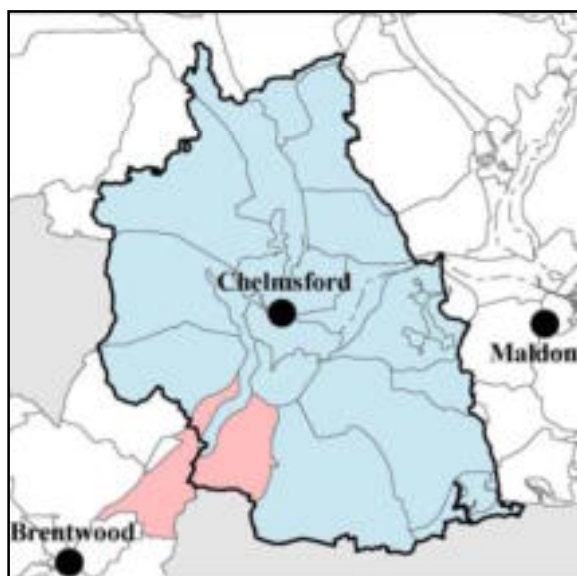
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Chelmsford town and Ingatestone Village.
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Conserve views into the Wid valley from the eastern edge of the area.
- Conserve the setting of Hylands House and Park.
- Seek to screen visual detractors (such as major road corridors, for example with planted shelter belts).

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage the existing mature hedgerow network.
- Conserve, manage and enhance patches of woodland (consider the use of traditional methods, such as coppicing and pollarding where appropriate to locality and local landscape character).
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Plant half-standard trees within field hedgerow boundaries to succeed over mature trees.
- Introduce arable field margins as a means of ensuring that mature trees within hedgerows are not disturbed by ploughing.
- Conserve and enhance areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland as important heritage, nature conservation and landscape features.

F10 HEYBRIDGE WOODED FARMLAND (shared with Brentwood Borough)

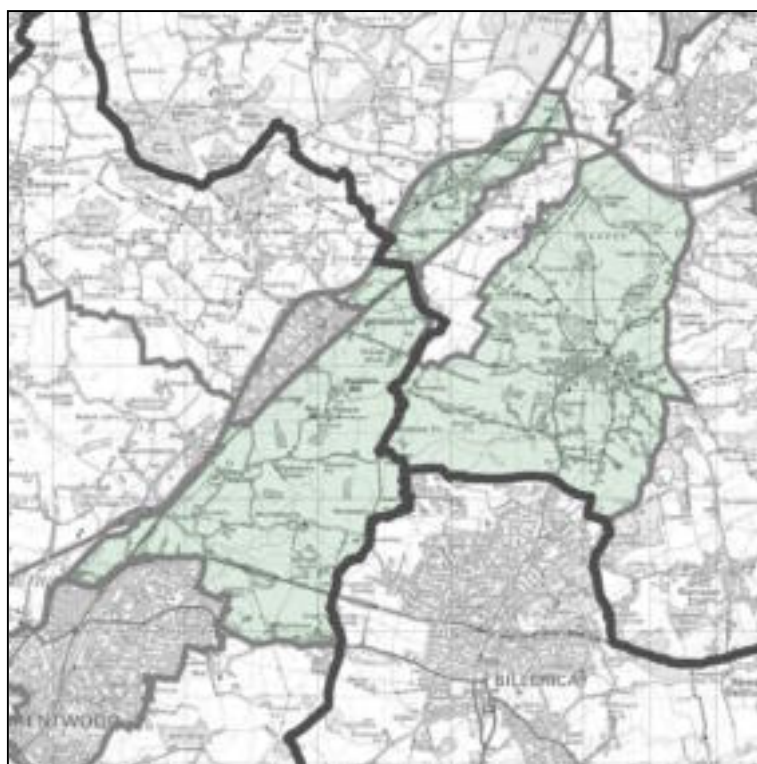


Key Characteristics

- Mature, undulating wooded farmland lining the B1002 road and railway corridor.
- Mixture of medium to large-scale predominantly arable fields with mature treed field boundaries.
- Single mature trees and vegetation-lined ditches.
- Strong linear settlement pattern though the centre of the area, becoming more scattered at distance from the road/railway corridor.
- Landmark halls and churches.
- Narrow, often tree-lined rural lanes.

Overall Character

Situated to the northeast of Brentwood urban area, this character area encompasses wooded farmland to the south of the B1002 road and railway corridor. The northern half of the character area surrounds the southern half of the valley of the River Wid. A mixture of medium to large-scale, predominantly arable fields, delineated with mature trees, rather than lower hedges, dominates the character of the area. Several single mature trees and species-rich ditches also provide recognisable landscape features. The strong linear settlement pattern of Ingatestone and Margaretting settlements (lining the straight B1002 road and railway corridor) and Brentwood urban edge to the southwest, introduce a suburbanised character to the northern part of the character area. Away from this main settlement corridor, however, settlement pattern is smaller scale, consisting of small hamlets and scattered farmsteads which are accessible via a network of quiet, often tree-lined rural lanes - for example Old Church Lane. Church towers and small



halls within Ingatestone and Margaretting for example, and Mountnessing windmill, are landmarks within views across the area and from surrounding character areas.

Visual Characteristics

- Open views to urban edges of Brentwood, Mountnessing and Ingatestone.
- Open views into the valley of the River Wid from fields within the northern half of the area.
- Views to wooded horizons both within the area and within adjacent Landscape Character Areas.
- Framed views to landmark church towers and halls (such as Ingatestone Hall) and also to Mountnessing windmill.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by irregular fields mixed in with the predominant co-axial field system of ancient origin. The co-axial fields are mostly aligned east to west. The commons were mostly enclosed by the 19th century, but part of their extent can be seen in the surviving field boundary pattern. Historically, the settlement pattern was dispersed, some of it being focussed on commons. There were also scattered farmsteads, and parkland associated with Ingatestone Hall.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture with scattered woodland. The area contains 13 SINC's comprised of unimproved grassland, scrub and ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats, plus 9 ancient woodlands south of Ingatestone.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Noise and visual intrusion associated with the B1002 road and main railway corridor.
- Potential visually intrusive expansion of the urban edges of Brentwood, Mountnessing and Ingatestone.
- Pressure of increased traffic on rural and minor lanes.
- Potential visually intrusive farm buildings.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include mature treed field boundaries, single mature trees and vegetation-lined ditches, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The overall sense of tranquillity within parts of the character area (away from main road corridors) and the network of narrow tree-lined lanes is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. Open views to wooded horizons are sensitive to potential new development, which may interrupt or block such views. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from linear historic settlement pattern and the presence of several areas of co-axial fields (of ancient origin). There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 13 sites of importance for nature conservation, predominantly comprising 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.

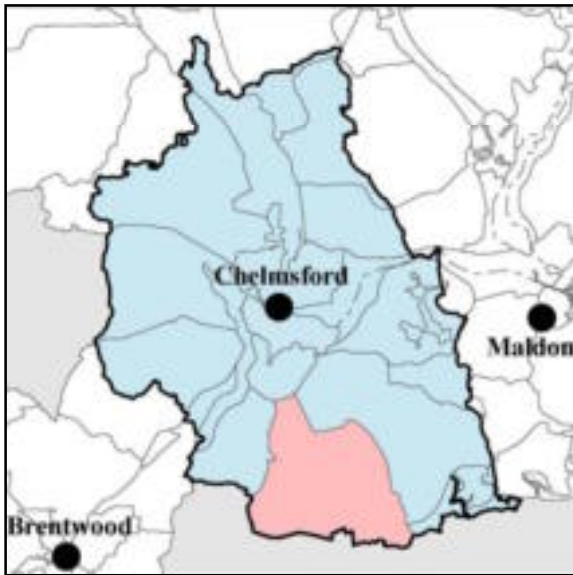
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Maintain views to landmark churches and halls and also to wooded horizons.
- Maintain open views into the Wid valley from the northern part of the character area.
- Ensure that new farm buildings are sensitively designed and located within the landscape in accordance with existing landscape character.
- Seek measures to screen visually intrusive urban edges around Brentwood, Mountnessing and Ingatestone.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

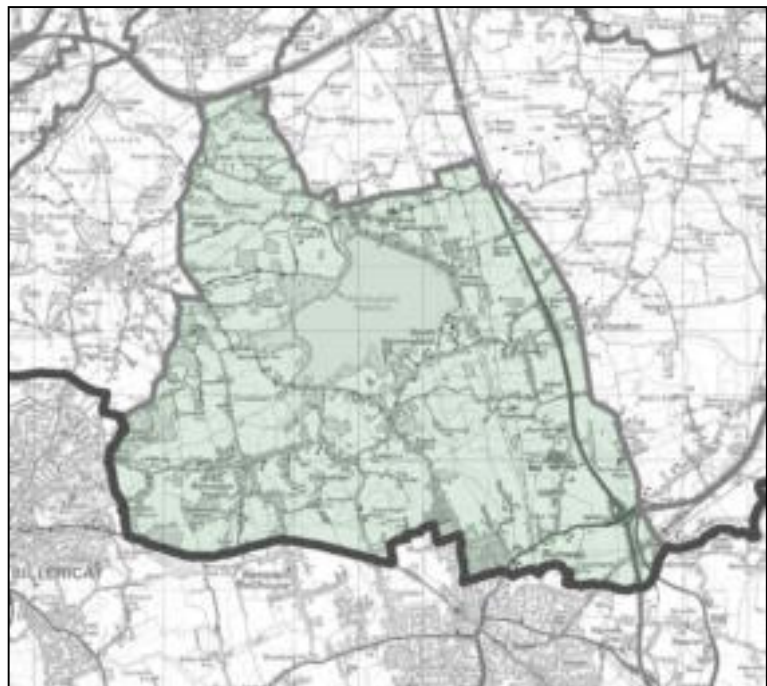
- Conserve and enhance mature hedgerow trees.
- Conserve and manage areas of woodland (consider the use of traditional methods, such as coppicing and pollarding, in keeping with local landscape character).
- Conserve and enhance areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland as important heritage, nature conservation and landscape features.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Introduce arable field margins as a means of ensuring that mature trees within hedgerows are not disturbed by ploughing.

