

Chelmsford City Council

Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys

Review Report



February 2017

Amec Foster Wheeler Environment
& Infrastructure UK Limited



Report for

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Executive summary

Purpose of this report

1. This report has been produced for the purpose of providing part of the evidence base for the emerging Chelmsford Local Plan. Amec Foster Wheeler was commissioned by Chelmsford City Council to undertake a review of the extent of, and rationale for, the existing Green Wedges and to assess the potential extension of the Green Wedges along the valleys of the Rivers Chelmer, Can and Wid. The study will form part of the evidence base helping to underpin the emerging Local Plan and in particular the reference in the Issues and Options Consultation¹ that:

“The valleys and flood plain of the Rivers Chelmer, Wid and Can are protected as Green Wedges through Chelmsford's Urban Area. These have played an important role in shaping the form and character of Chelmsford and providing physical links to the countryside. They also provide an important amenity, recreation and nature conservation resource. The Council believes that the general extent of the existing Green Wedges should be maintained and further extensions along the river valleys should be promoted.”

Green Wedge Assessment

2. The assessment includes a full review of the existing Green Wedge designation to assess whether they are suitable for protecting the land for various reasons and whether the boundaries of the Green Wedges should be extended along the river valleys. The report provides a reasoned justification for the decisions taken to identify areas which are currently:
 - ▶ Within the Green Wedge network which should remain designated;
 - ▶ Within the Green Wedge network which should be removed; and
 - ▶ Not within the Green Wedge network which should be included.
3. Precise boundaries are outlined and mapped, together with details on the characteristics and features of each Green Wedge such as areas of informal and formal open space, important heritage and landscape features, nature conservation sites, cross-valley views, existing hedgerows patterns and cycle and footpath routes.

Chelmsford's Green Wedges

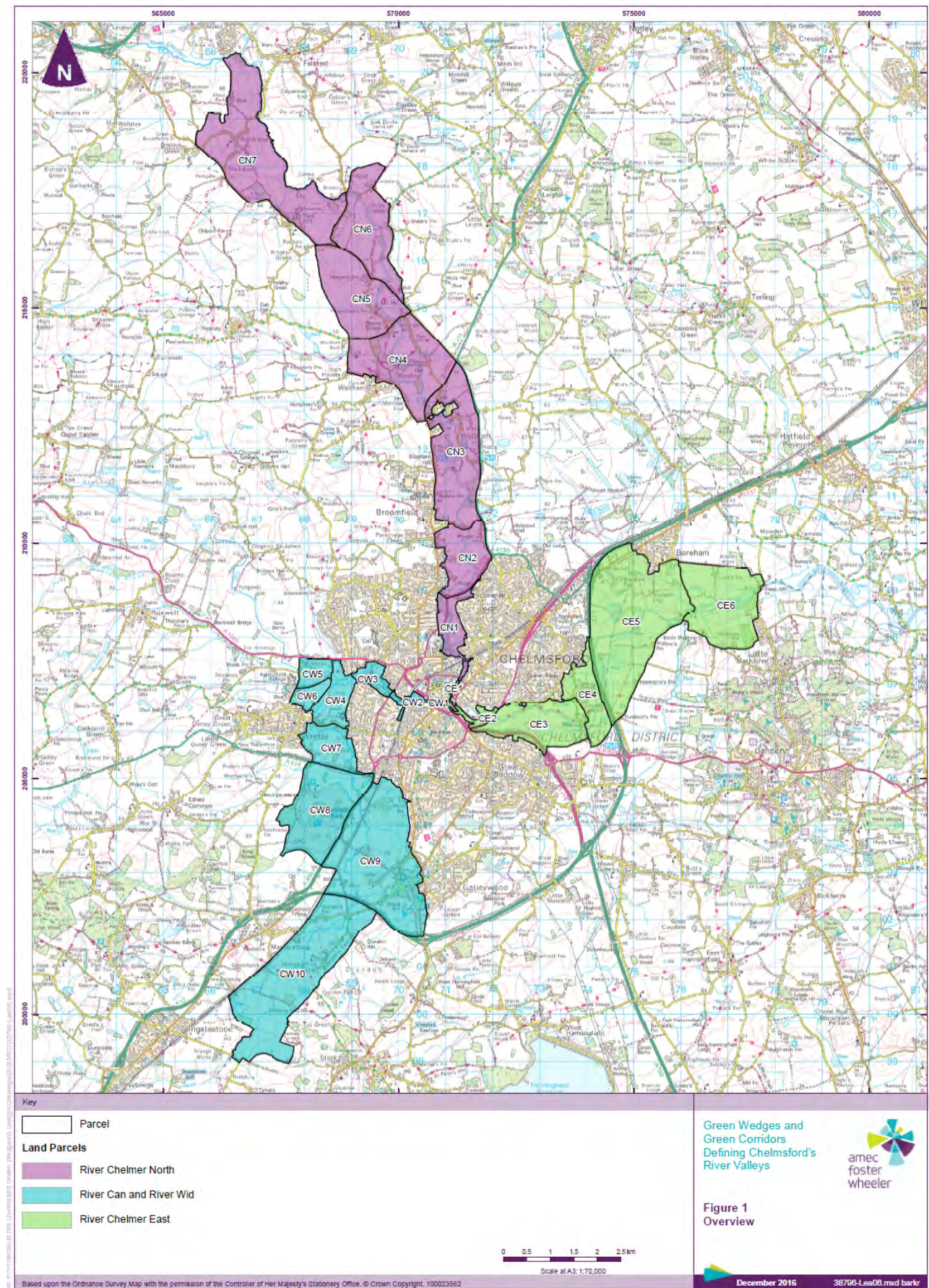
4. The valleys of the River Wid, River Can and River Chelmer form an important part of Chelmsford's landscape and natural environment. Their designation as Green Wedges is to maintain and protect the open character of the landscape of the river valleys, to provide physical links between the urban area of Chelmsford and the countryside beyond, to provide an important network of natural habitats and various formal and informal leisure and recreation uses.
5. The current Green Wedge designations have been successful in protecting unsustainable development and maintaining the character of Chelmsford as seen through unsuccessful planning applications and appeals for development in the Green Wedge.

Survey

6. The River Valleys were divided into parcels for survey which recorded the function and appropriate boundaries of each parcel, describing their character and fitness for purpose in respect of various parameters including: land use, landscape features and quality, role in containing built edges, access and opportunities for new/additional land management. Figure 1 illustrates the extent and component parcels of Chelmsford's principal River Valleys.

¹ Chelmsford City Council (November 2015) **Chelmsford Local Plan: Issues and Options Consultation Document**

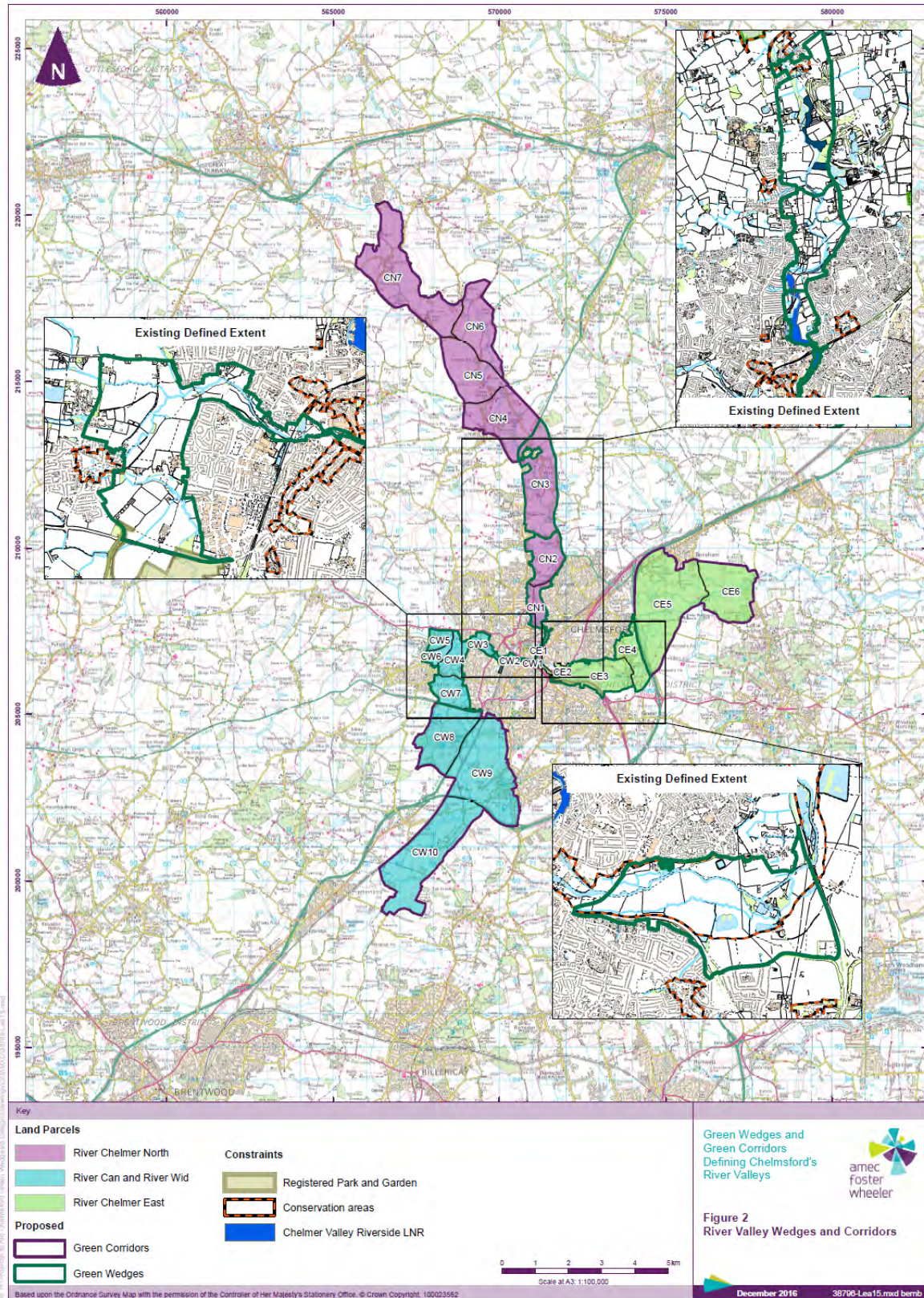
Figure 1 Survey Parcels for the River Valleys



Results

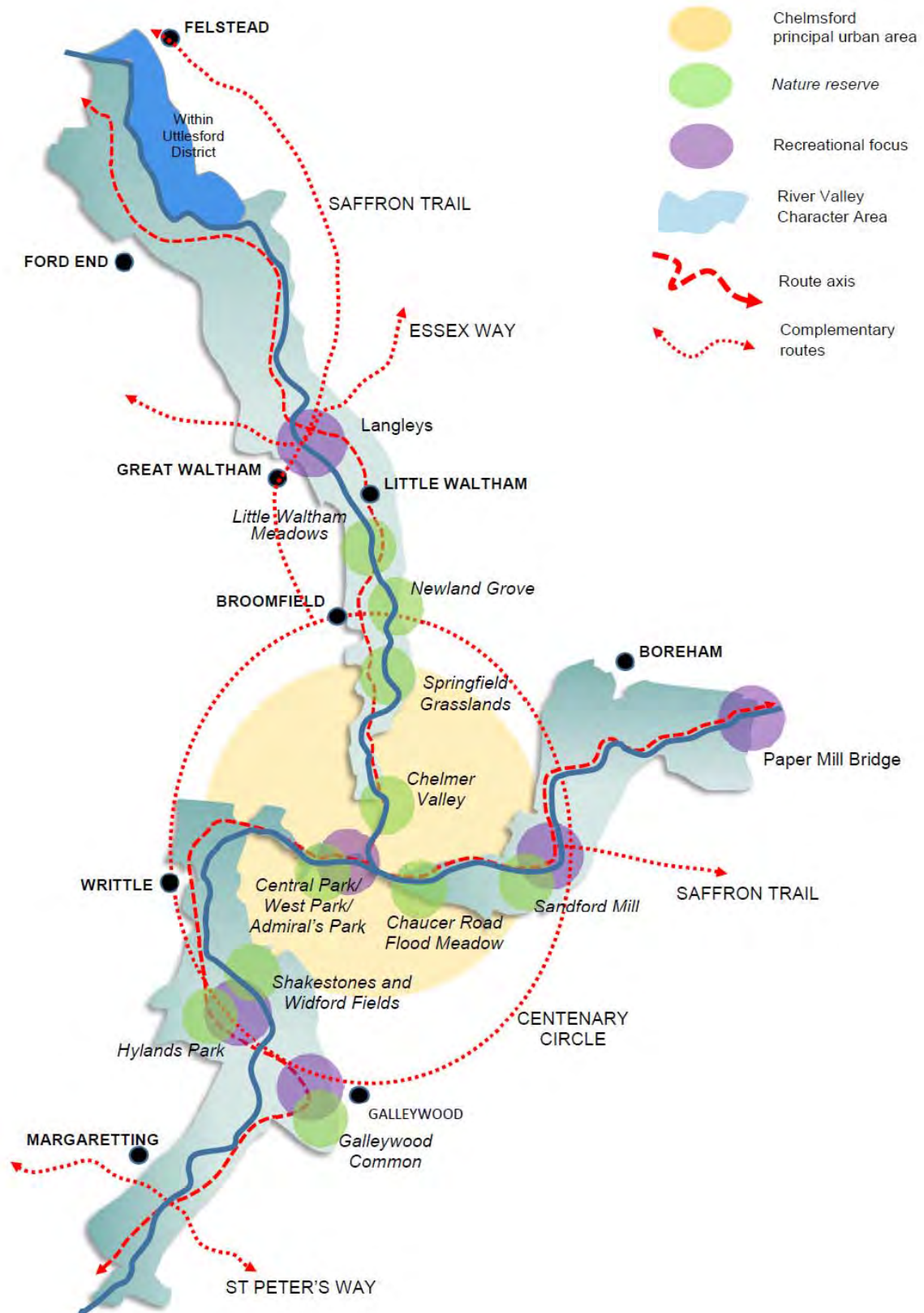
- Detailed profiles of the 23 parcels which comprise the River Valleys have been produced, containing detail on land use, landscape character, recreation and biodiversity assets and boundary detail. Figure 2 illustrates the proposed division, for planning policy purposes, of the River Valleys into Green Wedges and Green Corridors, reflecting their separate but related policy requirements.

Figure 2 River Valley Wedges and Corridors



8. Figure 3 illustrates the interrelationship between the River Valleys and their natural and cultural assets, demonstrating a spatial unity which serves as basis for planning policy which protects and enhances the River Valleys and development of a City-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy. Recommendations on Local Plan policy objectives relating to Green Wedges and Green Corridors are set out, as well as a structure for a Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Figure 3 Spatial Concept for River Valley Wedges and Corridors



Contents

1.	Background to the Study and Key Issues	1
1.1	Study Remit	1
1.2	Chelmsford's Green Wedges	1
1.3	Green Wedges and National Planning Policy	2
1.4	The role of Green Wedges in the emerging Local Plan	3
2.	Study Methodology	5
3.	River Valley Analysis	9
3.1	Overview	9
3.2	River Wid and River Can	14
3.3	River Chelmer North	20
3.4	River Chelmer East and Blackwater Navigation	25
4.	Principles and Practice of Green Wedge and Green Corridor Definition	29
4.1	Testing the Principle of Definition	29
4.2	A Spatial Strategy & Planning Policy	31
	Spatial Strategy	31
	Green Wedges and Green Corridors	33
	Green Wedges	33
	Green Corridors	35
4.3	Planning Policy Objectives for Green Wedges and Green Corridors	35
	Green Wedges: Proposed Policy Objectives	35
	Green Corridors: Proposed Policy Objectives	35
5.	Conclusions: Green Wedges, Green Corridors and Planning for Green Infrastructure in Chelmsford	37
5.1	Study Conclusions	37
5.2	A Green Infrastructure-led Approach	39
	Rationale	39
	Green Infrastructure Principles	39
	Outline Structure for a Green Infrastructure Strategy	40
Table 3.1	River Valley Key Characteristics	10
Table 3.2	Can and Wid Parcel Character Analysis	15
Table 3.3	Chelmer North Parcel Character Analysis	22
Table 3.4	Chelmer East Parcel Character Analysis	27
Table 4.1	Components of River Valley Character	30
Table 5.1	What can be done 'within current budgets'?	37
Table 5.2	What is more ambitious?	37
Table 5.3	Example Green Infrastructure Protection, Enhancement and Creation Actions	40

Figure 1.1	Indicative Green Wedges identified as part of the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation	4
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Figure 2.1	Existing Green Wedges, Parcels for Survey and Landscape Character Areas	7
Figure 3.1	Topography	9
Figure 3.2	River Valley Character Areas within Chelmsford City Council	11
Figure 3.3	Chelmsford's Designated Natural and Cultural Assets	12
Figure 3.4	Formal and informal open space, cycleways and Public Rights of Way	13
Figure 3.5	River Wid and River Can: Component Parcels	14
Figure 3.6	River Chelmer (North): Component Parcels	21
Figure 3.7	River Chelmer (East & Blackwater Navigation): Component Parcels	26
Figure 4.1	Chelmsford River Valleys as the basis for a connected network	29
Figure 4.2	Chelmsford River Valleys Spatial Relationships	32
Figure 4.3	Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Proposed Extent	34
Figure 5.1	Landscape continuity: the role of the White Willow (<i>Salix alba spp.</i>)	38

Appendix A Parcel Profiles

1. Background to the Study and Key Issues

1.1 Study Remit

1. Amec Foster Wheeler was commissioned by Chelmsford City Council to undertake a review of the extent and rationale for the existing Green Wedges and to assess the potential extension of the Green Wedges along the valleys of the Rivers Chelmer, Can and Wid. The study will form part of the evidence base helping to underpin the emerging Local Plan and in particular the references in the Issues and Options Consultation² to the use of Green Wedges as components of the City's spatial planning strategy.
2. The study will provide up-to-date and robust evidence to accompany consultation on the Preferred Options Local Plan scheduled for early 2017. This report relates to requirement a) i.e. the analysis of the potential extension of Green Wedges within the City boundary.
3. The overall aim of this study is to provide a review of the existing Green Wedge designation to assess whether they are suitable for protecting the land for various reasons and whether the boundaries of the Green Wedges should be extended along the river valleys. The report provides a reasoned justification for the decisions taken to identify areas which are currently:
 - ▶ Within the Green Wedge network which should remain designated;
 - ▶ Within the Green Wedge network which should be removed; and
 - ▶ Not within the Green Wedge network which should be included.
4. Precise boundaries are outlined and mapped, together with details of the characteristics and features of each Green Wedge such as areas of informal and formal open space, important heritage and landscape features, nature conservation sites, cross-valley views, existing hedgerows patterns and cycle and footpath routes.

1.2 Chelmsford's Green Wedges

5. The valleys of the River Wid, River Can and River Chelmer form an important part of Chelmsford's landscape and natural environment. Their designation as Green Wedges is to maintain and protect the open character of the landscape of the river valleys, to provide physical links between the urban area of Chelmsford and the countryside beyond, to provide an important network of natural habitats and various formal and informal leisure and recreation uses.
6. The current Green Wedge designations have been successful in protecting the River Valleys in the vicinity of the urban area from unsustainable development and maintaining the character of Chelmsford as seen through unsuccessful planning applications and appeals for development. The principle and practice of Green Wedge designation in Chelmsford have been supported at Examination³.
7. The Issues and Options Local Plan consultation states that the Council believes that the general extent of the existing Green Wedges should be maintained and further extensions along the river valleys should be promoted, subject to review of the precise boundaries.
8. In addition to Chelmsford City Council, a number of authorities within Essex, Yorkshire, Leicestershire, Devon and Derbyshire use Green Wedges as a policy tool to protect land (and to a lesser extent help shape growth). These have generally been supported at Examination as a legitimate means of organising and systematically protecting crucial green infrastructure assets.

² Chelmsford City Council (November 2015) **Chelmsford Local Plan: Issues and Options Consultation Document**

³ Chelmsford Borough Council (2008) **Core Strategy Inspector's Report** & Chelmsford Borough Council (2011) **North Chelmsford Area Action Plan Inspector's Report**

1.3 Green Wedges and National Planning Policy

9. Green Wedges are long-standing policy instruments which have varying popularity as a means of protecting specific areas from intrusion by development and directing growth towards and away from specific areas. Green wedges typically perform a multifunctional role designed to:
 - ▶ Prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods;
 - ▶ Maintain the open character of a 'green lung' contributing to health and wellbeing for residents;
 - ▶ Bring the countryside into the heart of town;
 - ▶ Provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play;
 - ▶ Provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat;
 - ▶ Protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity; and
 - ▶ Provide a positive approach to land use.
10. National policy neither encourages nor discourages the use of district-scale planning and landscape designations of this type and where used they remain as locally-led designations which do not have statutory weight. They are nevertheless powerful planning policy tools, particularly when combined with partner strategies for green infrastructure, biodiversity and recreation and it is this which is the focus of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated planning policy guidance. In this regard, key elements of the NPPF are that:
 - ▶ Information gained from relevant assessments should be used to determine requirements for open space, sports and recreational provision, as access to high quality open spaces can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities (para. 73).
 - ▶ Such existing spaces should not be built on unless it is clearly shown the land is surplus to requirements, or a land-swap would take place to replace the loss of land and equal/enhance its quality, or the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision and the needs outweigh the losses (para. 74).
 - ▶ Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks (para. 113).
 - ▶ Local Plans should plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure (para. 114).
 - ▶ Local Plans should also include policies which plan for biodiversity at a landscape scale across local authority boundaries, and should identify and map components of local ecological networks (para. 117).
 - ▶ Crucially, Local Plans should:
 - ▶ identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance; and
 - ▶ contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, and supporting Nature Improvement Areas where they have been identified (para. 157).
11. The NPPF (Annex 2: Glossary) defines open space as *"all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity"*, and green infrastructure as *"a*

network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.”

12. Following the introduction of the NPPF, the principle and practice of local designations which seek to specifically protect land deemed to be of local and/or district-wide importance have been tested at Local Plan Examinations and through appeals. Certain reference points have emerged as part of the testing of the integrity of the policies and proposals, which are that:
 - ▶ blanket policies seeking to protect large areas of land from development are not compliant with the NPPF;
 - ▶ any policy and designation must be supported by a comprehensive and robust evidence base that sets out why a landscape designation is justified;
 - ▶ designation should be accompanied by a criteria-based policy against which development proposals will be assessed, that follows the NPPF (para 113) which requires that protection is commensurate with status, and gives appropriate weight to contribution to wider ecological networks; and
 - ▶ policy should allow for the informed consideration of landscape character and whether proposed development would represent an unacceptable adverse effect.

1.4 The role of Green Wedges in the emerging Local Plan

13. The new Local Plan for Chelmsford is at a formative stage but sets development of a Green Infrastructure network at the heart of the proposed Local Plan, thus:

***4.14** A central part of the new Local Plan's strategy will be the creation of a Green Infrastructure network across the district, providing green links between neighbourhoods and urban centres, linking existing and new parks and open spaces and providing opportunities for new footpaths, cycleways and riverside walks. In particular, the Council will work with Essex County Council to enhance the strategic cycleway and footpath network between Chelmsford and surrounding villages.*

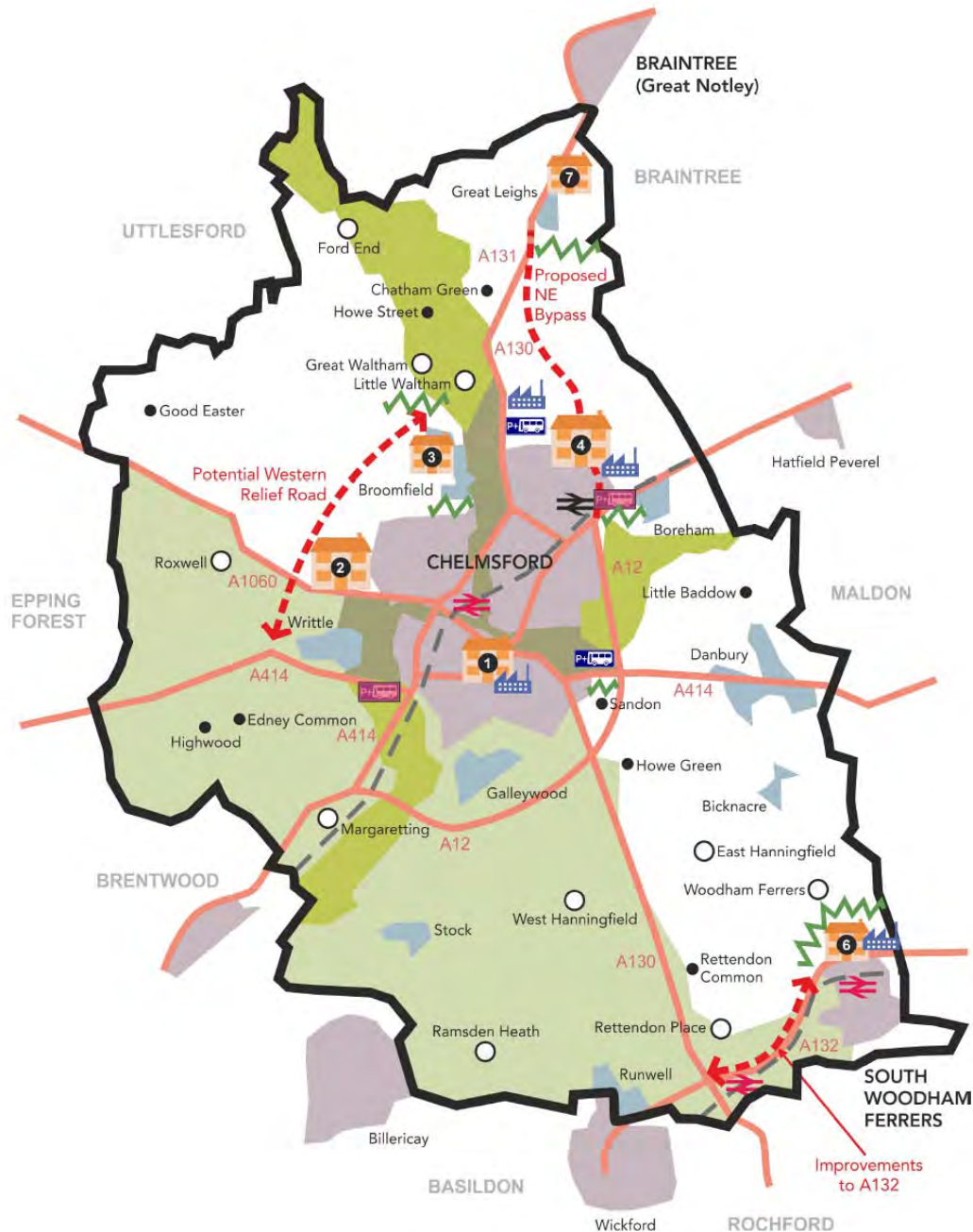
14. In realising this aspiration, the multifunctional role of the City's three Green Wedges is emphasised, their principal roles being to:

“ensure the retention of the open character of the valleys' landscape; and to provide links from the urban area into the countryside, protection for the important network of natural habitats and nature conservation areas, and leisure and recreation opportunities. Development proposals relating to rural activity or existing residential/businesses uses must be compatible with the character and appearance of the Wedge. Other encouraged enhancements include the commitment to undergrounding overhead power lines, tree planting and improvements of paths.”

15. The principle of Green Wedges was endorsed at the Core Strategy Examination, specifically that *“Green Wedge designations are [therefore] necessary to recognise and protect the important river valleys and flood plains”* through:
 - ▶ Protecting structurally important areas of open land which influence the form and direction of urban development.
 - ▶ Ensuring open land extends outwards between existing and planned development limits of urban areas.
 - ▶ Preserving strategic landscape and wildlife links between the Countryside and urban open spaces.
 - ▶ Preventing coalescence and maintaining the physical identity of settlements adjoining main urban areas.
16. It is the intention of the City Council that this approach is rolled forward and reinforced in the new Local Plan, specifically that:

“The valleys and flood plain of the Rivers Chelmer, Wid and Can are protected as Green Wedges through Chelmsford's Urban Area. These have played an important role in shaping the form and character of Chelmsford and providing physical links to the countryside. They also provide an important amenity, recreation and nature conservation resource. The Council believes that the general extent of the existing Green Wedges should be maintained and further extensions along the river valleys should be promoted.”

Figure 1.1 Indicative Green Wedges identified as part of the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation



Note: The above map illustrates Option 1 from the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document. Other options were presented in the Consultation Document.

2. Study Methodology

1. The study has been approached in a systematic fashion, proceeding from the assembly and mapping of existing data, through fieldwork to analysis and reporting. There is no accepted good practice in respect of reviewing the extent and function of Green Wedges, but there are various equivalent studies⁴ which have helped to inform this methodology.
2. The following steps have been followed:
 - i. Mapping at 1:50,000 and 1:10,000 scale data held by the City Council including: existing Green Wedge boundaries, cultural heritage, nature conservation, open spaces, rights of way, landscape character areas and aerial photography.
 - ii. Using the assembled mapping, identification of parcels along each river valley (River Chelmer north, River Chelmer east and Blackwater Navigation and River Can/River Wid west) as the basis for detailed field survey. These parcels reflect logical divisions of the River Valleys into areas which display broadly similar character and are defined by significant boundaries such as main roads. These parcels serve as a means of summarising the diverse character of the River Valleys akin to Landscape Description Units⁵. In order to identify and test appropriate parcel (and therefore Green Wedge) boundaries, Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial photography was used to apply the following hierarchy, based on their relative strength and permanence, namely:
 - ▶ Roads and rights of way of various scales, from rough tracks through to motorways;
 - ▶ A building line that provides a straight logical line and clearly represents the edge of the urban area;
 - ▶ A river, stream, ridge, car park, playground or other physical feature (such as a woodland edge);
 - ▶ An ownership boundary marked by physical features such as a hedgerow or a fence line; and
 - ▶ In the absence of any physical features to follow on the ground to provide a straight line between two permanent physical features.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the parcels identified for survey, along with the existing Green Wedge boundaries and strategic Landscape Character Areas⁶ which as reference points for the detailed definition.
 - iii. A field survey proforma was devised to determine the character, function and appropriate boundaries of each parcel, describing their character and fitness for purpose in respect of the following parameters:
 - ▶ Location and setting
 - ▶ Land use

⁴ See, for example:

Derby City Council (2012) **Core Strategy Green Wedge Review**

Harrogate District Council (2011) **Review of Local Landscape Designations: Green Wedges**

Leicester and Leicestershire (2009) **Green Wedge Review Joint Methodology**

⁵ A Landscape Description Unit (LDU) is a representation of a Landscape Type in a specific location. These are the basic building blocks of the landscape and are defined by a combination of six key characteristics relating to geology, topography, soils, tree cover character, land use and historic settlement pattern. See

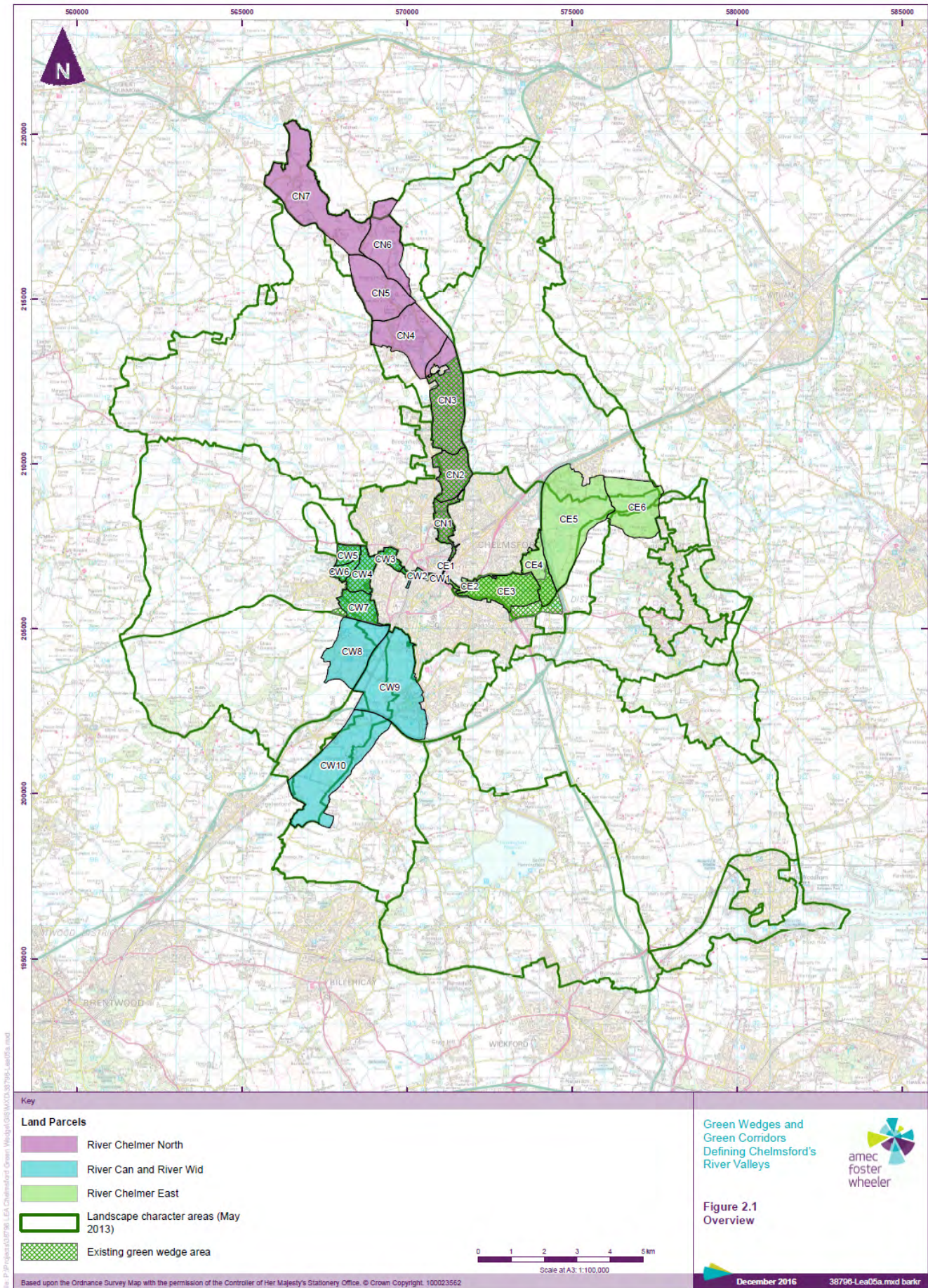
<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/landscape-description-units>