F11 SOUTH HANNINGFIELD WOODED FARMLAND



Key Characteristics

- Undulating mature wooded farmland.
- Vast expanse of Hanningfield reservoir.
- Mixed woodland and a patchwork of diverse habitats surrounding the reservoir.
- Small-scale linear settlement pattern.
- Medium to large-scale arable fields with hedged and treed field boundaries.
- Views to wooded horizons both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Network of quiet, narrow rural lanes traverse the area.



Overall Character

This character area is situated to the south of Chelmsford and north of Billericay and Wickford (to the south of the Study Area). Undulating arable wooded farmland (delineated by mature hedgerows with several hedgerow trees) covers the area. The area slopes (relatively steeply in places) downwards from north to south, affording spectacular views across the Thames valley in places. At the centre of the area, character is dominated by the vast expanse of Hanningfield reservoir. The large body of water is surrounded by a mixed woodland reserve (including Peninsula Wood, Well Wood, Chestnut Wood and Hawks Wood, a visitors centre and nature reserve) and contains diverse habitats for wildlife (especially wildfowl). Flocks of swifts, swallows and martins swooping onto the reservoir during the summer, provide a visually interesting and dynamic character. The uniform and engineered concrete edges of the reservoir exert a strong human influence upon the surrounding landscape, whilst certain stretches of the reservoir exhibit more natural shorelines and have well-developed marginal vegetation. Settlement pattern consists of several small linear hamlets and villages (including South and West Hanningfield

and Ramsden Heath). Church towers within these villages are visible landmarks from the surrounding landscape. There is some sense of enclosure and tranquillity within woodland clearings and away from settlements. A network of quiet, rural and often tree-lined lanes also crosses the character area.

Visual Characteristics

- Open and framed views to wooded horizons, both within the character area and also within adjacent LCA.
- Spectacular panoramic views into the Thames valley from certain locations.
- Open, panoramic views across Hanningfield reservoir dramatically influenced by changing weather and colours of the sky.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by irregular fields mixed, with the predominant co-axial fields of ancient origin. The commons were mostly enclosed by the 19th century, but part of their extent can be seen in the surviving field boundary pattern. Historically, the settlement pattern was dispersed, some of it being focussed on commons. There were also scattered farmsteads. This pattern has survived with more recent nucleations of settlement at East Hanningfield and Rettendon.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture and pasture with frequent woodland. The area contains Hanningfield Reservoir SSSI (c. 400 ha) and 32 CWSs, comprising ancient and semi-natural woodland, unimproved grassland and wetland habitats.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Pressure of increased traffic on rural, minor lanes.
- Potential future expansion of Hanningfield reservoir.
- Potential for fertiliser and pesticide run-off from adjacent agricultural farmland to pollute Hanningfield reservoir and affect water quality and habitats.
- Potential for visually intrusive development at the fringes of small villages and also Wickford and Billericay.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A127 road corridor.
- Potential major road improvements to the A127.
- Potential visually intrusive development of new farm buildings.
- Deterioration and eventual loss of mature woodland, single trees and hedgerows.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include mature hedged and treed field boundaries and a patchwork of diverse woodland and other habitats surrounding Hanningfield reservoir (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The overall sense of tranquillity within parts of the character area (away from main road corridors) and the network of narrow tree-lined lanes is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. Open views to wooded horizons are sensitive to potential new development, which may interrupt or block such views. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and the presence of several areas of co-axial fields (of ancient origin). There are also several important wildlife habitats consisting of 22 areas of 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.

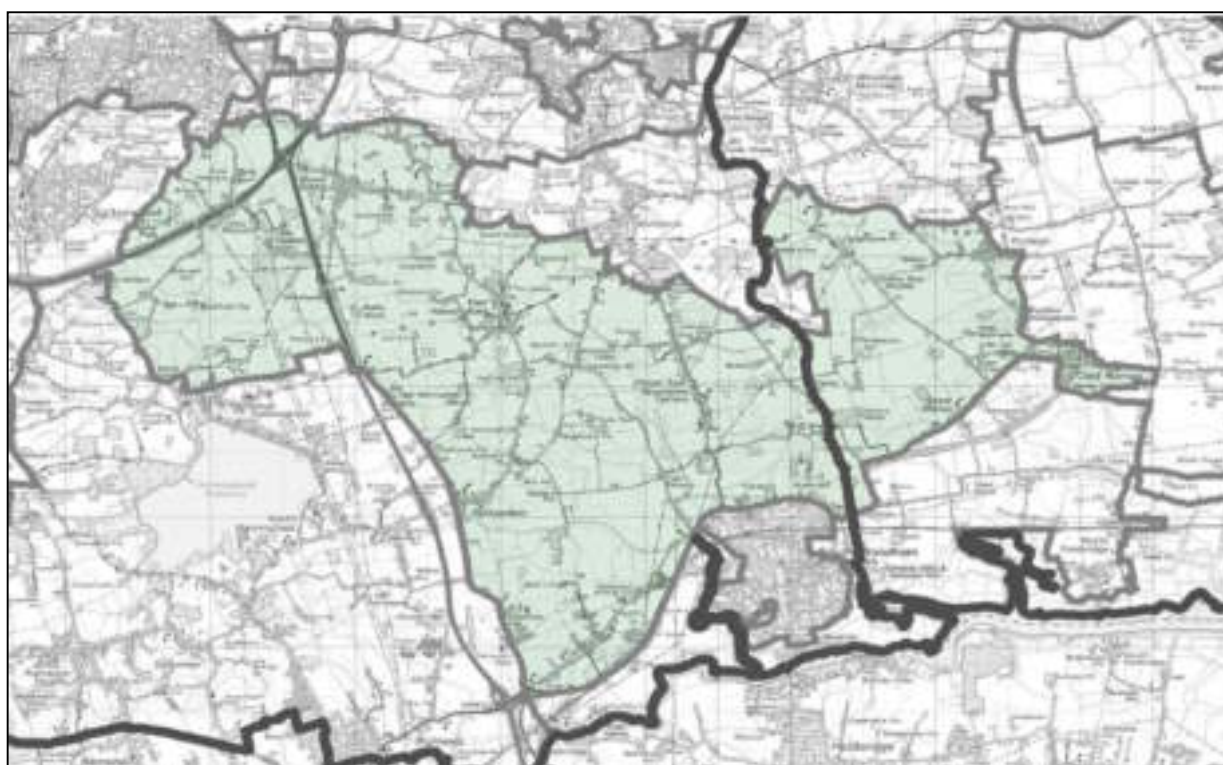
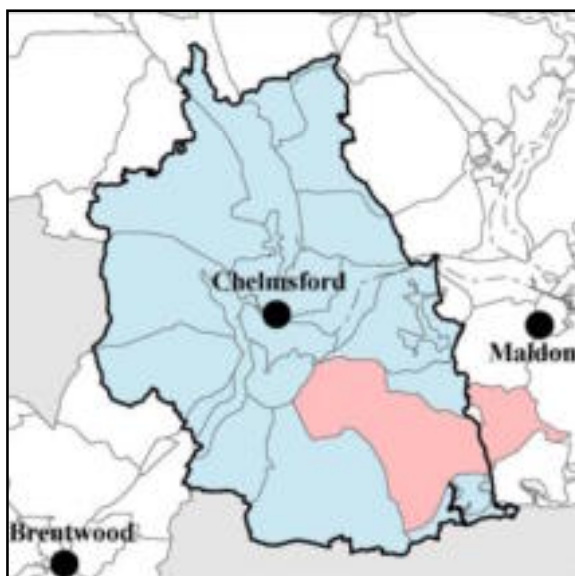
Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the landscape settings of small settlements within the character area and also Wickford and Billericay.
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Conserve existing views across the area and to adjacent Landscape Character Areas.
- Seek to screen visual detractors (such as A127 road corridor, for example with planted shelter belts).
- Conserve the open, undeveloped character and valuable wetland habitats associated with Hanningfield Reservoir.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage the existing mature hedgerow network.
- Conserve, manage and enhance patches of woodland (consider the use of traditional methods, such as coppicing and pollarding where appropriate to locality and local landscape character).
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Plant half-standard trees within field hedgerow boundaries to succeed over mature trees.
- Introduce arable field margins as a means of ensuring that mature trees within hedgerows are not disturbed by ploughing.
- Conserve and enhance areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland as important heritage, nature conservation and landscape features.
- Seek to minimise potential impacts from agricultural practices (such as run off) on valuable habitats within and fringing Hanningfield Reservoir.