⁶ Chris Blandford Associates (September 2006) **Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments**

- ▶ Landscape features and vegetation cover
 - ▶ Topography and drainage
 - ▶ Boundary character and opportunities for adjustment and setting
 - ▶ Landscape and visual assessment (character, sensitivity, intervisibility)
 - ▶ Relationship with the open countryside
 - ▶ Role in containing built edges
 - ▶ Nature conservation and cultural heritage
 - ▶ Principal access, quality and evidence of use and opportunities for enhancement
 - ▶ Opportunities for new/additional land management
 - ▶ Recommendations on parcel extent, management and contribution to the purpose and function of the Green Wedge
3. In undertaking the field survey and the assembly of parcel profiles a narrative evaluation (as opposed to a quantitative approach) of character and function, determined through the professional judgement of a chartered planner and a chartered landscape architect was used. Combined with illustrative material such as photographs (aerial and ground-based) and maps, a series of profiles which describe each defined survey parcel and which together are used to evaluate the character and purpose of the Green Wedge (existing and potential) as a whole.
4. The results of the field survey have been assembled into parcel profiles for each River Valley (Appendix A) and drawn upon to provide the analysis for this report. These profiles and accompanying mapping have benefitted greatly from the inclusion of open space survey mapping completed for the City Council⁷ which sets out the precise extent of the widely recognised categories of open space, ranging from formal to informal and which for the River Valleys within and adjacent to the City's built extent (i.e. the current Green Wedges) form a significant proportion of the land use within them.
5. The analysis of the rationale for, and application of, Green Wedges centred on the River Valleys draws together the field survey work and puts this into the context of the emerging Local Plan by proposing planning policy objectives and also making connections to wider strategy work concerning green infrastructure.

⁷ Ethos Environmental Planning (2016) **Chelmsford Open Space Study**

Figure 2.1 Existing Green Wedges, Parcels for Survey and Landscape Character Areas



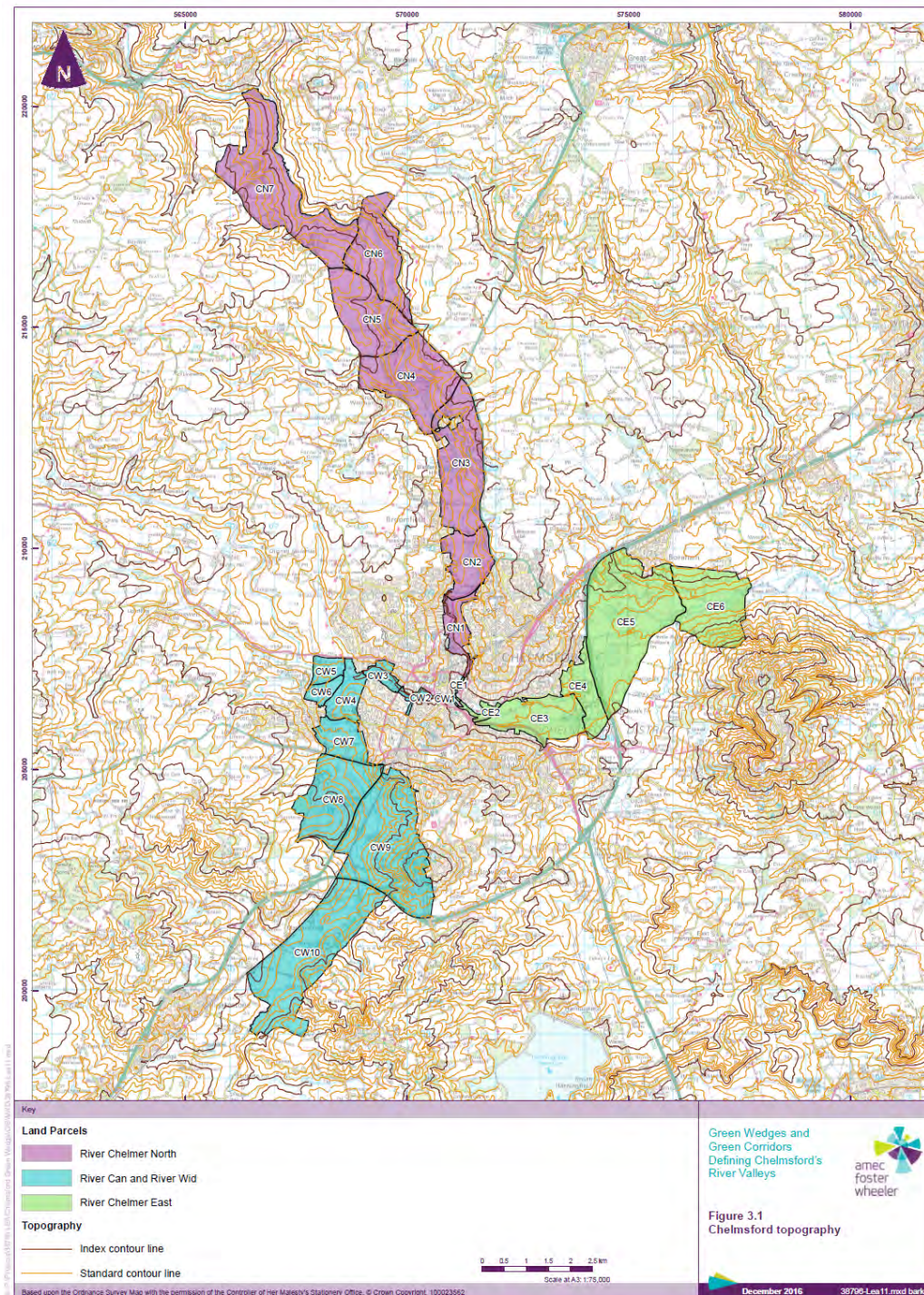


3. River Valley Analysis

3.1 Overview

1. The City of Chelmsford has grown up around the confluence of two principal watercourses: the River Chelmer and the River Can, in turn each fed by a complex pattern of tributaries. The interaction between topography and drainage (Figure 3.1) has defined the spatial character of the City, with built development avoiding areas of flood risk and in so doing largely protecting the openness of the River Valleys.

Figure 3.1 Topography



2. At strategic scale, the analysis of sub-regional landscape character identifies Chelmsford at the centre of the three river valleys, with their extent defined in accordance with national guidance which uses the following variables to define character area boundaries, including:
- ▶ topography, geology and soils
 - ▶ rivers and coastal features
 - ▶ trees and woodland
 - ▶ field patterns and boundary features
 - ▶ land use
 - ▶ nature conservation interests
 - ▶ cultural associations
 - ▶ roads and other rights of way
 - ▶ settlement pattern and building materials
 - ▶ tranquility and remoteness
3. The principal features of the River Landscape Character Areas are identified⁸ as having a V-shaped or U-shaped landform which dissects the Boulder Clay/Chalky Till Plateau, several tributaries serving the main rivers, flat or undulating valley floors wooded and/or intimate character in places. Table 3.1 summarises the key characteristics of each river valley and Figure 3.2 indicates their spatial extent.

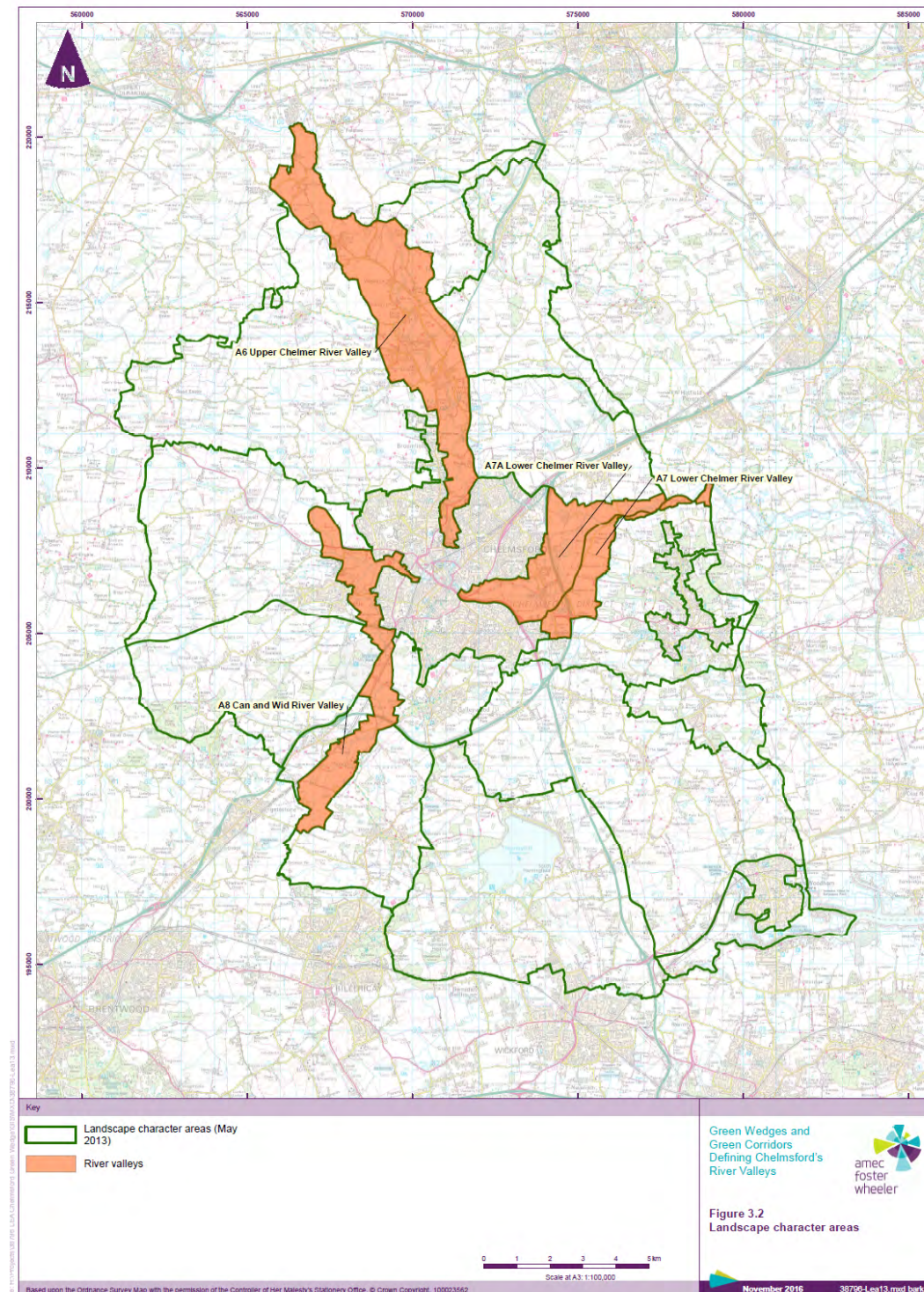
Table 3.1 River Valley Key Characteristics

Upper Chelmer River Valley	Lower Chelmer River Valley	Can and Wid River Valley
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Source: summarised from Chris Blandford Associates (September 2006) **Chelmsford Landscape Character Assessment**

⁸ Chris Blandford Associates (September 2006) **Chelmsford Landscape Character Assessment** p.140

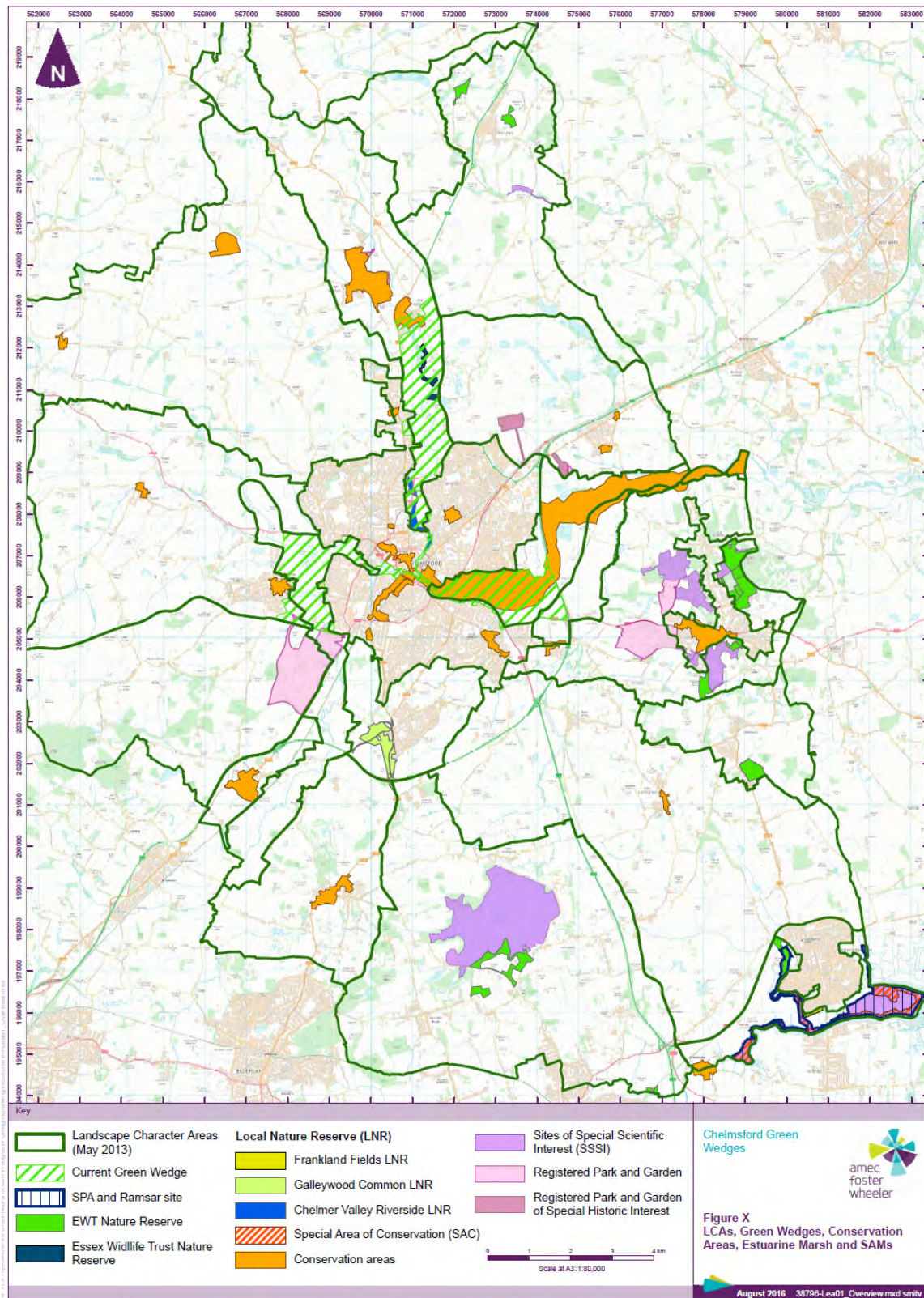
Figure 3.2 River Valley Character Areas within Chelmsford City Council



Source: extracted from: CBA (2006) **Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments**

- There is a reasonably clear demarcation between the built extent of Chelmsford and the River Valleys, reflecting as noted above, the influence of flood risk, and latterly the recognition of importance of maintaining open spaces as part of the City's identity and health of the population. These resources have come to be formally recognised as a strategic resource and part of a wider collection of natural and cultural assets which play an important part in defining the City as a whole (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Chelmsford's Designated Natural and Cultural Assets

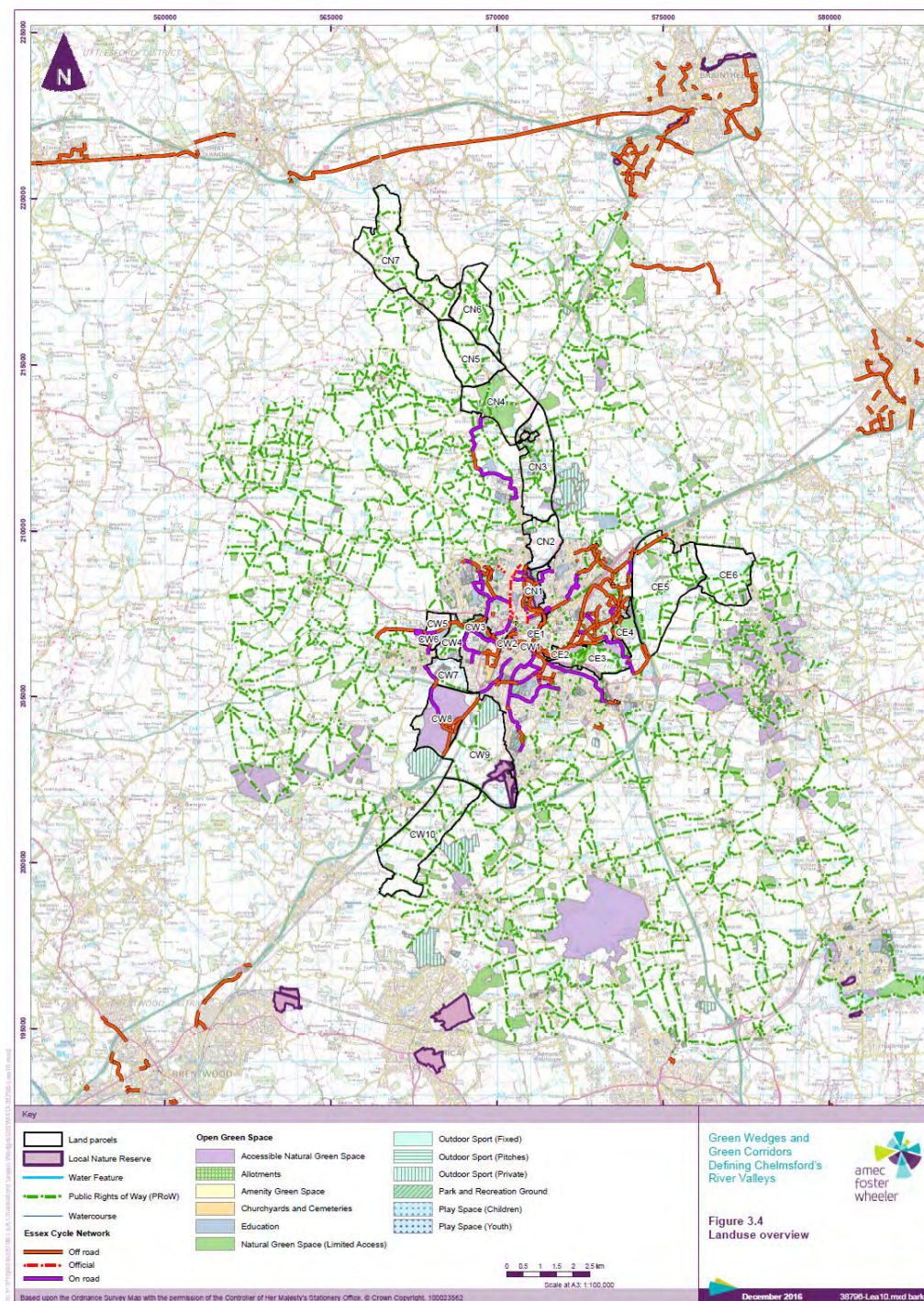


5. The complementary role of the River Valleys is most important in strategic spatial planning terms as part of the definition of how the City functions as a place to live, work and visit and its long term sustainability. Notable designations within and immediately adjacent to the River Valleys are:

- ▶ Nature reserves along Chelmer North: Chelmer Valley Riverside, Springfields Grasslands, Newland Grove, Little Waltham Meadows. Nature reserves along Chelmer East/Blackwater Navigation at: Chaucer Road Meadows, and Sandford Mill. Nature reserves along the Can/Wid at Admiral's Park, Shakestones/Widford Field, Hylands Park and Galleywood Common.
- ▶ Conservation Areas at Little Waltham and Great Waltham, along the length of the Chelmer East/Blackwater Navigation, at Writtle and Margaretting along the River Wid.
- ▶ Registered Parks and Gardens at Langleys, Boreham House and Hylands Park.

6. The River Valleys are a principal focus for the City's recreational resources in the form of the formal and semi-formal parkland at Central, West and Admiral's Parks, Hylands Park and the network of cycleways and Public Rights of Way which radiate from the City Centre (Figure 3.4).

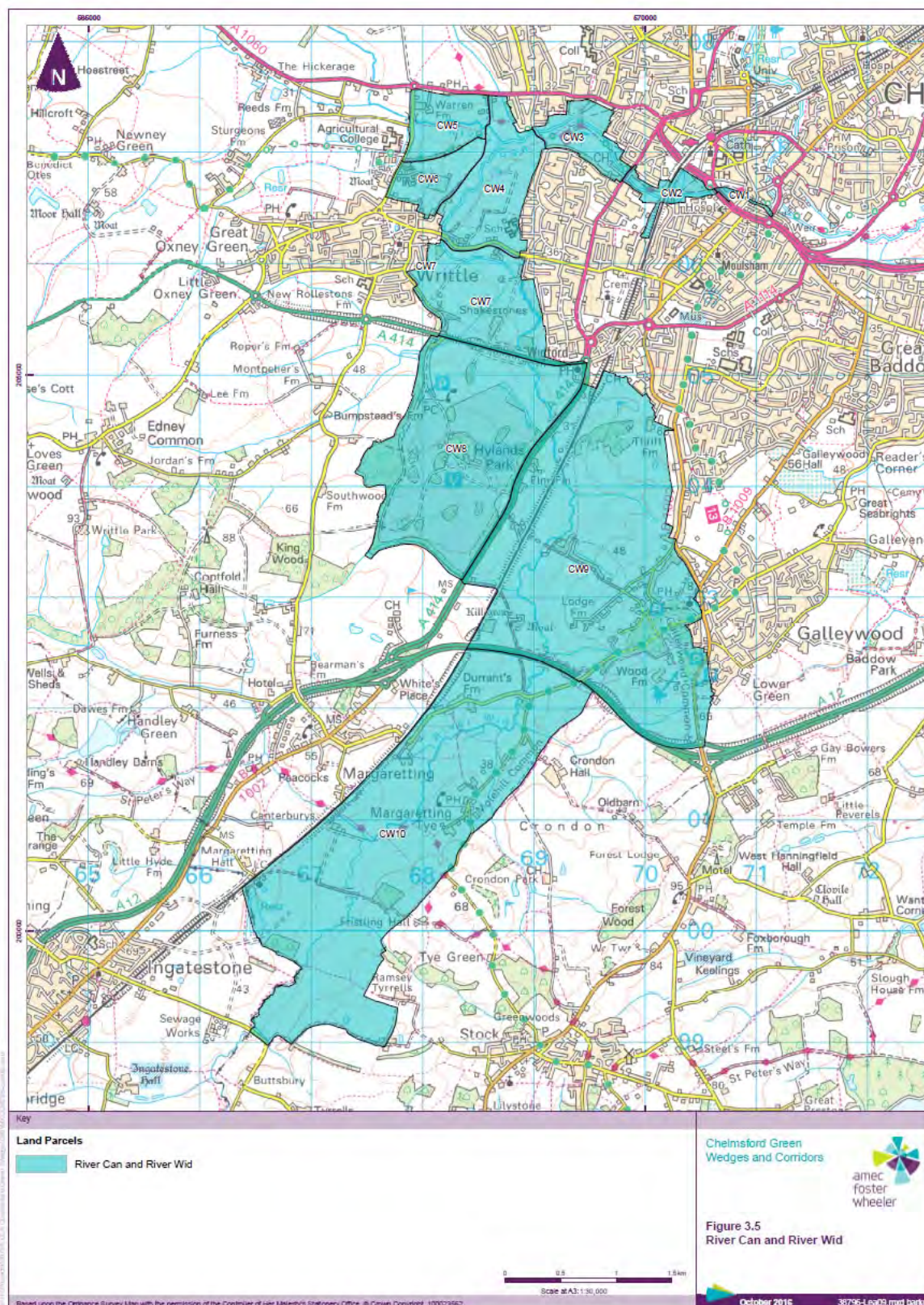
Figure 3.4 Formal and informal open space, cycleways and Public Rights of Way



3.2 River Wid and River Can

8. Ten parcels (Figure 3.4) have been identified which divide the broad course of the River Can/River Wid into character areas which are analysed in detail in respect of their existing and potential contribution to Green Wedge designation (Appendix A).

Figure 3.5 River Wid and River Can: Component Parcels



9. The valley of the River Wid extends from the centre of Chelmsford at High Bridge Road, through Central Park, West Park and Admiral's Park and at the junction with the River Can southwards past Writtle and onwards towards Ingatestone. The river landscape is one of significant diversity from the canalised stretches in the heart of Chelmsford through formal and semi-formal parkland to open countryside of improved grassland and extensive arable cultivation.
10. The identity of the River Wid and its surrounding landscape, throughout its length, varies considerably, with the river being an incidental feature in some places, particularly towards the south. There is nevertheless a distinct river valley landscape which has a recognisable topography and vegetation which falls broadly into two sections: north of the A414 London Road where the River Wid broadly has an urban fringe character, and to the south of A414 where the land is largely of open character in agricultural use. The associated riverside vegetation reflects this division with that to the south being more 'natural' than to the north which is more diverse with evidence of various planting initiatives, notably of poplar and willow along the course of the River, singly and in plantations.
11. Visually, the river valley acts as a clear wedge between the built edges of Chelmsford and between Chelmsford and Writtle in its lower reaches, and a distinctive river valley landscape in its upper reaches. Of particular significance in the River Wid's middle reaches is the presence of Hylands Park and Galleywood Common which guide the river between them, offer intervisibility and are important focal points for recreational activity, in doing so tying the river valley together visually and functionally.

Table 3.2 Can and Wid Parcel Character Analysis

Parcel	Character
Parcel CW1: Land between the A1099 High Bridge Road and New London Road	<p><i>Location:</i> Forming a clear corridor through the City Centre, this parcel is part of the identity of the City, introducing a semi-natural feature into the dense urban fabric.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Formal park and garden (Central Park) to the west; hard-surfacing associated with shops and offices to the east.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Dominated by intensively managed formal parkland to the west of the New London, sparse through the heavily canalised section to the east. Occasional street trees and riverside planting.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/ Cultural Heritage:</i> Forms part of the context for the much modified historic City Centre.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The parcel is highly urbanised in character, particularly to the east of New London Road where the River Can is canalised with very limited marginal vegetation. Various short and long distance perspectives are available along the eastern section, combining the river with the built form of the City Centre. To the west of New London Road is the start of Central Park, with formalised planting on either side of the river. The perspective opens out, compared to the eastern section, but views remain focused on the River and its immediate context. Overall the parcel is of great significance from an urban design and townscape character perspective.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> There are numerous access points along its length, including cycle lanes which connect to the east and west. The parcel is intensively used by pedestrians and cyclists.</p>
Parcel CW2: Land between the New London Road and the A1016 Waterhouse Lane	<p><i>Location:</i> Following the course of the River Can as it passes through the city centre this parcel extends along river banks from the A1060 in the east, to the A1016 in the West. It is limited to a few meters on both sides of the river in proximity to the A1060 but quickly widens into Central Park and Marconi Nature Reserve beyond the railway.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Formal parkland and accessible greenspace (Marconi Nature Reserve).</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> The landscape is well maintained throughout Central Park which features lawn areas, a small lake, avenues of trees and individual tree planting. The riverbanks, railway embankments and the Marconi Nature Reserve host groups of trees with scrubby under planting. A formal garden with ornamental planting is located in Central park to the south of the Lake.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> The Marconi Ponds Nature Reserve is located along the western railway embankment to the south of the River Can. It's maintained by volunteers and features a woodland trail and ponds. The footbridge has a grade II listing and dates from the early 19th century.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Due to the flat nature of the terrain and the enclosing built form of the city, views are short to medium in distance and mainly within the parcel. Foreshortening from intervening</p>

Parcel	Character
Parcel CW3: Land between the A1016 and Beach's Drive	<p>vegetation and the railway viaduct further limits the extent of these views. This landscape has a high recreational value with cycling, jogging, fishing and walking the most common activities. Sports facilities within Central Park include a skateboard park, tennis courts, and a multi-use sports pitch. The landscape within this parcel is considered of high value due to the contrasting urban development surrounding this area. This parcel has a very limited relation to the open countryside due to its urban location.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> This parcel is mainly accessed via footpaths and smaller roads within the city. The busy A1060 limits access to underpasses. There are a number of well-defined cycle routes that run through the parcel, with the national cycle route 1 crossing from the east to west. All routes showed evidence of high use. The Saffron Trail crosses this parcel along the route of the River Can, this is a long distance footpath over 71 miles in length stretching all the way from Southend-on-Sea in the south east of the county to Saffron Walden in the north west.</p> <p><i>Location:</i> This parcel borders the River Can west of the A1016 Rainsford Lane. It extends along the urban edge of Chelmsford in the north to meet the A1060 at Admirals Park and Tower Gardens. In the south it's bound by residential buildings and extends west, to the urban fringes of Chelmsford, where it meets Parcel CW4.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominantly recreational parkland with a 9 hole golf course along the southern bank of the river called West Park. Two areas of allotments are located along the northern and southern boundaries. The parcel encompasses Admiral's Park and Tower Gardens which comprise formal gardens, bowling green, tennis courts, a cricket pitch, playground and river meadows.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> The landscape is well maintained with areas of formal gardens, river meadows and avenue planting. Trees and scrub planting are associated with the river banks and parkland.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> The river banks and meadow areas create a variety of habitat.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The urban context limits views along the river corridor. These are mainly short to medium views often framed or foreshortened by established planting. The landscape is well used as a recreational resource and well maintained, as a result the quality of the landscape is considered to be high. Intervisibility with other parcels are limited to locations close to their boundaries. This is limited to the western boundary with parcel CW4 and only glimpsed through boundary planting. Where observed the landscape of CW3 is rural in character which is in contrast to the maintained landscape of Admiral's Park.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Access from the urban areas in the north and south are formal and restricted to four or five locations. Mixed use footpaths and cycleways follow the course of the River, with National Cycle Route 1 crossing from east to west. The Saffron Trail, a long distance footpath, also crosses this parcel along the route of the River Can.</p>
Parcel CW4: Land between A1060 and Chelmsford Road	<p><i>Location:</i> This parcel is located to the north east of the village of Writtle. It borders the Chelmsford Road in the south and shares its eastern boundary with the urban fringe of Chelmsford. The northern boundary meets the A1060 and the western boundary is located along Lawford Lane.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominately arable farmland and rough grazing adjacent to the rivers, with Hylands School and playing fields located in the south-eastern corner and a sports centre with sports pitches located within the northern boundary. Skeggs farm, located on the southern boundary, is the only other notable built form within the parcel.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Vegetation is limited to the river banks and boundary treatments of the fields. A dense buffer of young woodland planting encloses the footpath extending south from the north-eastern corner of the parcel.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Writtle Bridge Meadows is a wildlife site located adjacent to the River Wid at its confluence with the River Can and borders Lawford Lane. Other habitats are limited the field boundaries and river corridor. The Marconi radio hut was located within the western boundary of the parcel and broadcast the first entertainment radio show in 1922. Field patterns are mostly intact.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Views along the river corridor are short to medium distance in nature and are often foreshortened or framed by intervening planting associated with the rivers corridors and field boundaries. Wider open views are from the elevated terrain along the eastern boundary of the parcel, these are medium to long distance views across the river valley. This landscape is not particularly remarkable as arable fields are the main land use within the wider landscape. However the proximity to the urban fringe of Chelmsford, which is a dominant feature on the ridge or the valley in the east, creates a contrasting character that increases the sense of value. Views of other parcels are limited to locations along the elevated terrain in the east and when close to the boundaries themselves. This parcel relates well to the open countryside in the north and south. The urban fringe</p>