F12 EAST HANNINGFIELD WOODED FARMLAND (shared with Maldon District)



Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling/undulating wooded farmland overlooking the Crouch River channel to the south.
- Predominantly large arable fields, delineated with very mature treed field boundaries and ditches.
- Evidence of field boundary loss.
- Pockets of pasture and pony paddocks.
- Network of quiet narrow lanes.
- Generally dispersed settlement pattern.
- Sense of tranquillity away from major road corridors.

- Fords where streams and narrow lanes meet.
- Views to wooded horizons and across the Crouch River channel.

Overall Character

This character area encompasses gently rolling/undulating wooded farmland to the north of South Woodham Ferrers and south of Chelmsford. Overall, the area slopes gradually downwards from north to south, towards the floor of the Crouch River valley. Predominantly large arable fields are delineated by very mature deciduous treed field boundaries, ditches and simple wooden post fences. In places, however, field boundaries are gappy with evidence of boundary loss. Pockets of pasture and pony paddocks are also dotted throughout the character area (for example surrounding Howe Green). A network of quiet, narrow tree-lined lanes cross the area, upon which there is a sense of enclosure. Patches of mature deciduous and mixed woodland provide further enclosure. Other than the large, nucleated settlement of South Woodham Ferrers (overlooking the Crouch River channel), settlement pattern consists of several small hamlets and scattered farmsteads. There is a sense of tranquillity within more intimate, northern parts of the character area, which becomes more disturbed to the south by activity associated with South Woodham Ferrers, the A132 and A130 road corridors. Open views across drained estuarine marsh to the Crouch channel help to create a recognisable sense of place. Pylons are also dominant within views southwards from the area. Several small stream corridors and narrow lanes permeate the area, and where these meet, fords are a key characteristic. Churches within small settlements (for example All Saints Church, East Hanningfield) are landmarks within views across and to the area.

Visual Characteristics

- Open and framed views to wooded horizons, both within the character area and also within adjacent LCA.
- Panoramic views across drained estuarine marsh to the south, along the Crouch River channel.
- Open views to urban edges of South Woodham Ferrers.
- Pylons dominant within views southwards from the area.
- Church towers are landmarks within views across the area.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by irregular fields mixed in with the predominant co-axial fields of ancient origin. Historically, the settlement pattern was dispersed, some of it being focussed on commons. This pattern has survived with more recent nucleations of settlement at East Hanningfield and Rettendon. The main historic landscape features include:

- Co-axial fields mostly aligned east to west
- Commons, which were mostly enclosed by the 19th century, although part of their former extent can be seen in the surviving field boundary pattern.
- A few ancient woodlands on the north of the area.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture and pasture. The area contains 4 CWSs, comprising grassland habitats.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Pressure of increased traffic on rural, minor lanes.
- Potential for fertiliser and pesticide run-off from adjacent agricultural farmland to pollute stream corridors/River Crouch and affect water quality and habitats.
- Potential for visually intrusive development at the fringes of small villages and also South Woodham Ferrers.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with A132 and A130 road corridors.

- Potential major road improvements to the A132 and A130.
- Visual prominence of new road bridges.
- Potential visually intrusive development of new farm buildings.
- Deterioration and eventual loss of mature woodland, single trees and hedgerows.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include very mature treed field boundaries, ditches and patches of mature deciduous and mixed woodland, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The overall sense of tranquillity within parts of the character area (away from main road corridors) and the network of narrow (often tree-lined lanes, with fords at the meeting point with streams) is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. Open views to wooded horizons and also panoramic views across drained estuarine marsh to the south are sensitive to potential new development, which may interrupt or block such views. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and presence of several areas of co-axial fields (of ancient origin). 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 and enhance the landscape settings of small settlements within the character area and also South Woodham Ferrers.
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character. Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Conserve existing views across the area and to adjacent Landscape Character Areas.
- Conserve open views across and along the Crouch River channel.
- Seek to screen visual detractors (such as A130 and A132 road corridors, for example with planted shelter belts).
- Seek to minimise the impact of visually intrusive new development on the wooded slopes.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage the existing mature hedgerow network.
- Conserve, manage and enhance patches of woodland (consider the use of traditional methods, such as coppicing and pollarding where appropriate to locality and local landscape character).
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Plant half-standard trees within field hedgerow boundaries to succeed over mature trees.
- Introduce arable field margins as a means of ensuring that mature trees within hedgerows are not disturbed by ploughing.
- Conserve and enhance areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland as important heritage, nature conservation and landscape features.
- Seek to minimise potential impacts from agricultural practices (such as run off) on valuable habitats within streams and the Crouch River channel.

F16 GALLEYWOOD WOODED FARMLAND



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating topography with views to higher land to the south and east.
- Settlement pattern dominated by Galleywood nucleated settlement.
- Occasional scattered farmsteads.
- Wide strip of small arable fields to the south of Chelmsford urban area.
- Intricate arrangement of habitats surrounding Galleywood common.
- Sense of tranquillity despite proximity to major A12 road corridor.



Overall Character

Situated directly to the south of Chelmsford, the western slopes of this area encompass the eastern valley sides of the River Wid. Topography gently undulates throughout the area, with views to higher land to the south (of the A12) and east (Danbury wooded hills). Settlement pattern is dominated by the large nucleated settlement – Galleywood, which is separated from the main built fabric within Chelmsford by a wide strip of small-scale fields, often with mature field boundaries. Occasional single farmsteads are also sprinkled within the area. An intricate and diverse arrangement of habitats (including woodland, lowland heath, open grassland, ponds, bog and common) surrounds Galleywood common, to the west of Galleywood. Open, panoramic views to surrounding wooded hill horizons can be gained looking southwards and eastwards from the common area. Despite proximity to the A12 corridor, there is a sense of tranquillity within (and in areas surrounding) Galleywood common and woodland.

Visual Characteristics

- Open, panoramic views to surrounding wooded hill horizons to the south and east.
- Open views into and along the Wid valley to the west.
- Views to Chelmsford urban edge from the northern part of the character area.

Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by irregular fields mixed in with the predominant co-axial fields of ancient origin. The commons were mostly enclosed by the 19th century, but part of their extent can be seen in the surviving field boundary pattern. Historically, the settlement pattern was dispersed, some of it being focussed on commons. There were also scattered farmsteads. The main historic landscape features include:

- Co-axial fields that are mostly aligned east to west.
- A few ancient woodlands.

Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture and pasture. The area contains the following sites of nature conservation value and one area of ancient woodland, including:

- A CWS comprising ancient and semi-natural habitat.
- Numerous CWSs at Galleywood, comprising woodland habitats and unimproved grassland.

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Loss of mature field boundaries.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with the main A12 road corridor.
- Increased pressure on historic lanes and minor roads.
- Potential visually intrusive expansion of Chelmsford and Galleywood.
- Potential loss of small-scale intricate field pattern to the north of Galleywood and south of Chelmsford through potential coalescence of both settlements.
- Management of Galleywood common for recreation and nature conservation purposes.

Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the intricate arrangement of habitats (including woodland, lowland heath, open grassland, ponds bog and common) surrounding Galleywood common, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Open views to wooded horizons to the south and east and also open views into and along the Wid valley to the west, are sensitive to potential new development, which may interrupt or block such views. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from east-west aligned co-axial fields, a few ancient woodlands, a dispersed settlement pattern and a visible surviving field boundary pattern, denoting the extent of former commons. 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

- Ensure that the design of new agricultural buildings reflects the local vernacular style and uses materials which are appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new development responds to the historic settlement pattern and uses materials which are appropriate to local landscape character.
- Seek ways to ensure that potential new development at the fringes of Chelmsford and Galleywood not visually intrusive within the surrounding landscape setting.
- Conserve the landscape setting of Chelmsford and Galleywood within the character area.

Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland within the area as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen where appropriate through planting.
- Seek ways to mitigate the visual impact of the A12 road corridor through introducing new and strengthening existing parallel shelter belts.
- Conserve historic, tree lined and covered lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 General

8.1.1 This section sets out the consultant's recommendations to the commissioning authorities for their consideration and action as appropriate.

8.1.2 Recommendations are provided for the application of the Landscape Character Assessment in relation to Local Development Framework policies for protecting and enhancing landscape character, and an outline framework for monitoring landscape change. Recommendations for further work required to enhance the evidence base on the landscape and settlement character of the Study Area are also included.

8.2 Key Applications of the Landscape Character Assessments

8.2.1 It is intended that the Landscape Character Assessments of Braintree District, Brentwood Borough, Chelmsford Borough, Maldon District and Uttlesford District can be used by all those with an interest in landscape planning, design and management within the Study Area.