Parcel	Character
	<p>of Chelmsford and, to a lesser extent, the settlement of Writtle detract from the open nature of this parcel.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> This parcel is well served by a number of footpaths and Cycle routes. These routes mainly extend out of the urban fringe of Chelmsford from around the river corridor at the north-eastern corner of the parcel. Lawford Lane is a significant greenway that connects the village of Writtle to the cycle network in the north and is part of the Centenary Circle, a footpath that circumnavigates Chelmsford. National Cycle Route 1 passes through the northern half of this parcel in an east-west direction.</p>
Parcel CW5: Land between A1060 and Fox Burrows Lane	<p><i>Location:</i> Parcel CW5 is located along the southern edge of the A1060 and extends west from Chelmsford, along the route of the River Can to Lordship Road. The southern boundary is defined by the cycle route along Fox Burrows Lane.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Land use in this parcel is predominantly agricultural with the River Can running west to east through the middle of the parcel. There are 6 residential properties located along Lawford Lane, within the eastern boundary. A petrol station and pub feature along the northern boundary and a farm is within the western boundary.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Trees within this parcel are limited to the river corridor, property boundaries and transport routes. These also include hedgerows and scrub planting. A woodland belt is located along the western boundary, opposite Writtle University College.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> There is limited nature conservation and cultural heritage value currently in this parcel other than the habitats along the River Can and the woodland buffer in the west. Field patterns have been eroded over time.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The level terrain through this parcel results in views which are limited by intervening vegetation associated with boundary planting and the river corridor. This results in short to medium distance views often framed or glimpsed. Other than the footpaths that follow the rivers' course and surround this parcel there is limited recreational value. The River Can adds value to a landscape that is no particularly rare as its features are common within the surrounding landscape. Intervisibility with neighbouring parcels is restricted by dense boundary planting and only glimpse views can be obtained.</p> <p>The continuation of similar land use around this parcel creates a good relationship with the wider open countryside. Although the visual connectivity is limited, there is a strong association with a rural setting.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> This parcel is bordered by two main roads in the north and west with single file lanes and footpaths/cycleways along the southern and Eastern boundaries. The Centenary Circle, which circumnavigates Chelmsford, runs along the eastern boundary. A footpath also follows the route of the River Can through the middle of the parcel.</p>
Parcel CW6: Land between Writtle and Fox Burrows Lane	<p><i>Location:</i> Located on the northern edge of the village of Writtle this parcel is bounded by Lordship Road in the west, Fox Burrows Lane in the North and Lawford lane in the east. All boundaries, other than the southern boundary, which borders the built extent of Writtle, are set within a landscape that is principally rural in character.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Mainly agricultural in nature with a cluster of agricultural buildings within the western boundary, which are associated with Writtle University College Lordship Campus. This site was originally a garden centre, with a few glass houses and geometric planting areas still remaining. A sports club with sports pitches is located in the north-eastern corner and children's nursery is also located along the northern boundary.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Landscape features are limited to the boundary treatment of fields and properties boundaries. These consist mature trees, hedgerows and scrub planting. The north-western corner is well wooded and buffer planting features around the university buildings.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Writtle village features a large number of listed buildings, some dating back to 16th century, these are located to the south of the parcel with no listed features within the parcel. The field patterns are mostly intact.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Views are very limited as footpaths are mostly bordered by dense vegetation. The relatively flat terrain amplifies this, resulting in views which are mostly short. This is most notable along Lawford Lane where the dense wooded boundaries funnels the view along the lane. Open views are observed along a short stretch of footpath that bisects a field in the middle of the parcel, close to Writtle. Intervisibility is limited due to the enclosed nature of this parcel. There is a weak visual connection to the surrounding countryside due to the enclosed nature of this parcel. Along the footpath directly north of Writtle views are open across arable fields which has a better relation to the open countryside.</p>

Parcel	Character
	<p><i>Access:</i> Access is principally via high quality footpaths and cycleways which provide links into Chelmsford. Vehicular access is via Lordship Road in the west. Centenary Circle, a footpath circumnavigating Chelmsford, follows Lawford Lane along the eastern boundary. Walking and cycling routes appear to be very well used. There are limited opportunities for enhancement as all routes are considered to be high quality.</p>
Parcel CW7: Land between Chelmsford Road and the A414	<p><i>Location:</i> Located south-west of Writtle, this parcel is bounded by Chelmsford Road in the north and the raised embankment of the A414 Greenbury Way in the south. The built extent of Writtle forms the western boundary and the industrial development on the fringe of Chelmsford forms the eastern boundary.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Land use within this parcel is principally agricultural, but with substantial formal recreational facilities. The River Wid meanders north along the eastern and northern boundaries. Writtle Cricket club is located near the southern boundary and features an area of sports pitches as well as three multi use all weather pitches. Near the centre of the parcel is Shakestons Farm which is notable for its series of six large rectilinear farm buildings.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Tree, hedgerows and scrub planting feature mainly along the river corridor and field boundaries, species include poplars and willows. The A414 Greenbury Way in the south has a band of buffer planting along its length and links to the area of established woodland in the south west of the parcel. This would have originally been part of the Writtle Belt, a wooded belt within Hylands Park.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> There is limited nature conservation in this parcel. Habitats are limited to the river corridor and boundary planting. The northern tip of Hylands Park, which is a registered park and garden, extends along the wooded belt in the south-western corner and has been cut off from the main garden by the A414. Field patterns have been mostly eroded.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Landscape features are generally in good condition. The higher topography of the western side of this parcel creates wide open views across the river valley to the north-east and south-east. These views are limited by boundary vegetation, resulting in glimpsed views from a few locations along Paradise Road and from the footpath between Writtle Cricket Club and Widford. In these views the landscape of the parcel is dominated by the industrial buildings along the eastern boundary and Shakestons Farm. These appear stark with little to no screening vegetation softening their appearance. The rising eastern slope of the river valley adds to their dominance in the landscape. From raised terrain there is good intervisibility with Parcel CW4 in the north and CW8 in the south, with views of the church spire of St Mary's in Widford observed. The open rural character of this parcel is weakened by the urban industrial fringe of Chelmsford. Busy transport routes limit connectivity to the north and south.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Access is limited to boundary roads. The Centenary Circle follows the route of Paradise Road. One footpath bisects the southern edge of the parcel connecting Writtle Cricket club and Widford. Informal access points are apparent along the eastern boundary and traverse the parcel along farm tracks. A dual use footpath/cyclepath/footpath runs under the A414 connecting the parcel with that containing Hylands Park to the south.</p>
Parcel CW8: Land between the A414 and Hylands Golf Complex	<p><i>Location:</i> This parcel encompasses Hylands Park and extends to the A414 Greenbury Way in the north and the A414 London Road in the east.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominantly parkland featuring woodland copse and dense wooded belt along the southern and western boundaries. The northern boundary features a number of arable fields, Widford Church and a restaurant.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Individual mature trees are located throughout the parkland, along with woodland copse and plantation woodlands. A dense buffer of woodland planting exists along the boundaries of the parcel in the east, south and west. An area of ancient woodland (South Wood) is located on the southern boundary and species include Pedunculate Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>), Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>) and Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>). Large areas of grassland are managed for both biodiversity and recreation purposes. A large lake is located north east of Hylands house and smaller ponds are dotted throughout the park. There is limited tree and scrub along the river corridor in the north.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Hylands Park is a nature reserve and the habitats along the River Wid. Hylands House is a grade II* listed neo-classical villa set in parkland designated as a grade 2 registered park and garden, designed by Humphry Repton. Shakestones/Widford Meadows Nature Reserve to the north east.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The parkland provides a scenic setting for a variety of short, medium and long distant views. These range from wide open expansive views of the urban fringe of Chelmsford towards the east, to enclosed framed views within the woodland setting in the west. The historic nature of this landscape and the large amount of recreational opportunities it provides creates a</p>

Parcel	Character
	<p>landscape that is of high value and locally rare. There is limited intervisibility to the south with open views to parcel CW7 to the north. This landscape is scenic in quality but in general the extensive views are towards the urban fringe of Chelmsford in the east. Dense planting along the southern and western boundaries of this parcel limits the relationship to the wider countryside in these directions.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> This landscape is open to the public throughout the year and is host to a number of events and festivals. There are a number of walks around the park with The Centenary Circle footpath adjacent to the western boundary. This is a well-used public space.</p>
Parcel CW9: Land between Widford and the A12	<p><i>Location:</i> This parcel is located on the eastern edge of the A414 London Road. It borders the south-western urban fringe of Chelmsford, from Widford in the north to Galleywood in the east. The southern boundary meets the A12.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Principally agricultural with a large golf course located within the northern boundary. Other land use includes Galleywood common which covers approximately 46 hectares along the eastern boundary. The railway bisects this parcel from the north to the south, parallel to the western boundary; and is raised along most of its length.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Trees and hedges are associated with field boundaries, property boundaries and the river corridor. Bands of woodland and buffer planting are located in and around the golf course in the north; along the railway embankment, the route of the A414 and A12. There is an area of ancient woodland called Moulsham Thrift Wood, which consist Pedunculate Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) and Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), located within the golf course. Galleywood common in the south comprises areas of heathland, mire, grassland, woodland and ponds.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> There are two wildlife site sites located in the northern extent of the parcel. One covers the ancient woodland Moulsham Thrift Wood the other Widford Meadow which features riverside meadow habitats. Galleywood common in the southern extent of the parcel, offers a complex mix of habitats. Listed buildings are spread though the southern half of the parcel with a scheduled monument of a moated site, dating from medieval times, surrounding Killegrews House in the south-west corner.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Views from the higher areas of the river valley are generally wide, open and are medium to long distance in nature. These are sometimes limited by intervening vegetation resulting in views that are framed or glimpsed. From locations lower in the valley, closer to the river, views are often foreshorten by boundary vegetation resulting in short to medium distant views and are more enclosed. The railway embankment adds to the foreshortening of views in the west. Landscape features are generally in good condition although the tranquillity is effected by noise from the A414 and A12. There is good intervisibility with Parcel CW10 in the south. This parcel has a good visual relationship to the countryside from locations on elevated terrain near the boundary, however this is over the busy A12 which limits access. Intervening vegetation and the railway embankment prevents visual connectivity to the west.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> This parcel is bound by Busy A roads on the western and southern boundaries which limit access to crossing points which are mostly along minor roads. Centenary Circle bisects the parcel from the east to the west, with a difficult informal crossing point at the A414. Other footpaths include an east-west route parallel to the A12 which passes Killegrews in the west and Galleywood Farm in the east; and a northern routed which links Galleywood to Widford. Galleywood common has a number of formal and informal routes, some follow a disused racetrack that features as a grassland strip around the common. All routes appeared well used.</p>
Parcel CW10 Land between the A12 and Stock Lane	<p><i>Location:</i> This parcel extends south west along the course of the River Wid from the A12 in the north to Stock Lane, east of Ingatestone.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominately agricultural fields set out in a rectilinear pattern. The river meanders through the centre of the parcel towards the north-east. Residential and farm properties are scattered along Maldon Road and Swan Lane in the north with occasional farmsteads located in the south.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Tree and hedge planting are associated with field and property boundaries, as well as the river corridor. Ancient woodland blocks are located in the southern extent of the parcel and are predominately Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>) Pedunculate Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) species. The railway embankment and cuttings, along the western boundary, are also well wooded.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Nature conservation is limited to woodland blocks and the river corridor. The field boundaries are mostly intact on the eastern valley, but have been eroded on the western side. There are a number listed building spread though this parcel, with Whites Bridge crossing the River Wid in the north a notable feature.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The Valley topography allows for open extensive views across the valley. This is limited by intervening vegetation associated with field and property boundaries. From locations within the valley views are often foreshortened and are more enclosed in nature. This landscape is of good scenic quality in the south, which features less development. Overall the landscape is not</p>

Parcel	Character
	<p>particularly rare as farmland is a common land use within the wider landscape and the recreational value is limited to footpaths. Overall the landscape has a rural character with high level of tranquillity away from the noise of the busy A12 in the north. There is good intervisibility with Parcel CW8 from the higher valley sides in the north. The valley topography creates limited visual connections within the river corridor, but creates open and extensive views from the valley sides and ridgelines</p> <p>Access: This parcel is well served by a network of local roads and footpaths that interconnect the neighbouring towns and villages. Along the northern boundary the A12 has severed two footpaths which have been redirected to main roads. There is evidence that an informal route is being followed along the River Can and beneath the A12. This could be formalised and improved.</p>

3.3 River Chelmer North

12. Seven parcels (Figure 3.5) have been identified which divide the broad course of the River Chelmer North into character areas which are analysed in detail in respect of their existing and potential contribution to Green Wedge designation (Appendix A).
13. The northern part of the River Chelmer extends from the City Centre at Victoria Road to the open rural landscape southwest of Felsted, containing a wide variety of land uses and settlements *en route*. These include, variously, significant nature conservation sites (the Chelmer Valley Riverside Nature Reserve extending into the heart of the City being the most obvious), sports pitches, informal grassland, underused/abandoned farmland, and extensive arable cultivation.
14. Whilst vegetation is concentrated along the main watercourse (being most extensive associated with the Chelmer Valley Nature Reserve), there is also extensive tracts at Newlands Grove and in the vicinity of Langleys to the north east of Great Waltham where characteristic White Willow defines the course of the River. There is a reasonably clear transition in the character of the River Valley landscape in the vicinity of Broomfield (approximately at Mill Lane) where a relatively small scale landscape of managed and unmanaged grassland gives way to extensive arable cultivation and the opening out of extensive vistas into and out of the valley.
15. As whole, there is nevertheless a unity to the character of the River Valley, tied together physically and visually by the course of the River Chelmer which is traceable by linear tracts of willow and poplar. In the vicinity of Chelmsford south of Broomfield by a sense of enclosure as built development becomes prominent and the River Chelmer functions as a clear tract of open land separating built development on higher ground. The River Valley comprises the southern portion of LCA A6 Upper Chelmer Valley which extends towards Great Dunmow.

Figure 3.6 River Chelmer (North): Component Parcels

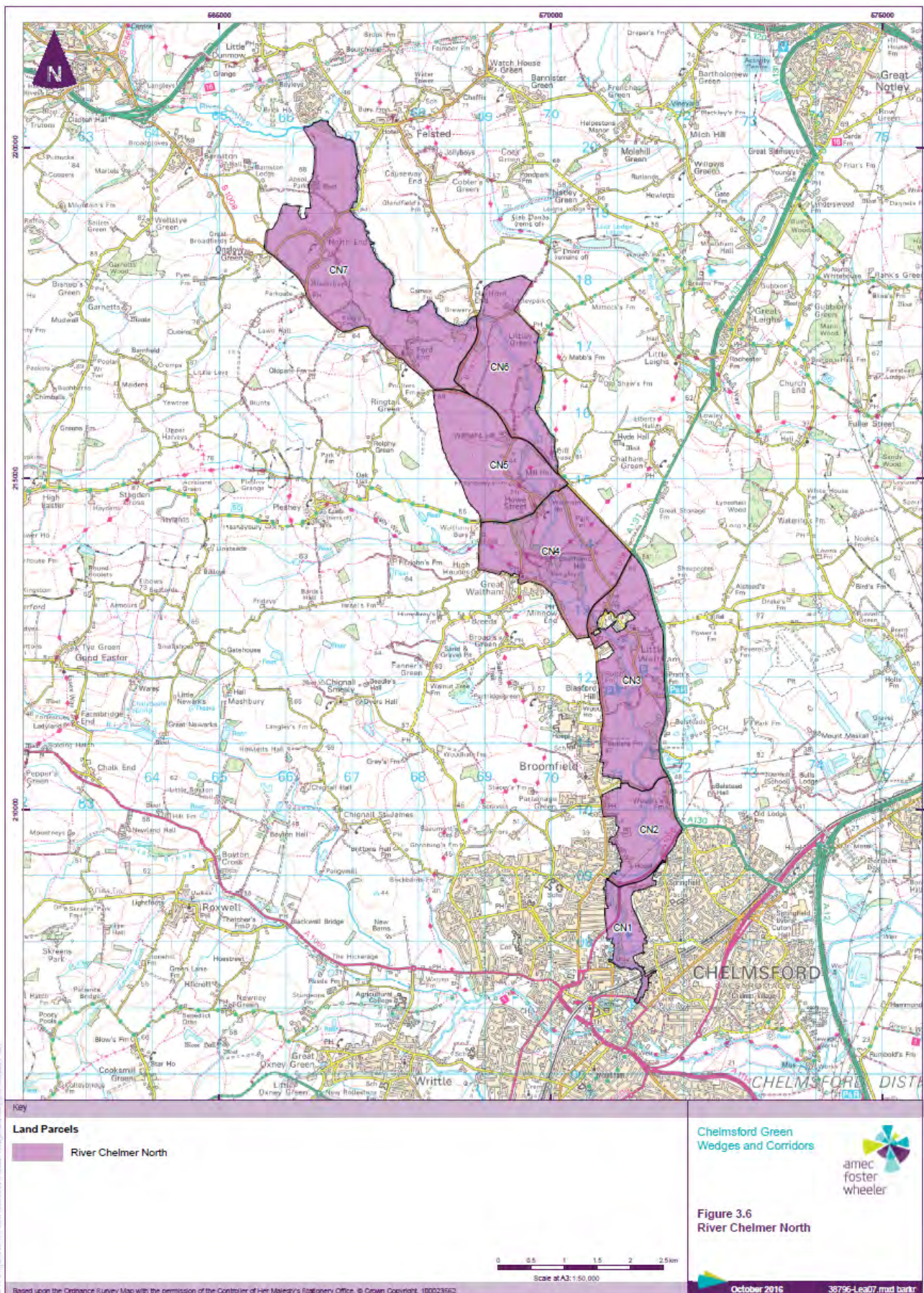


Table 3.3 Chelmer North Parcel Character Analysis

Parcel	Character
Parcel CN1: Land between Victoria Road and the A1016 Chelmer Valley Road	<p><i>Location:</i> Extending north from Victoria Road to Valley Bridge and the A1016. Tightly bordered by urban development. Narrow and closely following the river in the southern third, wider and more diverse further north.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Close to Victoria Road the parcel follows the banks of the River Chelmer limiting land use to footpaths and parkland. An elevated railway crosses the narrow southern section of the parcel, north of which, the parcel is wider with wet woodland and meadows along the river corridor. A rectilinear field pattern is located on the valley sides in the east and west. These include scrubland, allotments, play spaces and sports pitches (Springfield Hall Park). The A1016 runs through the parcel from west to north and Springfield Hospital is located in the NE corner.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Various mature trees, including <i>Cricket Bat willows</i> (<i>Salix alba 'Caerulea'</i>), are present along the river banks and within the amenity spaces. The boundaries of the rectilinear fields located on the valley sides are defined by hedgerows with mature trees and in some places wooded buffers. The embankments of the raised A1016 are planted with a mixture of semi mature trees. Two disused quarries exist in the east with the quarry face naturalised by vegetation.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Chelmer Valley Nature Reserve is located along the eastern banks of the River Chelmer. It runs for approximately 2.5km from Valley Bridge to Victoria Road and extends into parcel CN2.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Overall the landscape features are in good condition and are well maintained. This is a landscape with limited scenic quality due to presence of a number of raised transport routes. It's also not particularly rare landscape as features are common in other riverside locations. However, it has a high recreation value due to the sports pitches, play spaces, and the large number of footpaths and cycle routes which connect the surrounding urban areas. In addition, its urban context creates a landscape that is perceived as having a higher level of tranquillity, especially in riverside areas away from the noise of surrounding transport routes. This parcel has enclosed short views limited by wooded river banks, dense field boundaries and raised transport routes. Intervisibility with parcel CN2 occurs in the north-east, from elevated areas along the parcel boundaries.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Access is mainly confined to dual use pathway/cycleways which are well used. Open areas of grassland are used for dog walking and informal recreation. Littering by dog walkers in informal areas appears to be an issue but being addressed. There is a lack of formal access along the middle half of the eastern boundary which has resulted in a number of informal access points, these have recently been fenced off.</p>
Parcel CN2: land between the A1016 Chelmer Valley Road and Mill Lane	<p><i>Location:</i> Extending north from Valley Bridge and the A1016 Valley Road to Broomfield and Mill Lane. Bounded by the A130 Essex Regiment Way in the east and the B1008 with its associated residential settlement in the west.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> The river corridor crosses from the north to the south with the River a Chelmer meandering within it. A rectilinear field pattern remains largely intact with land in the west used as pasture for horses, and land in the east used as arable. Broomfield football club and cricket club occupy a number of fields in the north west. A large horse stables and Bridge marsh Care Home, with its landscape gardens, are notable features.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Mix of hedgerows, scrub, woodland belts and mature trees; mainly associated with field and property boundaries. Fields extend up to the river's edge with limited space for riverbank vegetation. The course of the River Chelmer is not a clearly definable feature within the lower parts of the topography.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The quality of the landscape within the south half of this parcel is notably different when compared the north. The presence of overhead power lines and pylons combined with temporary fencing, used to subdivide the fields for horses, and number of dilapidated farm buildings reduces the scenic quality of the south. In comparison the well maintained sports pitches and arable fields create a higher scenic quality. The feeling of tranquillity in the south is limited by the noise from the A130 Essex Regiment Way and A1016. This becomes less apparent further north. Recreational quality is limited to the sports pitches in the north and a few public footpaths. Views are limited and framed by boundary planting and are generally glimpsed in nature. Extensive open views are available across the valley from the higher terrain along the eastern boundary.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Generally limited towards the south of the parcel where the land is in pastoral use, but opportunities increase towards the north where the sports pitches of Broomfield extend towards the River Chelmer and a PRoW leads to Mill Lane. The rather abrupt ending of cycleway provision at Valley Road presents an opportunity to extend access, either along the River Chelmer or in the vicinity, thereby creating a traffic-free link between Broomfield and the City Centre. Creation of</p>

Parcel	Character
	access across the River Chelmer from Broomfield to Little Waltham Road/Essex Regiment Way would also help to develop recreational opportunity.
Parcel CN3: Land between Mill Lane and the B1008 Braintree Road	<p><i>Location:</i> This parcel follows the routes of the B1008 and Essex Regiment Way, from Mill lane in the south to the point where the both roads meet in the north.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominantly arable fields, with the settlement of Little Waltham located in the north and other settlement clustered along the B1008 in the west. Regiments Way Golf Centre occupies approximately 30 hectares of land along the eastern boundary.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Mature trees and hedgerows associated with field boundaries and the river corridor. Pockets of woodland and woodland buffer planting are located along the river corridor and alongside the main roads. A woodland area of approximately 12 hectares is located near the south-east corner and is used for 4x4 off-roading.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> There are two nature reserves within this parcel, Little Waltham Chelmer Mosaic (15.4 ha) and Little Waltham Village Meadows (5.7 ha). These extend from the northern boundary near Little Waltham along the banks of the River Chelmer for 2.5km. Little Waltham Conservation Area covers the northern extent of the village and the river corridor to the south of the village. WWII pillboxes are also present.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> This landscape is agricultural in nature with settlement focused in the north and along the parcel's western edge. The area is surrounded by two major roads which affects the perception of tranquillity nearby. Within the river corridor, away from the roads, there is a greater sense of tranquillity and remoteness. The landscape is more intimate in character and has a higher scenic quality. Recreational value is high due to Regiments Way golf course and a number of sports pitches to the north of Little Waltham. In addition to these a number of PRow also traverse this area. Short to medium distance views from the raised valley sides are often glimpsed. Shorter views are experienced along the river corridor due to the foreshortening of plating associated with field boundaries and the river corridor itself. The combination of the valley topography, settlement, and vegetation associated with the bordering transport routes, limits the visual connectivity to the southern boundary and from the raised terrain in the north.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> The road network provides good access to most of this parcel and the large number of PRow allow the river to be followed for most of its length. However the southern extent lacks connectivity. Footpaths are diverted to the busy main roads bordering the site, resulting in a number of informal paths developing across fields to avoid them. There is clearly an opportunity to provide a link from Centenary Circle along the southern boundary, to the footpath network further north. Informal paths also appear to branch out of Broomfield along the western boundary and perhaps there is also an opportunity to improve connectivity in this area.</p>
Parcel CN4: Land between the B1008 Braintree Road and Howe Street	<p><i>Location:</i> Located within a mainly agricultural landscape, this parcel is defined by the main roads in the east and country roads in the west. It stretches from Broad's Green and Little Waltham in the south to Howe Street in the north and includes the village of Great Waltham within its western boundary.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominantly agricultural in nature with areas of parkland and plantation woodland relating to Langleys Estate. The settlement of Great Waltham is located on the western edge with a cluster of private dwellings located along the Chelmsford Road to the south. A number of properties also exist along the northern boundary which are associated with the settlement Howe Street.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Plantation woodland is located in the northwest corner and to the east of Great Waltham. Mature trees feature individually though the parkland area of Langleys Estate, as well as in groups along the river corridor. Hedgerows, mostly featuring mature trees, are associated with field boundaries and alongside roads. A woodland buffer is located along Caterham Hall Lane, north of Scurvy Hall Lane.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Great Waltham Conservation Area covers most of the historic part of the village and the parkland surrounding Langleys is a registered historic parks and gardens. WWII Pillboxes which formed part of the GHQ Line continue to follow the course of the River Chelmer and are mainly located on the western banks.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Overall the landscape features are in good condition with a higher level of scenic quality resulting from the historic setting of Great Waltham and the large area of historic parkland around Langleys. The main detractor from this are the busy roads along the East and West boundaries. Recreation is limited to a number of PRow traversing this area and the two sports pitches around Great Waltham. Visually this landscape is inward focused with glimpsed medium to short views close to the river. Wider views across open farmland are observed from higher terrain around the boundaries and where boundary planting doesn't foreshorten views. The River corridor within this parcel has limited visual connection with the surrounding countryside due to views foreshortened by plantation woodlands and dense vegetation associated Langleys estate and the river banks respectively. Close to the</p>

Parcel	Character
	<p>boundaries, on the higher terrain, there is a stronger visual link with medium to long distance open views observed.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> There is a well-developed network of footpaths within this parcel and it also features two long distance footpaths, the Saffron trail and Essex Way. The Saffron Trail crosses in a northerly direction, from Broad's Green to Howe Street via Great Waltham, and stretches 71 miles from Southend-On-Sea to Saffron Walden. The Essex Way stretches 82 miles from Epping near London to Harwich on the east coast and crosses this parcel from west to east. Its route from the west is along the course of Walthambury Brook to Langleys estate where it crosses the River Chelmer to meet the midpoint of the eastern border.</p>
Parcel CN5: Land between Howe Street and the B1417	<p><i>Location:</i> The north eastern boundary of this triangular parcel is located along the route of the B1008 and stretches from the settlement of Howe Street in the south to Stumps Cross in the north. The southern boundary is defined by Main Street, Parsonage Lane and Hyde Hall Lane. The Western boundary is demarcated by Dunmow Lane, which is a Byway.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominantly agricultural use with the settlement of Howe Street, located close to the southern boundary. A few residential and farm buildings are located along the route of Main street as it heads north from Howe Street.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> The river corridor crossed the eastern corner, parallel to Main Street, and features mature trees and a plantations of willows. Due to the agricultural nature of this area, landscape features, such as hedges and trees, are mainly associated with field and property boundaries. Along the western boundary, Dunmow Lane is bordered by dense tree planting.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> This parcel contains no nature or cultural heritage designations although there are 9 listed buildings in Howe Street and to the north. Originally 5 pill boxes formed part of the WWII GHQ defence line though this parcel, of which only two remain.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Generally the landscape features are good condition although there is evidence of fly tipping at Stumps Cross in the north. The landscape has few detracting features, with the level of tranquillity mainly limited by the busy B1008 Essex Regiment Way which runs along the eastern boundary. Although overall not a rare landscape, due to extensive agricultural land use on a regional scale, the river corridor adds a natural element that offers conservation and recreational opportunities. Views are generally foreshorten by vegetation associated with field boundaries, resulting in a relatively enclosed landscape, with limited intervisibility. The sloping nature of the river valley topography limits views of the wider countryside to higher terrain located along the boundaries. Where boundary planting permits there is a strong visual link to the surrounding countryside.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> The B1008 Essex Regiments Way, demarking the eastern boundary, is the main access route between Chelmsford and Great Dunmow. Main Street is the only road traversing this parcel. The Saffron Trail crosses the eastern corner and the regional cycle route 50 runs along the southern boundary. There is a good network of footpaths and as well as a byway, Dunmow Lane, which is showing evidence of recent 4x4 trafficking.</p>
Parcel CN6: Land between Warners Farm and Hartford End	<p><i>Location:</i> Located to the north of the B1008 Essex Regiment Way, this parcel follows the River Chelmer through agricultural land to Hartford End and the district boundary.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominantly agricultural land with scattered residential properties along the eastern and western boundaries. The river corridor crosses from north to south with fields extending up to the river banks in most places.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Landscape features mainly associated with river banks and fields boundaries. A block of woodland, called Wood Spring, is located along the western boundary and an area of plantation woodland with mixed scrub is located on the west bank of the river, south west of Fair View Farm.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Two nature conservation areas exist within this parcel, Woods Spring in the west and Little Park Meadows to the north. The latter covers the central river corridor from the middle of the parcel to the northern boundary. There are 6 listed buildings within this parcel. Originally 16 pillboxes as part of the GHQ Line during WWII, of which only 14 remain.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Overall the landscape features are in good condition. Some hedgerows missing or in poor health. Recreation value is limited to footpaths and a byway. This agricultural landscape is of medium scenic quality and is not uncommon in the wider region. Noise from the B1008 Essex Regiment Way limits tranquillity in the south. Views across and along the valley are generally short to medium in nature. These becoming longer and extensive from the higher ground towards parcel boundaries. Foreshortening and framing of views often occurs due to screening effect of vegetation associated with river corridor and field boundaries. This landscape relates closely to the surrounding countryside as it features similar land use and only a small amount of settlement.</p>

Parcel	Character
	<p><i>Access:</i> Good network of Footpaths and byway, which appear to be used regularly. Access along river to the south is limited and could make use of a road bridge crossing the river on the southern boundary. This would improve connectivity to parcel CN5.</p>
Parcel CN7: Land around Ford End and North End	<p><i>Location:</i> A large parcel that stretches along the western bank of the River Chelmer from Hartford End in the south to Felsted in the north and extending to the B1008 in the west.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Agricultural in nature with cluster of residential properties located around North End and Ford End.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Trees and hedgerows are associated with field boundaries, the river corridor and property boundaries. Field patterns have been eroded in the centre of the parcel and to the north where some isolated trees remain. Bands of scattered trees are located near Hartford End, with a block of woodland to the north of Ford End. New plantation woodland has been created to the north west of Ford End.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Harford End Spring wildlife site is located in the east and consists mixed woodland and scrub. The WWII GHQ defence line continues along the western bank of the River Chelmer and originally featured over 20 pillboxes within this parcel. Most remain in the south with 12 removed in the north. A moated site, listed as a scheduled monument, exists at Absol Park, near North End. There is cluster of listed buildings ant North End and Ford End.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The landscape features are generally in good condition although the rectilinear field boundaries have been eroded to the north and though the centre of the parcel. Recreational space is limited to Footpaths. Views are generally short to medium due to foreshortening by boundary planting. Views along the river valley and to the east are more open and extensive. There is a good relationship with the open countryside as land use in generally consistent with surrounding context. Boundary planting limits the visual connectivity in places.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> There is a good network of footpaths which traverse this parcel and follow the course of the River Chelmer. The B1008 forms the West boundary which is a busy route between Chelmsford and Great Dunmow. Cycle routes are limited and could be enhanced</p>

3.4 River Chelmer East and Blackwater Navigation

16. Six parcels (Figure 3.6) have been identified which divide the broad course of the River Chelmer into character areas which are analysed in detail in respect of their existing and potential contribution to Green Wedge designation (Appendix A).
17. Extending from the City Centre where the River Chelmer is heavily canalised and built development abuts the River banks, to the floodplain landscape towards Boreham supporting mixed arable and pastoral uses. Topography is largely at grade (around 21m) with vegetation concentrated along the River Chelmer (but also in some field boundaries and isolated plantings of willow and poplar), with extensive views into and out of the landscape.
18. Despite being an urban fringe river valley, the landscape retains a broad unity of character, with the principal physical severances being the A1308 Chelmer Road and the A12. There is considerable variation in field pattern and size, simpler and of larger scale towards Chelmsford, more complex beyond the A12 as the river valley opens out into open countryside. Settlement is sparse, comprising isolated farmsteads, with additional built development/disturbance limited to water treatment works and quarrying activity. The River Valley forms the western half of LCA A7 Lower Chelmer River Valley. The River Chelmer and its immediate flood plain is designated as a Conservation Area.