8.2.2 In line with the aims and objectives set out in Section 1.2, the principal recommended application of the Landscape Character Assessments is in relation to the local authority planning process. Practical uses of the Landscape Character Assessments in this regard include:

- Raising the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to quality of life within the Study Area by recognising:
 - * both the differences and similarities between places
 - * what gives different places their special local identity and distinctiveness
 - * the need to protect and enhance special and valued characteristics
 - * that development needs to be sympathetic to these special qualities
 - * the need to actively improve the quality of places through good design.
- Informing the formulation of character-based landscape policies in the Local Development Framework.
- Providing the spatial framework for considering the landscape character implications of options for different scales and patterns of strategic development in the Local Development Framework.
- Informing development control decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change.
- Informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Development Frameworks of the impact of new development on landscape character.
- Providing a framework for more detailed studies to enhance the evidence base, and for the targeting of landscape enhancements in concert with development schemes.
- Informing design guidance to promote higher quality landscape design.
- Providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character and quality.

- 8.2.3 Planners, developers, architects, urban designers, landscape architects and other professionals may also find the characterisation information and guidelines useful as a reference source for informing the site masterplanning and building design process for specific development schemes. Other applications of the Landscape Character Assessments include its use by those involved in the targeting and delivery of environmental land management schemes - e.g. Environmental Stewardship advisers, landowners and managers. Local communities and other stakeholders may also find the Study useful as a basis for guiding their responses to consultations by the local planning authorities on plans, strategies and planning applications that may have significant implications for their local landscapes.

8.3 Incorporating Landscape Character into Local Development Frameworks

Key Issues to be Addressed by LDF Policies

- 8.3.1 The landscape planning policy framework in the Study Area was outlined in Section 1.4. In summary, the focus of the current national and emerging regional planning policy framework in relation to the protection and enhancement of landscape character can be summarised as:

- Sustainable development is the overarching objective and priority.
- Landscape character, settlement character and local distinctiveness should be taken into consideration in development.
- Landscape character should inform but not constrain development.
- The countryside is to be protected for its own sake but development that supports the rural economy should be considered.
- Core policies need to be clear, concise and criteria-based.
- A strong evidence base is required to support policies and any Supplementary Planning Documents.
- Local landscape designations and green wedges/strategic gaps, where these are to be retained, need justification based on a formal and robust assessment.
- Design policy is an important means for achieving landscape character objectives.

- 8.3.2 The range of issues affecting landscape character in the Study Area was identified in Section 2.4. The key issues in relation to planning can be summarised as follows:

- *Built development* – expansion of suburban character and pattern; use of standardised housing designs/inappropriate building methods/materials/details that ignore local vernacular; expansion of industrial, leisure and retail developments on settlement edges; pressure on open character of countryside gaps.
- *Infrastructure* - loss of tranquillity from road and development growth/widespread lighting; increase in power lines, telecommunication masts and associated buildings.
- *Small-scale and incremental change* - gentrification, suburbanisation and extension of rural settlements, dwellings and gardens; planting of exotic species, urban style fencing and lighting; loss of locally distinctive features such as walls, fences, signs, etc; increased car use/erosion of narrow lanes/adverse impact on landscape and settlement character/obtrusive road signage and traffic calming measures.
- *Settlements in their landscape settings* - relationship between settlement core and landscape severed by settlement expansion; new development unsympathetic to original settlement pattern and relationship with landscape; poor relationships between settlement and landscape/key views/landmarks/other landscape features.
- *Recreation and tourism* – access infrastructure; horse-related developments, golf courses.

- *Climate change* – reducing the causes of climate change through energy conservation/efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources; adapting to the consequences of climate change in relation to flood risk and sea level rise.

8.3.3 In order to most effectively address these issues, it is recommended that the commissioning authorities use this Landscape Character Assessment to underpin a character-based approach to landscape protection and enhancement in their Core Strategies. This is consistent with approaches by other authorities in England where criteria-based landscape character policies, with supporting guidance, are replacing the traditional reliance on Local Landscape Designations where these are considered to be too blunt an instrument for delivering sustainable development in landscape terms. The following approaches to incorporating landscape character within the respective Core Strategy documents are recommended based on existing and emerging best practice from Staffordshire¹ and West Sussex².

Incorporating Landscape Character into the Vision

8.3.4 It is recommended that the role of landscape in contributing to quality of life should be incorporated into the Core Strategy's Vision. For example:

'The [District/Borough] will be a place where distinctive and valued natural and historic landscapes and the built environment will be protected and enhanced over time, contributing to a high quality of life.'

Incorporating Character Objectives

8.3.5 It is recommended that a landscape character objective be included in the Core Strategy. This could be drafted as:

'To protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the varied landscape character within the [District/Borough] reflecting landscape sensitivity and promoting local distinctiveness.'

8.3.6 In addition, it is recommended that a settlement character objective should also be included in the Core Strategy. This could be drafted as:

'To protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the locally distinctive and historic character of the urban and rural settlements and their settings within the [District/Borough] and to retain the separation between settlements.'

8.3.7 To support the above character objectives, it is recommended that a design objective is also included, such as:

'To promote high quality design and a rigorous design process that embodies sustainable development and management principles, takes full account of site and context, respects and enhances the character of the area, and provides for inclusive access.'

¹ Planning for Landscape Change - an Introduction and User's Guide to Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Plan 1996-2011 (Staffordshire County Council, 1999).

² Countryside Agency Demonstration Project - Criteria-based Landscape Policies and Guidance in Local Development Documents : an Approach in West Sussex, Report No.1 Policies (White Consultants, February 2006)

Drafting Core Policies and Supporting Text

- 8.3.8 It is recommended that a criteria-based landscape character policy is included in each local authority's core strategy as a replacement for/in preference to Local Landscape Designations. The Policy should include reference to the following main components:
- Landscape character and local distinctiveness to be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced.
 - Proposals for development to take into account the key characteristics, local distinctiveness and the sensitivities to change of the relevant Landscape Character Areas identified by this Landscape Character Assessment.
 - Development to be permitted where it can protect, conserve and enhance:
 - * landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area (including its historical, biodiversity and cultural character and its tranquillity)
 - * the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, settlement and buildings and the landscape including important views
 - * the function of watercourses, woodland, trees, field boundaries, vegetation and other landscape features as ecological corridors
 - * the special qualities of rivers, waterways, wetlands and their surroundings
 - * the topography of the area including sensitive skylines, hillsides and geological features.
- 8.3.9 The policy needs to be drafted to reflect the predominant landscape character of the respective District/Borough as required – such as emphasising the particular character and sensitivities of coastal landscapes in Maldon District for example.
- 8.3.10 It is recommended that the supporting text for the landscape character policy should include reference to the following:
- Landscape character is of fundamental importance to the quality of life for communities in all areas.
 - High priority to be afforded to the protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character in delivering sustainable development in line with Government policy.
 - A clear definition of landscape character and local distinctiveness.
 - The intended preparation of a joint Supplementary Planning Document (if appropriate) to provide guidance on how the overall character of each Landscape Character Area identified in the Landscape Character Assessment can be protected, conserved and enhanced.
 - Other existing character studies (e.g. the Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Study) and proposed studies that provide part of the evidence base for landscape and settlement character.
 - Well-designed, high quality new development within rural areas that helps sustain and/or create landscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity to be encouraged.
 - Encouragement for landscape enhancement schemes, submission of landscape design statement with planning applications and provision of landscape-scale management plans/strategies.
- 8.3.11 The character of settlements within the Study Area is also of importance to the quality of life. Subject to provision of an appropriate evidence base being available (see Section 8.5 for details), a criteria-based settlement character policy is recommended - either in combination with the landscape character policy or as a separate policy. The formulation of a settlement character policy should include reference to the following main components:

- Settlement character and local distinctiveness to be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced.
- Proposals for development within and/or on the edge of settlements to take into account settlement character including its distinct identity, historic core pattern, setting and, in appropriate places, separation from adjacent settlements.
- Development to be permitted, provided that settlement character is protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced.

8.3.12 It is recommended that the supporting text for the settlement character policy should include reference to the following:

- Settlement pattern of separate settlements with intervening countryside is highly valued by local communities.
- Retaining the separate identity, character and the visual and functional amenity of settlements and preventing coalescence is a key objective.
- The intended preparation/facilitation of studies to contribute to the evidence base for the preparation of a joint Supplementary Planning Document (if appropriate) to provide guidance on how the overall character of towns and villages within the Study Area can be protected, conserved and enhanced.
- Studies include Urban Archaeological Surveys, Conservation Area Appraisals, Settlement-Edge Studies, and Local Distinctiveness Studies, and Town/Village Design Statements and Parish Plans developed by local communities.
- Encouragement for landscape enhancement schemes, submission of landscape design statements with planning applications and provision of landscape-scale management plans/strategies.

8.3.13 Based on the advice set out in paragraphs 8.3.8 to 8.3.12 above, a recommended draft policy for consistent use across all the local authorities' Core Strategies is included as Appendix F.

Incorporating Landscape Character into Other Core Policies

8.3.14 To support the above landscape/settlement character policies, it is recommended that local character considerations should also be incorporated into the following policies:

- *Design Policy* - to include reference to character, local distinctiveness, design process and use of design statements.
- *Nature Conservation Policy* - to include reference to European, national and locally designated wildlife sites, meeting BAP targets in ways that reinforce local landscape character, etc.
- *Heritage Policy* - to include reference to listed buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, etc.

Developing a Joint Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document

8.3.15 Building on the partnership approach to the preparation of the Landscape Character Assessments, it is recommended that consideration is given to developing a joint Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford. The aims of this 'Landscape Character SPD' would be to:

- Develop a co-ordinated approach or 'toolkit' for using the Landscape Character Assessment and other characterisation information to inform criteria-based planning policies and guidance in Local Development Documents (LDDs).