Figure 3.7 River Chelmer (East & Blackwater Navigation): Component Parcels

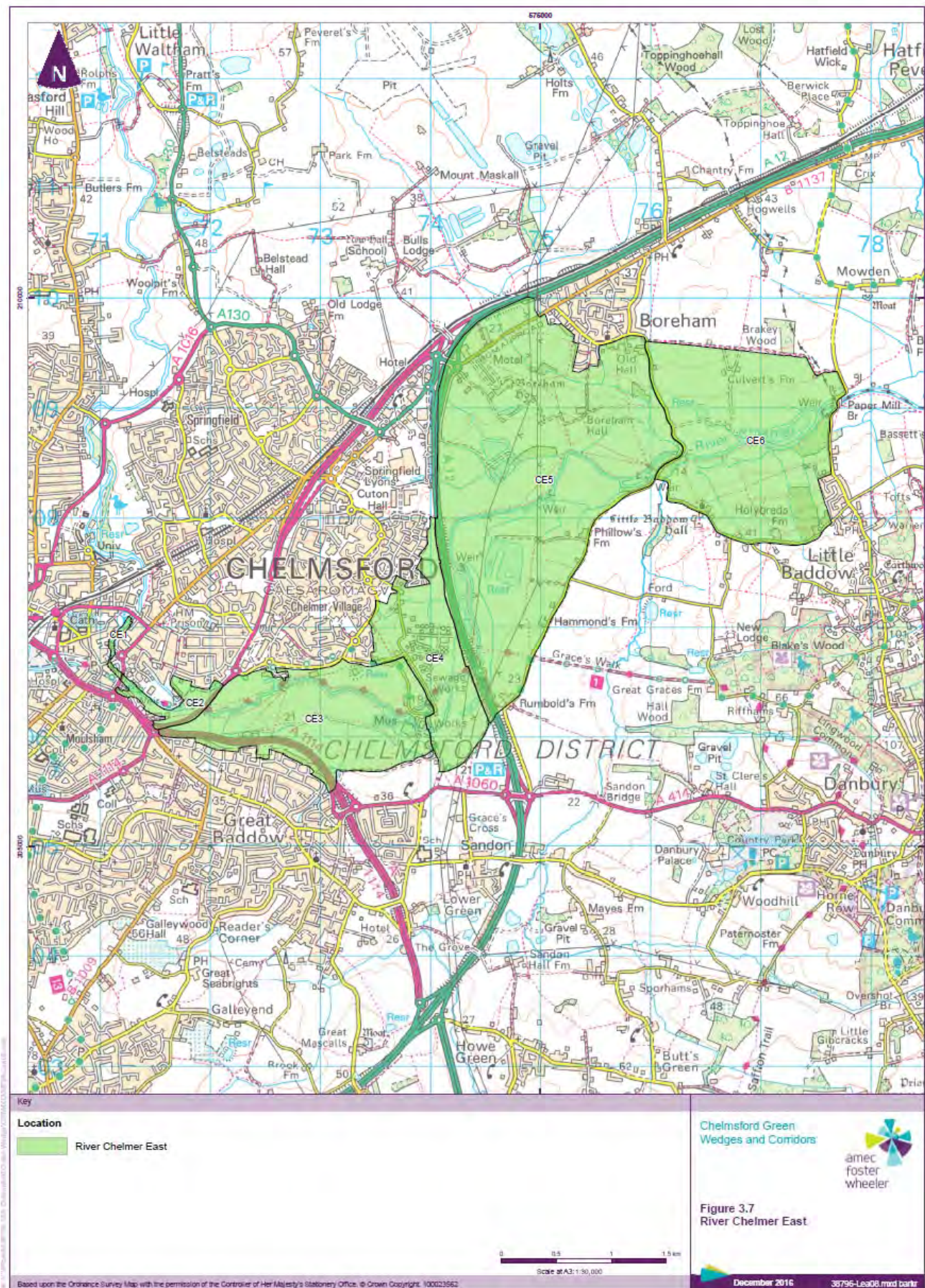


Table 3.4 Chelmer East Parcel Character Analysis

Parcel	Character
Parcel CE1: Land between the A1099 Victoria Road and the A1099 High Bridge Road	<p><i>Location:</i> This parcel comprises the City Centre stretch of the River Chelmer extending from the A1099 Victoria Road southwards to the A1099 High Bridge Road.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Limited to the River Chelmer and proximate land containing variously a footpath/cycleway and between The A1099 Victoria Road and the A1099 High Bridge Road town centre uses abutting the River.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Variously mature trees and understorey along the course of the River, hard standing and urban landscaping centred on City Centre environs.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> The southern reaches of the parcel are part of the River Chelmer Conservation Area.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The parcel comprises a section of the town centre and is of generally high quality forming a focus for movement through the town centre and the context for retail and commercial uses. The River corridor provides visual continuity and is the focus for numerous and diverse long, medium and short vistas. The parcel has no visual connection with the open countryside, but forms the linkage between the River Chelmer's northern and southern extent.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Confined to dual use pathway/cycleway adjacent to the River. Multiple connections exist along its extent, part of a highly permeable space which is heavily used by walkers and cyclists.</p>
Parcel CE2: Land between the A1099 High Bridge Road and the A138 Chelmer Road	<p><i>Location:</i> Starting with the confluence of the River Chelmer and River Wid, the parcel forms the bridge between the city centre setting of both rivers and the wider flood plain of the River Chelmer to the east.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Rough grazing and a sports pitch associated with a floodplain function to the south of the River Chelmer, rough grassland and allotments to the north, with access by footpath and cycleway (Saffron Trail/Kings Head Walk) to the north of the River Chelmer and then to the River Wid. Other footpaths (largely informal) cross the parcel.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Diverse assemblage of boundary vegetation of varying robustness, pockets of woodland and scrub, but predominantly an open landscape with short and middle-distance views to and from the town centre.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> The parcel is covered by the River Chelmer Conservation Area designation.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Landscape character reflects the urban edge location of the parcel which quickly shades changes from dense built form into open rough grassland which is part of the floodplain of the River Chelmer. The land, because of its open character, is sensitive to change, with various short, medium and longer distance views across its extent. The A138 Chelmer Road is a significant intrusion, visually and aurally. Glimpsed visual connections with land beyond the A138 which presents a significant physical and visual barrier, with access limited to a riverside footpath under the road or via a cyclepath/footpath along Mill Vue Road.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Access is by paved cycleway/footpath which extends to the A138, canal towpath and various informal routes across rough grassland.</p>
Parcel CE3: Land between the A138 Chelmer Road and the water treatment works at Sandford Mill Bridge	<p><i>Location:</i> Comprising the flood plain of the River Chelmer, separating the outer suburbs of Chelmsford, fringed by major roads and built development to the north, south and west.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Predominantly rough grazing associated with its flood plain function, also quarry and water treatment works uses. Some isolated dwellings and clusters of development to the east along Sanford Mill Lane/Sandford Mill Road and the north off Chelmer Village Way.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Predominantly open in aspect but intermittent hedgerows associated with some field boundaries, field size diminishing west to east.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Largely covered by the Chelmer River Conservation Area designation.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Comprising open countryside, mixed arable and rough grassland there are extensive medium and long distance views across the parcel towards the built edges of Chelmsford and eastward towards Sandford Mill and the A12. However, along the River Chelmer there is a more intimate landscape created by the bankside vegetation creating an enclosed, tranquil feeling, particularly away from intrusive traffic noise. Generally, however, the parcel has the character of open countryside with links to the rural areas to the east (notwithstanding the barrier of the A12).</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Complex network of public rights of way, centred on a riverbank path along the River Chelmer, along with various informal paths, particularly to the north of the River south of Chelmer Village.</p>

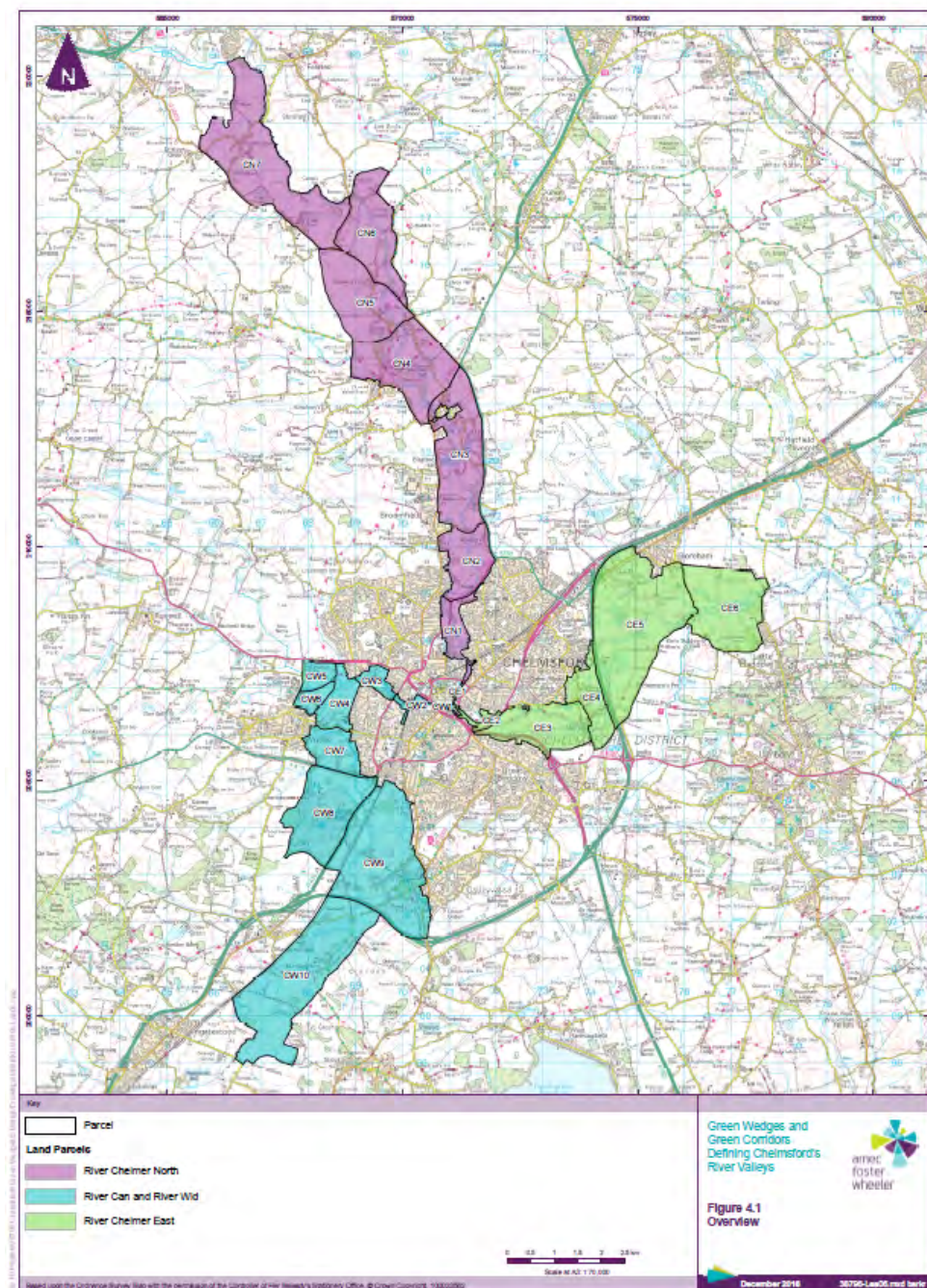
Parcel	Character
Parcel CE4: Land between the water treatment works at Sandford Mill Bridge and the A12	<p><i>Location:</i> Lying between Sandford Mill Lane/Brook End Road South and the substantial boundary of the A12, this urban fringe land forms the transition between the suburban setting to the west and open countryside beyond the A12 to the east.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Dominated by a water treatment works and rough grazing north of the River Chelmer, largely arable uses to the south.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> Various small woodland clumps and gappy hedgerows bounding fields and rough grassland to the north of the River Chelmer, gappy hedgerows and woodland clumps to the south. Exposed arable landscape to the south of River Chelmer dominated by high voltage transmission lines running north – south.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Covered by the Chelmer River Conservation Area designation to the south of the water treatment works</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Comprising open countryside, mixed arable and rough grassland with a range of short, medium and longer distance views towards the urban edge of Chelmsford (with much new development) and southwards in and around the water treatment works and Blackwater Navigation. The A12 is a significant intrusion visually and aurally. The significant physical and visual barrier of the A12 has severed the immediate connection between this parcel and the wider open countryside to the east. There are three connecting underpasses which provide connectivity and there are some long distance views to the countryside to the east from the higher ground to the south of the parcel. Nevertheless, the A12 significantly interrupts a sense of continuity between what is effectively the bounded countryside to the west of the A12 and open countryside to the east.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Access is by a combination of combination of formal and informal paths, principally along the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, but also across various tracts of open land east of Chelmer Village. The Centenary Circle footpath makes use of rights of way across the north and south of the parcel.</p>
Parcel CE5: Land between the A12 and Hammonds Road and Church Road Boreham	<p><i>Location:</i> Largely open land to the east of the A12, forming a substantial part of the easterly countryside context of Chelmsford.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> A complex mixture of arable and pastoral uses, with diverse field size and shape and evidence of past quarrying activity restored to water and rough grassland. Some isolated properties.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> River valley landscape characterised by intermittent hedgerows along some field boundaries, including strings of willow (<i>salix alba</i> spp.) and poplar (<i>populus</i> spp.) and occasional copses of the same. A high voltage transmission line traverses southwest – northeast.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Boreham House is a Registered Park & Garden</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> The river valley landscape is of largely open character and visually sensitive to change, with various short, medium and long distance views, modified to varying degrees by woodland and tree-line planting. However, traffic noise from the A12, which is on an embankment above the valley floor, intrudes into this open landscape, removing any sense of tranquillity for a considerable distance into the parcel. The landscape appears to be of reasonably high quality, notwithstanding the influence of intensive arable cultivation which has removed woodland and hedgerows. Boreham House is a focal point to the north of the parcel, set within this extensive landscape, in turn influenced by the presence of high voltage transmission lines crossing the parcel north to south and the intrusion of traffic noise. Land between the B1137 Main Road and the A12 is, in character terms, part of the parcel, and vulnerable to change, being the remaining open land between Boreham and various developments around the A12/A138 junction. Forms the beginning of open countryside to the east of Chelmsford.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Access is principally by a riverside footpath, fed by various minor paths to the north and south.</p>
Parcel CE6: Land between Church Road, Holybread Lane, North Hill (Coleraines) and a track between North Hill and Boreham	<p><i>Location:</i> Land to the east of Boreham extending to the City boundary with Maldon District.</p> <p><i>Land Use:</i> Dominated by extensive arable uses but with some quarrying activity.</p> <p><i>Vegetation:</i> River valley landscape as part of wider open countryside, characterised by intermittent hedgerows, some planted with willow (<i>salix alba</i> spp.) poplar (<i>populus</i> spp.) and isolated copses of the same.</p> <p><i>Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:</i> Land in the vicinity of the River Chelmer is designated as a Conservation Area.</p> <p><i>Landscape Character:</i> Of an open aspect on the valley sides with panoramic views to the east and west, more enclosed in the immediate vicinity of the River Chelmer where there is extensive tree planting. The landscape is of strong character, particularly to the south of the River Chelmer towards Little Baddow where the land use is more varied and tree cover more extensive. Is clearly part of the open countryside to the east of Chelmsford.</p> <p><i>Access:</i> Access is by formal rights of way principally running east to west, with the lock at Paper Mill Bridge a clear focal point for recreational activity.</p>

4. Principles and Practice of Green Wedge and Green Corridor Definition

4.1 Testing the Principle of Definition

1. In light of the survey work undertaken, this chapter considers the case for the definition of Green Wedges and proposed Green Corridors. The spatial unity of the confluence of the three river valleys on Chelmsford serves as the foundation for the exploration of the subtleties of the river valley landscapes. There is significant diversity within and between the three river valleys, highlighted by changes in land use, vegetation, visual continuity and recreational use as their length is traversed from City Centre to relatively remote rural areas at the extremes of the City Council's boundaries (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Chelmsford River Valleys as the basis for a connected network



2. In addition to their strategic character and rationale, the connectivity of the river valleys manifests in a variety of ways which supports their definition as distinct entities, these being through:

- ▶ Defined land parcels
- ▶ Topography
- ▶ Visual unity
- ▶ Cultural associations
- ▶ Recreational opportunities
- ▶ Biodiversity
- ▶ Boundaries

3. Table 4.1 analyses these factors derived from the analysis set out in section 3.

Table 4.1 Components of River Valley Character

Dimension	Upper Chelmer River Valley	Lower Chelmer River Valley	Can and Wid River Valley
Land Parcels	Seven discrete parcels extending from Chelmsford City Centre to open countryside at Felsted.	Six discrete parcels extending from the City Centre to open countryside north of Little Baddow.	Ten discrete parcels extending from Chelmsford City Centre to open countryside at Ingatestone.
Topography	Flat or undulating valley floor with gradually rising slopes to east and west.	Flat valley floor rising sharply to north at Boreham and environs, and toward Little Baddow and Sandon. More extensive elsewhere.	Expansive valley floor on northern and southern sections, narrower through high points of Hylands Park and Galleywood Common.
Visual unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervisibility from valley sides throughout length, notably from Broomfield eastward, the A130 Essex Regiment Way westward and Ford End eastward. Willows a signature tree along River. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervisibility from valley sides throughout length, notably from the A138 Chelmer Road, Barnes Lock southward, B1137 Main Road Boreham southward, Church Road, Little Baddow northward and Church Road, Boreham southward. Willows a signature tree along River. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervisibility from valley sides throughout length, notably from Hylands Park eastward, Galleywood Common westward, Margaretting Tye westward and from the mainline railway at Margaretting westward.
Cultural associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial heritage (flour milling) Willow growing Langleys Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackwater Navigation Willow growing Sandford Mill Boreham House Paper Mill Bridge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admiral's Park Writtle village Hylands Park Galleywood Common
Recreation resources and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paved cycle path/walkway from the City Centre to Valley Bridge. Numerous rights of way throughout length, notably Essex Way and Centenary Circle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paved cycle path/walkway from the City Centre to the A138 Chelmer Road, and share cycle and walkway across the A138 Chelmer Road bridge. Numerous rights of way throughout length, notably Centenary Circle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paved cycle path/walkway from the City Centre via Writtle to Hylands Park (part National Cycle route NCN1). Numerous rights of way throughout length, notably St Peter's Way and Centenary Circle.