- Make the link between planning policy work and landscape management guidance for landowners and managers.
- Promote consistent approaches to development control practice by the five local planning authorities.

8.3.16 This approach would help integrate development planning with conservation and land management, in line with the requirements of PPS12³.

8.3.17 The purpose of the SPD would be to support the core and development control policies in the respective LDDs, and should therefore have a direct correlation with these policies. As advised by PPS12, the SPD should be relatively concise and criteria and process-based, without being over prescriptive. It should provide the link between the Landscape Character Assessments that form the evidence base, and the LDD policies. Subject to development of appropriate evidence bases (see Section 8.4), it is recommended that the Landscape Character SPD could incorporate Settlement Character and Design issues, or be complemented by separate SPDs addressing such issues. Examples of this type of SPD include High Peak Borough Council's Landscape Character SPD⁴.

8.4 Monitoring Landscape Change

8.4.1 In order to measure the effectiveness of planning policies in protecting, conserving and enhancing landscape character, quality and local distinctiveness, it is recommended that the local planning authorities give consideration to developing a framework for monitoring landscape change within the Landscape Character Areas identified by this Study. An outline of a possible monitoring framework is set out below as a starting point for consideration and further development as appropriate.

Defining Landscape Change

8.4.2 Policies and proposals can affect landscape in two basic ways:

- by impacting on *landscape character* – the subtle cumulative effects of often small-scale and incremental development over time on the underlying characteristics that affect sense of a place and contribute to local identity and distinctiveness;
- by impacting on *landscape quality* – typically through abrupt changes of development that either enhance or cause the loss or deterioration in landscape features that are of particular value.

8.4.3 In both cases, it is often changes related to the intangible attributes of landscape character (e.g. scale, pattern, texture, enclosure, visual stimuli, sense of tranquillity, etc), rather than physical elements, that most affect quality and character. This makes monitoring landscape change problematic. In relation to the first type of change, it is recommended that the local planning authorities jointly commission a project to devise a methodology for monitoring and measuring the impact of small-scale and incremental change on landscape character. Current work in West Sussex being led by the Chichester Harbour AONB Unit may offer some useful guidance in this respect.

³ PPS12 Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, 2004).

⁴ High Peak Borough Local Development Framework : Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document SPD5 (High Peak Borough Council, Adopted March 2006).

Developing Monitoring Objectives

- 8.4.4 Taking into account the suggested components of the landscape and settlement character policy in Section 8.3, the overall objective is to monitor the effectiveness of policies and proposals in protecting, conserving and enhancing elements that contribute to the character, quality and local distinctiveness of landscapes and settlements within the Study Area. This should use the relevant strategy objectives for each Landscape Character Area set out in Sections 3.0 to 7.0 of this report as the basis against which to monitor change.

Developing Monitoring Targets

- 8.4.5 In line with the suggested policy approach, the target against which the monitoring should be carried out is for development to have no net significant adverse affect on the character or quality of landscape character as described in the relevant Landscape Character Area descriptions, and wherever possible development should contribute positively by enhancing landscape character through high quality and innovative design.

Developing Monitoring Indicators

- 8.4.6 The Countryside Agency⁵ advise that specific features or attributes need to be selected from the key characteristics of individual Landscape Character Areas to act as indicators for monitoring changes within different areas. In relation to this Study, the criteria for selection of features or attributes as indicators include that they must be:

- central to the distinctive character of the individual Landscape Character Areas;
- liable to experience change either in extent or in their condition;
- capable of being measured against the key objectives for individual Landscape Character Areas and the overall monitoring target.

- 8.4.7 The selection of indicators also needs to consider the following:

- they need to be defined precisely in terms of desired trends;
- the desired direction of change (target) of the chosen indicator must be known;
- where possible, local stakeholders should be involved in the choice of indicators, particularly where there participation is needed to collect information to monitor changes.

- 8.4.8 Taking the above considerations into account, suggested indicators for monitoring changes to individual Landscape Character Areas include:

- change in the extent of existing characteristic elements in the landscape;
- change in the condition of existing characteristic elements in the landscape;
- change in the extent and form of new elements in the landscape;

⁵ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland : Topic Paper 2 – Links to Other Sustainability Tools (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

- change in the degree of key factors affecting landscape experience/sense of place (tranquillity/disturbance) and social benefits/well-being (access to wildlife, public open space);
- alteration and loss of vernacular buildings and other structures that contribute local distinctiveness.

8.4.9 In addition, suggested process indicators for monitoring landscape change could include:

- change in the coverage of landscape enhancement schemes;
- change in the number of landscape design statements submitted with planning applications;
- change in the coverage of completed landscape-scale management plans/strategies.

8.4.10 It is acknowledged that assembling data for monitoring landscape change against these indicators can potentially be a resource intensive process. As a minimum, it is recommended that the three process indicators set out in paragraph 8.4.9 are used to monitor the impact of the recommended policy set out in Appendix F.

8.5 Enhancing the Character Evidence Base

8.5.1 This Landscape Character Assessment provides information to help understand the distinctive character of landscapes within the Study Area, and it is expected that the evidence base will be treated as a material consideration in planning decisions. A variety of other character-based studies are needed to more fully inform the LDF policies and any SPDs. It is therefore recommended that, over time, the authorities work together with Essex County Council and other key partners to enhance the current character evidence base within the framework provided by this Landscape Character Assessment.

8.5.2 Options for enhancing the evidence base in relation to the character of the landscape (and settlements) within the Study Area include:

- ***Local Distinctiveness Studies*** – these should complement and significantly expand upon the content of this Landscape Character Assessment to provide comprehensive illustrated information and analysis of distinctive settlement forms/patterns, building styles and materials, and countryside signage/furniture.
- ***Landscape Design Guidance*** – to promote sensitive and high quality landscape design, by providing guidance on how the settings of new development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of the Local Development Framework in order to help retain local distinctiveness.
- ***Settlement Studies*** – including for example Townscape Character Assessments, urban archaeological surveys, settlement-edge studies, Conservation Area Character Appraisals, Town and Village Design Statements, and Parish Plans.
- ***Local Landscape Studies*** - more detailed assessments of landscape character at the local scale, undertaken to inform place-specific planning, design and management issues.
- ***Historic Environment Characterisation Studies*** - detailed integrated assessments of built heritage, historic landscape features and archaeological potential on a character area basis (in conjunction with Essex County Council).

- ***Area-based Regeneration Initiatives*** – detailed character appraisal studies to inform and underpin masterplans and design frameworks for the renewal and reuse of brownfield sites around settlement edges.
- ***Green Infrastructure Network Plans*** – long-term plans to establish networks of multi-functional green infrastructure sites, corridors and areas within the countryside in and around the District's/Borough's main settlements in concert with expansion proposals.
- ***Green Space Strategies*** – detailed strategies for delivering high quality parks and other public open spaces, based on PPG17⁶ open space audits and need assessments, prepared in line with CABE Space guidance⁷.
- ***River Corridor Environmental Strategies*** – including a coherent vision, objectives and an action plan for the long-term conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of key river corridors within the Study Area.

⁶ PPG17 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation (HMSO, 2002).

⁷ Green Space Strategies - a Good Practice Guide (CABE Space, Undated).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION



BRAINTREE, BRENTWOOD, CHELMSFORD, MALDON AND UTTLESFORD LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

First Stakeholder Workshop Note

2-4pm, Wednesday 30th November 2005, The Council Chamber, Saffron Walden

Participants

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA)	Dominic Watkins (Associate Technical Director)
	Emma Clarke (Landscape Planner)
Braintree District Council	Paul Munson (Planning)
	Melvyne Crow (Landscape)
Brentwood Borough Council	Jason Houghton (GIS)
Maldon District Council	Chris Bailey (Planning)
	Zyuoya Ling (Planning)
Uttlesford District Council	Melanie Jones (Planning)
	Sarah Nicholas (Planning)
	Ben Smeeden (Landscape)
Dedham Vale & Stour Countryside Project	Matt Hullis (Operations Manager)
Colchester Borough Council	Adam John (Landscape)
Essex County Council	Alison Bennett (Historic Environment)
	Martin Wakelin (Landscape)
	Crispin Downs (Landscape)
	Peter Spurrier (Landscape)
Hertfordshire County Council	Simon Odell (Landscape)

Aim of the Workshop

To discuss and review initial Landscape Character Types and Areas maps.

1. Welcome and Introduction

CBA gave a short presentation on aims of the overall project and the principles of landscape character assessment as a tool for establishing local distinctiveness and sense of place within each Borough/District, to inform land use planning, and land management policy and decisions.

It was also noted that initial work and preliminary characterisation had been based on Desk-study and had not included site visits, which are scheduled to start early in the New Year.

2. Review of National Level Landscape Character Areas

CBA presented an A0 plan to show Countryside Character Areas (Countryside Agency) and National Typology Landscape Description Units (Countryside Agency) which covered the Study Area. This map provided the starting layer of information to help build up a picture of landscape character within the Study Area.

3. Review of County Landscape Character Areas

CBA presented an A0 plan to show Essex County Landscape Character Types and Areas. These were plotted from previous work carried out at a County (1:50,000) scale for the whole of Essex (*Essex Landscape Character Assessment*, CBA, 2003). CBA noted that it was important that the local level (1:25,000) scale assessment being undertaken for each Borough/District, should be broadly consistent

with the County assessment, but should seek to refine the scale of assessment and boundaries to provide a more detailed description of landscape character, based on types and areas.

4. Correlation with adjacent Local Level Landscape Character Types and Areas

CBA noted that landscape character assessments, which are either, complete or undergoing within adjacent Counties and Districts, should be used to inform the definition of Landscape Character Areas at the boundaries of this study. This should ensure a consistent approach, wherever possible across the landscape, regardless of administrative boundaries. CBA noted that information was currently being gathered and fed in from the following adjacent studies:

- Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment
- Thurrock Borough Landscape Character Assessment
- Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment
- Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment
- Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment

5. Preliminary Landscape Character Types and Areas (1:25,000 scale)

CBA presented A0 plans to show preliminary Landscape Character Types and Areas for the Study Area, based on desk study and invited participative discussion of initial classification.

The following key points arose from discussions with stakeholders:

- Planning and land management guidelines for each Landscape Character Area, along with an approach based on determining sensitivity on a character area basis was seen as a useful and informative approach;
- Maldon DC (CB) emphasised the importance of the 6m contour in relation to potential coastal change (managed retreat/realignment/abandonment) within the District;
- Braintree DC (PM/MC) noted a distinctive ridge which should be picked up as part of the assessment process, but thought that this would be recorded more clearly after field work had taken place;
- Uttlesford DC (MJ/SN) noted that Stansted Airport should perhaps be included as an urban landscape type/area, rather than falling within Farmland Plateau type;
- Hertfordshire County Council (SO) offered to provide GIS shapefiles for East Hertfordshire to enable CBA to look more closely at the western boundary of the Study Area where this correlates with Hertfordshire work. SO noted that he was particularly interested in establishing a consistent approach at the boundaries with the Study Area;
- Essex County Council (MW) noted that it would probably be possible to further subdivide areas of farmland plateau following initial fieldwork;
- Essex County Council (AB) provided information on relevant on-going historic environment characterisation work in Chelmsford Borough;
- Essex County Council (PS) highlighted previous Landscape Character Assessment work for Chelmsford Borough.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 21st March 2006, 10.00am – 1pm, Hylands House, Chelmsford.



BRAINTREE, BRENTWOOD, CHELMSFORD, MALDON AND UTTLESFORD LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

Second Stakeholder Workshop Note

10 am – 1pm, Tuesday 21st March 2006, Hylands House, Chelmsford

Participants

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA)	Dominic Watkins (Associate Technical Director) Alison MacDonald (Senior Heritage Planner) Emma Clarke (Landscape Planner)
Braintree District Council	Paul Munson (Planning) Melvyne Crow (Landscape) Nina Pegler (Planning)
Chelmsford Borough Council	Paul MacBride (Planning)
River Colne Countryside Project	Simon Amstutz (Project Officer)
Brentwood Borough Council	Geoff Boyton (Planning)
Maldon District Council	Zyuoya Ling (Planning) Tom Kelly (Cllr)
Uttlesford District Council	Sarah Nicholas (Planning)
Dedham Vale & Stour Countryside Project	Matt Hullis (Operations Manager)
Colchester Borough Council	Adam John (Landscape)
Essex County Council	Nigel Brown (County Archaeologist) Martin Wakelin (Landscape)

Aim of the Workshop

To review latest character area mapping and identify key issues/changes in the landscape.

1. Introduction

CBA gave a short presentation on the aims of the workshop and outlined progress of fieldwork to date.

2. The Landscape Character Types and Areas

For the first half of the workshop, CBA presented key information and findings to date as part of the ongoing LCA work

Scale of definition

CBA confirmed that the assessment is being undertaken at 1:25,000 scale and that draft Landscape Character Types and Areas fit within the broader framework of Essex County LCA (1:50,000).

Boundary definition issues

Current ongoing fieldwork seeks to verify draft LCA boundaries based on landscape typology classifications.

Fit with adjacent classifications

CBA confirmed that ongoing work was broadly consistent with adjacent character assessments:

- Suffolk are in the process of determining draft Landscape Character Types from their Land Description Units (CBA awaiting information from Suffolk CC);
- South and North Hertfordshire have completed district level Landscape Character Assessments and provided digital LCA boundaries to CBA;
- Landscape Character Types within Cambridgeshire are broadly consistent with Landscape Character Types defined for the purpose of this study;
- Boundaries are also consistent along the eastern edge with Colchester Borough Council and southern edge with Thurrock Borough Council.

‘Historic Landscape Character Areas’

CBA gave a presentation of ongoing Historic Landscape Character (HLC) work, which is being undertaken to feed into the landscape character assessment process. The methodology has been agreed with English Heritage and Essex County Council and seeks to define historic Landscape Character Areas for each district. It will highlight historic field patterns and features within the Study Area.

Field Survey

CBA noted that this is an ongoing process, which is seeking to refine boundaries, whilst at the same time describing the key characteristics and sense of place within each character area.

4. Key Issues/Changes in the Landscape

For the second part of the workshop, initiated a discussion and stakeholders were split into two groups, with a summary discussion at the end of the process. For each Authority area, stakeholders were asked to identify:

1. *The key threats to valued characteristics/sense of place in relation to, for example:*

- Major urban extension and new settlements;
- Small urban extensions;
- Major transportation developments/improvements;
- Commercial/warehouse estate/port development;
- Developments with individual large/bulky buildings (eg. large farm buildings, industrial plant);
- Large scale ‘open uses’ (eg. golf courses, water bodies, major agricultural change, forestry, marinas, caravan parks);
- Mineral extraction/waste disposal;
- Incremental small scale developments (eg. minor highway improvements, small landform changes, farmstead intensification);
- Utilities development, ie. masts, pylons;
- Changes in traditional countryside management.

2. *The key opportunities to enhance character/sense of place?*

A brief summary of the key threats to valued characteristics and key opportunities to enhance character/sense of place, on an Authority basis is given below:

Braintree – Key threats to valued characteristics/sense of place:

- Minerals & waste – impacts on open landscape;
- Visibility of A120 and B19 (Silver End);
- Commercial development;
- Urban extensions - Braintree, Witham (sensitivity);
- New A120/A120 extension - Braintree eastwards to A12;
- A12/road improvements;
- Character of Protected Lanes (historic designation);
- Maltings Lane urban extension (2nd Phase - wider landscape impacts?)
 - Original masterplan 10 y.o. (No landscape input from District Council)
 - LCA guidelines may have helped - quality of design;
- Railway line improvements;
- Sudbury Western Bypass (possible?);
- Traffic from expanded airport?
- Waste management facility @ Rivenhall disused airfield;
- Halstead football ground relocation (possible?) - greenfield site;
- Water transfer proposals via Stour;
- Rural Diversification.

Braintree – Key opportunities to enhance character/sense of place

- Stewardship schemes – enhancements e.g. field margins;
- Rural diversification;
- AONB extension?
- Protect rural/tranquil lanes;
- Hatfield Peverel Gravel Pits - restoration (ongoing) – possible;
- ES enhancement/restoration of plateaux – ecological/historic opportunities.

Brentwood – Key threats to valued characteristics/sense of place:

- Speculative plot division – small holdings/residential/horses etc;
- Removal of field boundaries due to agricultural changes – (not a big issue);
- Small-scale development - diversification of rural building;
- Possible future pressure for new urban development/extensions in longer term around main settlements/transport corridors e.g. Brentwood, Ingatestone;
- Transportation improvements/widening; strategic road network- M25/A12 & A127 – western boundary - visibility/lighting;
- Rail corridors - ‘Shenfield Loop?’
- Mobile phone masts

Brentwood– Key opportunities to enhance character/sense of place

- Thames Gateway - issues - regeneration/pressure for rural leisure development;
- Principles for enhancement/conservation;
- Thames Chase (Project) – southern part of Borough, but particularly fenland south of A127 denuded at boundaries (elm disease/agricultural practices)- Planting boundary enhancements to reflect historic pattern;
- Diversification – improvements associated with proposals;
- Stewardship - further guidance;
- Green Arc - improvement/enhancement;

Chelmsford – Key threats to valued characteristics/sense of place:

- River valleys - pressures on grazing/openness;
- Urban extensions - north of Chelmsford;
- Protection of urban areas - key villages;
- Flood alleviation reservoirs - impact e.g. Halstead;
- Infrastructure - NE bypass/A12;
- Some mineral extraction - Country Park – Restoration;
- Changing agricultural practices – legacy;
- Reservoirs - creation of, and impacts

Chelmsford – Key opportunities to enhance character/sense of place

- Enhancements associated development;
- Policy design - i.e. green wedges - biodiversity/recreation
 - Pointers to good practice/engineered ‘feel’/Boreham airfield
 - In keeping with landscape character;
- Nature conservation sites along river corridors (potential);

Maldon – Key threats to valued characteristics/sense of place:

- Wind power (all, including coast) – visibility;
- Industry – nuclear;
- Water transfer - proposals knock-on;
- Future power stations;
- Highway improvements /widening (impact on landscape structure/pattern);
- Mobile masts;
- Sea level rise/climate change (agriculture/land cover/ecology);
- Excessive light pollution (study area wide issue);
- Expansion of settlements pressures (towns and villages) (capacity issues);
- Blackwater Estuary recreational use capacity issues;
- Hall Road Chalet Site proposals.

Maldon – Key opportunities to enhance character/sense of place

- Flood risk management - catchment area - river valleys;
- Managed realignment;
- Coastal protection policy belt - special character of coastal strip;
- Undergrounding pylons?
- Managed retreat;
- Tree planting/‘Community’ woodlands (nb. WGS changes uncertainty & ESA future?)
- Targeting ES schemes;
- Improved estuary management (more integrated);
- Partnership working (with £)

Uttlesford– Key threats to valued characteristics/sense of place:

- Stansted - 2nd runway - secondary effects - traffic/noise;
- Urban extension - A120/M11 - B1383 - corridors
 - damaging effects on landscape;
- A1060;
- Agricultural storage;
- Cypressus - planting - open/visible scape;

- Urban extensions - Haverhill.

Uttlesford - Key opportunities to enhance character/sense of place

- Mineral extraction/enhancement;
- Diversification;
- ES schemes.

Generic Threats

- Streams and rivers drying;
- Climate Change;
- Complex landscapes - sensitive to change;
- Park & Ride sites?
- Pressure for extension of gardens - varying sizes/uses - biodiversity - creeping urbanisation;
- Car boot sale sites + associated structures;
- Polytunnels – visibility.

Date of Final Workshop: 10.30am-1pm Tuesday 6th June 2006, Council Chamber, Brentwood Town Hall



BRAINTREE, BRENTWOOD, CHELMSFORD, MALDON AND UTTLESFORD LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Third Stakeholder Workshop Note

10.30 am – 1pm, Tuesday 6th June 2006, Council Chamber, Brentwood Town Hall

Participants

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA)	Dominic Watkins (Associate Technical Director) Emma Clarke (Landscape Planner)
Braintree District Council	Paul Munson (Planning)
Chelmsford Borough Council	Paul MacBride (Planning)
Brentwood Borough Council	Geoff Boyton (Planning)
Maldon District Council	Chris Bailey (Planning) Penny Jenner (Cllr) Tony Lancaster (Planning)
Uttlesford District Council	Melanie Jones (Planning) Ben Smeeden (Landscape)
River Colne Countryside Project	Simon Amstutz (Project Officer)
Essex County Council	Martin Wakelin (Landscape) Nigel Brown (County Archaeologist)
Countryside Agency	Graham King

Aim of the workshop

To present and discuss the overall draft findings of the Study with stakeholders.

1. Introduction

CBA distributed a short handout containing extracts from the First Draft Report.

CBA gave a brief overview of the status and contents of the First Draft Report. This noted the following key points:

- The relationship of the five assessments to adjacent completed and emerging landscape character assessments;
- Aims and Objectives of the Study;
- Approach and Methodology (including incorporation of Historic landscape characterisation inputs to provide a historic time-depth dimension).

2. Overview of the Study Area

CBA gave a brief presentation of the main components of Section 2.0, which covered the following key sections:

- Physical Influences on the Shaping of the Landscape;
- Historical Influences on the Landscape;
- Key Forces for Change in the Landscape (including discussion of potential applications within the LDF process);
- An overview of Landscape Character within the Study Area.

3. Structure of the Character Area Profiles

CBA explained that each character area profile was structured to include the following sections:

- Key Characteristics;
- Overall Character;
- Visual Characteristics;
- Historic Land Use;
- Ecological Features;
- Key Planning and Land Management Issues;
- Sensitivities to Change;
- Proposed Landscape Strategy Objective;
- Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines;
- Suggested Land Management Guidelines.

CBA also noted that within the Draft Final Report, each character area profile would include:

- Schematic context map to identify location of Character Area;
- OS base map showing Character Area boundaries;
- Photograph(s) to illustrate typical character/features of Character Areas.

Discussion followed regarding the potential to show Landscape Character Area boundary lines on figures as a blurred line, rather than a solid boundary. All concluded that the preferred approach was to stick with the solid line to ensure consistency with other recent LCA studies, and caveat each LCA Figure with a relevant statement.

4. Landscape Character of Braintree District

CBA gave a brief presentation of the 3 Landscape Character Types and 22 Character Areas within the area.

5. Landscape Character of Brentwood Borough

CBA gave a brief presentation of the 3 Landscape Character Types and 9 Character Areas within the area.

6. Landscape Character of Chelmsford Borough

CBA gave a brief presentation of the 4 Landscape Character Types and 16 Character Areas within the area.

7. Landscape Character of Maldon District

CBA gave a brief presentation of the 6 Landscape Character Types and 24 Character Areas within the area.

8. Landscape Character of Uttlesford District

CBA gave a brief presentation of the 3 Landscape Character Types and 21 Character Areas within the area.

9. Summary and Recommendations/Applications

CBA presented the possible applications of the Landscape Character Assessment in relation to LDF policies for protecting and enhancing landscape character, including:

- Raising the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to quality of life within the Study Area by recognising;
 - * both the differences and similarities between places
 - * what gives different places their special local identity and distinctiveness
 - * the need to protect and enhance special and valued characteristics
 - * that development needs to be sympathetic to these special qualities
 - * the need to actively improve the quality of places through good design
- Informing the formulation of policies in the Local Development Framework;
- Providing the spatial framework for considering the landscape character implications of options for different scales and patterns of strategic development in the Local Development Framework;
- Informing development control decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change;
- Informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Development Frameworks of the impact of new development on landscape character
- Providing a framework for more detailed studies to enhance the evidence base, and for the targeting of landscape enhancements in concert with development schemes;
- Informing design guidance to promote higher quality landscape design;
- Providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character and quality.

10. Discussion and Comments – All

PMB noted the need for the study to flag up a link between the character-based approach and replacement of Special Landscape Areas.

MW noted the need for signposts within the document to surrounding adjacent landscape character assessments.

NB noted the need to point out that adjacent landscape character area descriptions should be read in conjunction with each other to ensure that the relationships (for example historic links) between the whole landscape can be understood.

All discussed the processes involved in two possible methods for assessing sensitivity:

1. Assessing the inherent sensitivity of an area of landscape, based upon a number of criteria;
2. Assessing the sensitivity of an area of landscape to a particular type of development or change.

DW explained that this study took the first approach and sought to provide broad statements about the inherent sensitivities of areas of landscape within the Study Area. It was noted that this study should also be read alongside the County LCA work.

CB questioned the achievability of some of the suggested landscape strategy objectives/landscape planning and land management guidelines.

GK suggested that it was important that a strategic study such as this should be a statement of the desirable situation.

All agreed that it was necessary to look carefully at the emphasis placed on landscape planning and land management guidelines, and suggested the use of words such as 'suggested' and 'proposed'.

CB also noted that there was a possibility that people may read sections of the planning and land management guidelines out of the context of the main report and character area profiles.

GB suggested that it might be possible to add a caveat to each landscape character area profile to ensure that sections were not read in isolation.

CB noted the need to ensure that the document was consistent with Environment Agency advice, particularly within coastal character areas.

11. Next Steps

All discussed possible ways to take the project forward, including the possibility of preparing a 'Landscape Character Planning Toolkit' to develop a co-ordinated approach to the use of Landscape Character Assessment and other characterisation information to inform criteria-based planning policies and guidance in Local Development Documents (LDDs). This approach would help integrate

development planning with conservation and land management, in line with the requirements of PPS12. This toolkit should be capable of being formally adopted as a joint Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) if required.

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Community Strategy

All local planning authorities have a duty to prepare community strategies under the Local Government Act 2000 in conjunction with other public, private and community sector organisations. Community Strategies should promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Local Development Frameworks provide the spatial expression to those elements of the Community Strategy that relate to the use and development of land.

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out the long term vision and the strategic policies required to deliver that vision. Its main aim is to promote sustainable development. It will also seek to protect and enhance the environment, as well as defining the general locations for delivering strategic development including housing, employment, retail, leisure, community and transport. This Development Plan Document includes the existing national, regional and local strategies that have implications for the development and use of land. The Core Strategy includes a key diagram showing in broad terms the main policies and proposals, and also includes a number of strategic development policies that set out the broad criteria against which planning applications for the development and use of land and buildings will be considered. Such policies will ensure that any development in the area is in harmony with the spatial vision and objectives set out in the core strategy. They will also highlight the needs and characteristics of the local area.

Design Guides

A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of a local authority or other organisation often with a view to retaining local distinctiveness.

Development Briefs

Inform developers and other interested parties of the constraints and opportunities presented by a site, and the type of development expected or encouraged by local planning policies.

Development Plan Document (DPD)

Development Plan Documents that a Council are required to prepare include the core strategy, site-specific allocations of land and area action plans. There will also be a proposals map, which will illustrate the spatial extent of policies that must be prepared and maintained to accompany all development plan documents. All Development Plan Documents must be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination, and adopted after receipt of the inspector's binding report.

Evidence Base

An up-to-date information base on key aspects of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the area, to enable the preparation of a sound spatial plan that meets the objectives of sustainable development.

Local Development Document (LDD)

Local Development Documents are those documents that together make up the Local Development Framework. They comprise of Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and the Statement of Community Involvement.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

This is the term given to the portfolio of Local Development Documents which will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for the area.

Site Specific Allocations

Land allocated for specific uses identified in specific Development Plan Documents. Specific policies that relate to these designations are set out in a Development Plan Document and cover principles such as design or specific requirements for implementation. Policies relating to the delivery of the Site Specific Allocations, such as any critical access requirements, any broad design principles or any planning obligations which may be sought, are set out in a development plan document.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

This sets out the standards that a Council intends to achieve in relation to involving the community and all stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Local Development Plan Documents and in significant planning applications, and also how the local planning authority intends to achieve those standards. A consultation statement showing how a council has complied with its Statement of Community Involvement should accompany all Local Development Documents.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

These documents contain policy guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in Development Plan Documents. They do not form part of the development plan, nor are they subject to independent examination.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

An appraisal of the economic, social and environmental effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with sustainable development.

Landscape Character Area

A discrete geographical area of a particular Landscape Character Type with a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the area.

Landscape Character Type

A generic unit of landscape with a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the type.

Conservation Area

Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which is desirable to preserve or enhance, through strict control of new development, and protection of trees, and the need for demolition of buildings or walls to be subject to Conservation Area Consent.

Scheduled Monument

An ancient monument or deposits designated by DCMS under the Ancient Monuments Act 1979.

APPENDIX C
SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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APPENDIX D
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS METHODOLOGY

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS METHODOLOGY

This methodology for the definition of Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCAs) was agreed with Essex County Council Historic Environment Unit (Nigel Brown) and English Heritage (David Went).

The methodology involved five broad stages:

- * Addition of supplementary datasets to the Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) dataset;
- * Creation of outline areas;
- * Review in relation to work undertaken by Essex County Council;
- * Description and review;
- * Overlay of Landscape Character Areas.

Addition of Supplementary Datasets to HLC Dataset

Two additional supplementary datasets were included within the analysis:

- * Ancient Woodland data (from English Nature); and
- * Registered Historic Park and Garden data (from English Heritage).

Creation of Outline Areas

The initial HLCA were primarily derived from an interpretative analysis of the HLC dataset coupled with on-screen references back to original datasets, e.g. OS mapping, historic mapping and references to secondary surveys. This process formed the foundation for the entire characterisation. The boundaries of these areas were cross-checked with digital OS historic mapping which allowed the team to analyse areas where certain HLC types were open to debate. This analysis allowed for the sub-division and redefinition of some areas.

It should be noted that the character area boundaries are ‘soft’ and do not exactly match the underlying HLC data. This reflects the broad scale of digitisation and assessment. The analysis was undertaken at a variety of scales depending on the particular locality and situation. As the areas were developed, short notes on the key characteristics were developed to guide the descriptions of the areas.

Review in Relation to Work undertaken by Essex County Council

Essex County Council have undertaken a HLC zoning project for the entirety of Essex. They used a similar methodology to that described above. However, due to the County level scale it is not as refined as the level which is required at District level, producing 118 zones for the County and 57 for the Study Area. The boundaries and descriptions of these Character Zones were used to review and further modify the HLCA boundaries.

Description and Review

Once the initial areas were digitised, the descriptions for each area were prepared. The descriptions drew on a range of sources and attempted to reflect the reasoning behind the definition of an area and, where possible, relate that area to its wider historic context. The descriptions sought to highlight the key characteristics and HLC types in an area, and identified any particular significant features or assets. The process of preparing the descriptions were also part of the process of defining the areas, and this led to the modifications and deletion of some boundaries.

The draft HLCAs and associated descriptions were circulated to English Heritage and Essex County Council for comment.

Overlay of Landscape Character Areas

The HLCAs and the draft Landscape Character Areas were overlaid to enable an assessment to be made of the correlation between boundaries. The HLCAs contributed both to the description of Landscape Character Areas and to their definition.

APPENDIX E
CURRENT LOCAL PLANNING SITUATION

APPENDIX E

CURRENT LOCAL PLANNING SITUATION

Authority	Current Local Plan Status	Core Strategy: Issues & Options	Core Strategy: Preferred Options
Braintree DC	Adopted July 2005	November 2006	January 2007
Brentwood BC	Adopted August 2005	December 2006	June 2007
Chelmsford BC	Adopted April 1997	March 2005	November 2005
Maldon DC	Adopted November 2005	December 2006	July 2007
Uttlesford DC	Adopted January 2005	May 2006	October 2006

APPENDIX F

DRAFT CORE STRATEGY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER POLICY

Option A - Landscape Character Policy

'POLICY X - PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OF URBAN AREAS SHOULD BE INFORMED BY AND BE SYMPATHETIC TO LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER, AND SHOULD CONTRIBUTE, AS APPROPRIATE, TO THE ACTIVE CONSERVATION, ENHANCEMENT AND/OR RESTORATION OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED.

DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN PROTECT, CONSERVE AND/OR ENHANCE:

- * LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE AREA (INCLUDING ITS HISTORICAL, BIODIVERSITY AND CULTURAL CHARACTER AND ITS TRANQUILLITY)
- * THE DISTINCTIVE SETTING OF, AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN, SETTLEMENTS AND BUILDINGS AND THE LANDSCAPE INCLUDING IMPORTANT VIEWS
- * THE FUNCTION OF WATERCOURSES, WOODLAND, TREES, FIELD BOUNDARIES, VEGETATION AND OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AS ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS
- * THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF RIVERS, WATERWAYS, WETLANDS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS
- * THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE AREA INCLUDING SENSITIVE SKYLINES, HILLSIDES AND GEOLOGICAL FEATURES.

Supporting Explanatory Text

The undeveloped countryside is part of the everyday surroundings for a large proportion of the population in the Borough/District, and the visual character of landscapes is a significant influence on the quality of life for communities in all areas. In line with Government policy, the Council affords high priority to the protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character in delivering sustainable development within the Borough/District. The Council seeks to encourage well-designed, high quality new development that helps sustain and/or create landscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity.

A Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared to provide guidance on how the Landscape Character Assessment of the Borough/District (a technical study prepared by independent consultants in consultation with representatives of stakeholder groups) can be applied to help protect, conserve and enhance the landscape. The study identifies and describes distinctive Landscape Character Areas throughout the Borough/District as a whole. Drawing on this study, the SPD set out objectives and guidelines for conserving, enhancing and restoring the character of the Landscape Character Areas. This information can be used, along with other studies that provide part of the evidence base about landscape character, to inform considerations about the effects of development proposals on the distinctive character, qualities and sensitivities of landscapes throughout the Borough/District.' Other studies include the Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for example.

Option B – Combined Landscape and Settlement Character Policy

POLICY X - PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE INFORMED BY AND BE SYMPATHETIC TO LOCAL LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT CHARACTER, AND SHOULD CONTRIBUTE, AS APPROPRIATE, TO THE ACTIVE CONSERVATION, ENHANCEMENT AND/OR RESTORATION OF THE LANDSCAPE OR TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED.

DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN PROTECT, CONSERVE AND/OR ENHANCE:

- * LANDSCAPE OR TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AND LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE AREA (INCLUDING ITS HISTORICAL, BIODIVERSITY AND CULTURAL CHARACTER AND ITS TRANQUILLITY)
- * THE DISTINCTIVE SETTING OF, AND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN, SETTLEMENTS AND BUILDINGS AND THE LANDSCAPE INCLUDING IMPORTANT VIEWS
- * THE FUNCTION OF WATERCOURSES, WOODLAND, TREES, FIELD BOUNDARIES, VEGETATION AND OTHER LANDSCAPE FEATURES AS ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS
- * THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF RIVERS, WATERWAYS, WETLANDS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS
- * THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE AREA INCLUDING SENSITIVE SKYLINES, HILLSIDES AND GEOLOGICAL FEATURES.

Supporting Explanatory Text

The undeveloped countryside is part of the everyday surroundings for a large proportion of the population in the Borough/District, and the visual character of both landscapes and townscapes are a significant influence on the quality of life for communities in all areas. The settlement pattern of separate settlements with intervening countryside is also highly valued by local communities. In line with Government policy, the Council affords high priority to the protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape and townscape character in delivering sustainable development within the Borough/District. The Council seeks to encourage well-designed, high quality new development that helps sustain and/or create landscapes and townscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity. Retaining the separate identity, character and the visual and functional amenity of settlements and preventing coalescence is also a key objective.

A Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared to provide guidance on how the Landscape Character Assessment of the Borough/District (a technical study prepared by independent consultants in consultation with representatives of stakeholder groups) can be applied to help protect, conserve and enhance the landscape. The study identifies and describes distinctive Landscape Character Areas throughout the Borough/District as a whole. Drawing on this study, the SPD set out objectives and guidelines for conserving, enhancing and restoring the character of the Landscape Character Areas. This information can be used, along with other studies that provide part of the evidence base about landscape and the character of towns and villages in the Borough/District, to inform considerations about the effects of development proposals on the distinctive character, qualities and sensitivities of landscapes and townscapes throughout the Borough/District.' Other studies include the Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Study, Urban Archaeological Surveys, Conservation Area Appraisals, Settlement-Edge Studies and Local Distinctiveness Studies, and Town/Village Design Statements and Parish Plans developed by local communities.



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