Dimension	Upper Chelmer River Valley	Lower Chelmer River Valley	Can and Wid River Valley
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive areas of Accessible Natural Greenspace in urban and semi-urban reaches. Significant formal recreational resources in urban and semi-urban reaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive areas of Accessible Natural Greenspace in urban and semi-urban reaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive areas of Accessible Natural Greenspace in urban and semi-urban reaches. Significant formal recreational resources in urban and semi-urban reaches.
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chelmer Valley Springfield Grasslands Newland Grove Little Waltham Meadows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaucer Road Meadow Sandford Mill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admiral's Park Shakestones & Widford Fields Hylands Park Galleywood Common
Boundaries	Clear boundaries provided by built edges and a variety of roads and rights of way.	Clear boundaries provided by built edges and a variety of roads and rights of way.	Complex boundaries comprising built development, some roads, rights of way and a railway.

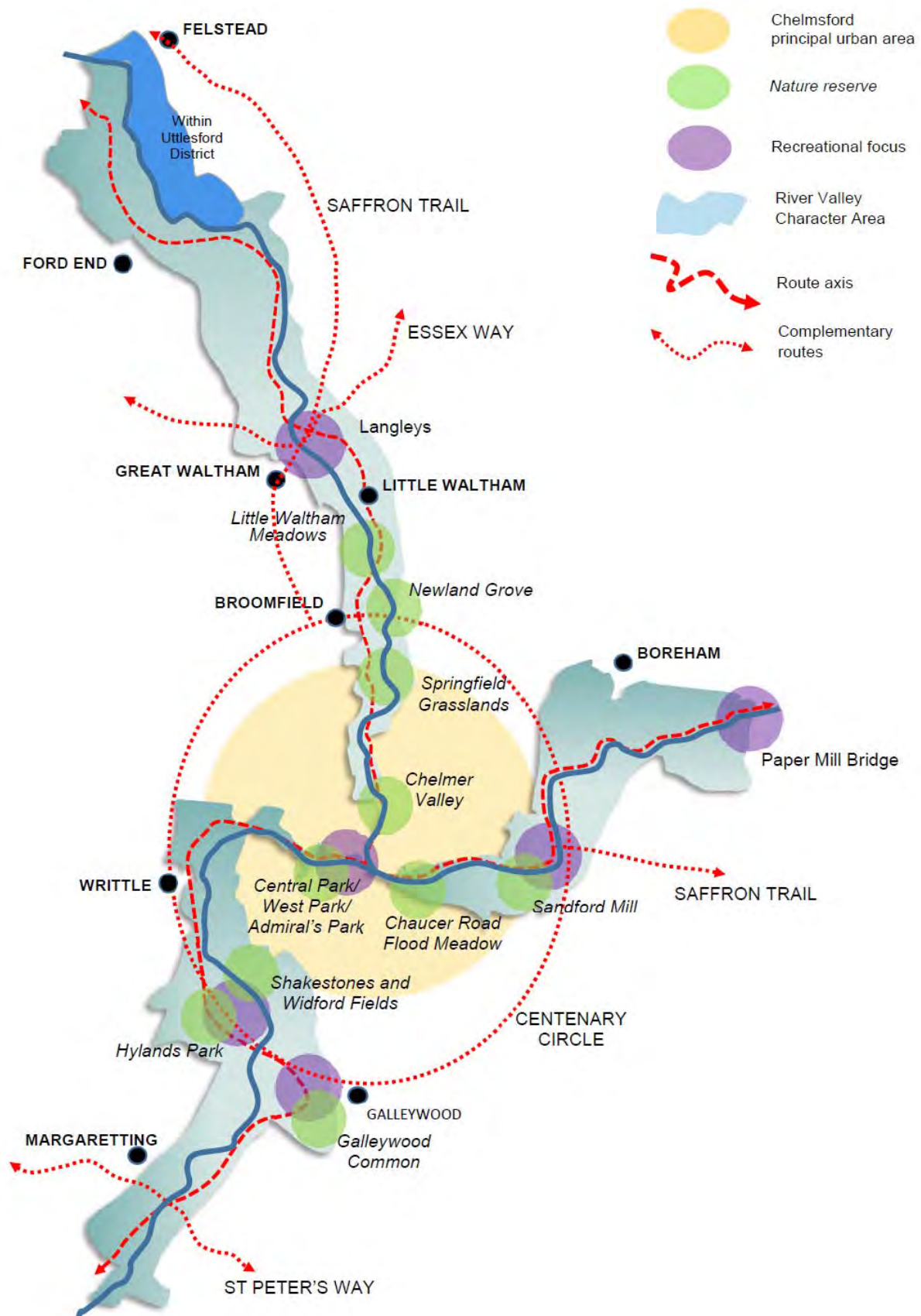
4.2 A Spatial Strategy & Planning Policy

Spatial Strategy

4. Figure 4.2 illustrates the relationship between the river valleys and key recreational and biodiversity resources. When brought together in this way, the interrelationship between natural and cultural resources becomes clear and presents the opportunity to establish and refine their connection. The river valleys present a unique focus for this strategy work. In turn, this serves as a basis for the consideration of the role of these assets as key components of planning policy and the development of a wider approach to planning for Green Infrastructure across the City, specifically:

- ▶ Definition of the extent of the City's principal river valleys along their length with the City Council boundaries as a starting point for their protection as distinctive entities.
- ▶ Definition of areas to be kept permanently open in relation to the built edge of the City, serving as key recreational resources in particular, but also aesthetic and biodiversity functions.
- ▶ Justification and a reference point for planning policy which can be used as a material consideration in determining applications for development which may impinge upon the character of the river valleys.
- ▶ Establishment of the framework for a Green Infrastructure Strategy which considers the functional and spatial interaction of natural and cultural assets and their role in delivering the sustainability aspirations of the Local Plan and the City.

Figure 4.2 Chelmsford River Valleys Spatial Relationships



Green Wedges and Green Corridors

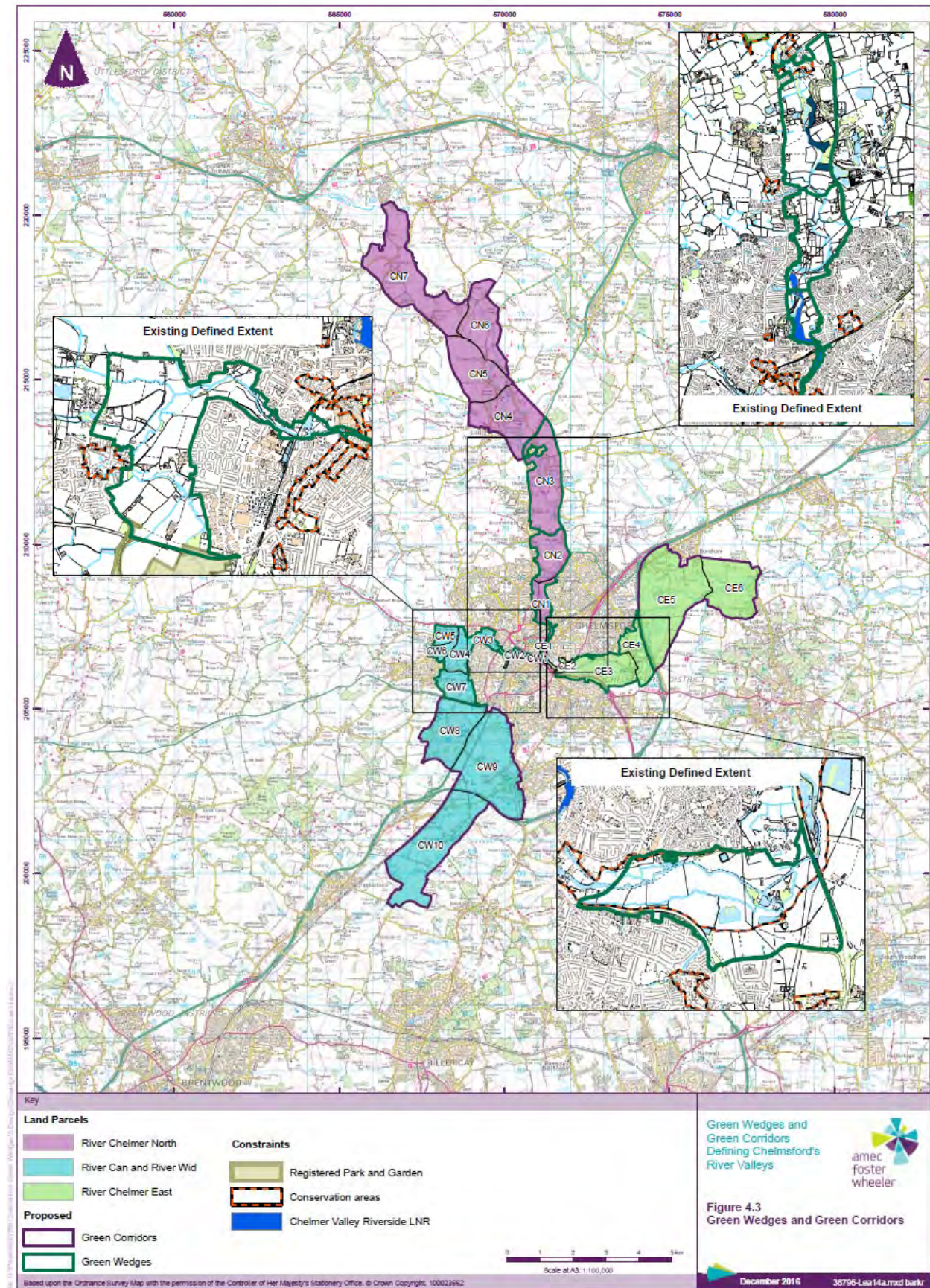
5. Having established the strategic and local coherence of the River Valleys, their role as a spatial planning instrument requires scrutiny. Their unity is expressed through a number of complementary dimensions which act together to create distinctive assets. Whilst the boundaries of the character areas can be determined with a high degree of confidence, reflecting visual unity and overall character, their function varies considerably. In terms of a planning role as an instrument for keeping land open as a landscape, recreational and biodiversity resource, this varies spatially.
6. The term 'Green Wedges' is appropriate to use in the context of where there is a clear separation role between built development. In addition, because of their proximity to the urban edge, these areas are often the focus for recreational activity, contribute aesthetically to the townscape by providing open areas amongst built-up areas and are often a biodiversity resource. Consequently they have been and should continue to be reflected in a specific policy which is used as a material consideration in wider planning strategy and the determination of planning applications. To date the extent of the Green Wedges has been broadly defined through indicative maps in the Core Strategy and the North Chelmsford Area Action Plan (CNAAP). In light of this survey and detailed analysis of local character, their extent needs to be modified slightly to better fit the role of a wedge in certain localities, reflecting both the evolution of the built form of the City and the need for a defensible designation.
7. For the river valleys beyond the City's built edge, the term 'Green Corridors' is a more appropriate label, reflecting their different character and function. At the urban edge and beyond into open countryside locations, there is no function as a wedge (i.e. separating built form) and the role transforms into that of a corridor, reflecting a unity of landscape character, visual connectivity and recreational and biodiversity focus. The definition of river corridors through policy is equally important to establish their role as a material consideration in decision making and, in conjunction with the Green Wedges, as a focus for Green Infrastructure planning.
8. The identification of separate character areas along the length of the rivers enables their division, for policy purposes, into Green Wedges and Green Corridors (Figure 4.4).
9. Section 4.3 sets out a proposed local plan policy which would address the specific requirements of the Green Wedges and Green Corridors, in form and function, their relationship with the Green Corridors and the connections to other policy areas.

Green Wedges

10. It is proposed that the current extent of the Green Wedges is refined to more directly meet their purposes, and complement the proposed Green Corridors which would comprise the remainder of the River Valley within the jurisdiction of the City Council. The detailed profiles boundaries of each parcel are set out in section 3.
 - ▶ For Chelmer north, parcels CN1, CN2 and CN3 (City Centre through to the Braintree Road, Little Waltham)
 - ▶ For Chelmer east, parcels CE1, CE2, CE3 & CE4 (City Centre to the A12)
 - ▶ For Can and Wid, parcels CW1, CW2, CW3, CW4, CW5, CW6 and CW7 (City Centre to the A414)
11. The principal differences between the existing Wedges and their boundaries are:
 - ▶ For Chelmer North, extending the Wedge designation to Braintree Road, Little Waltham which presents a more logical outer boundary, compared to the current CNAAP extent which runs to Sheepcotes Lane, Little Waltham. Proposals for development of land to the east of the A130 make a Green Wedge in this location critical to ensuring the long-term integrity of the river valley character.
 - ▶ For Chelmer East, extending the Green Wedge from Sandford Mill to the southern extent of the new development at Chelmer Village and pulling its extent to align with the course of the declassified Hammonds Road at Sandon (between Sandford Mill Lane and the A12).

- For the Can & Wid, limiting the extent of the Green Wedge to Paradise Road Writtle where it currently extends into open fields between the southern edge of Writtle and the A414.

Figure 4.3 Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Proposed Extent



Green Corridors

12. These comprise the remainder of the river valleys extending to the City Council boundary. These are:
- ▶ For Chelmer north, parcels CN4, CN5, CN6 and CN7 (Braintree Road, Little Waltham through to Felsted).
 - ▶ For Chelmer east, parcels CE5 and CE6 (the A12 through to Paper Mill Bridge, Little Baddow).
 - ▶ For Can and Wid, parcels CW8, CW9 and CW10 (the A414 through to Ingatestone).

4.3 Planning Policy Objectives for Green Wedges and Green Corridors

13. The following policy objectives (developed into policy either separately or as a two-part policy) should be included in the Local Plan. These draw upon and develop existing Green Wedge policy cited in the Site Allocations DPD, the North Chelmsford AAP and the City Centre AAP, to ensure that the full extent and potential of the River Valleys is captured. Policy objectives for Green Corridors are set out which focus on the protection of the special qualities of these landscapes, recognising their role as working landscapes and that some development will occur, but this should be particularly sensitive to the River Valley landscape.

Green Wedges: Proposed Policy Objectives

- ▶ To protect the extent of Green Wedges from development which does not directly contribute to its function and character.
- ▶ To protect the character of Green Wedges through particular attention to the quality of development on their fringes.
- ▶ To maximise public enjoyment where compatible with the protection of landscape character, biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- ▶ To conserve and manage the river banks and their margins to protect and enhance existing biodiversity, along with wider biodiversity and landscape management where appropriate.
- ▶ To promote the Green Wedges as part of the City's transport network, providing interconnected, car-free routes.

Green Corridors: Proposed Policy Objectives

- ▶ To protect and enhance the special qualities of the Green Corridors in respect of their landscape character, biodiversity and recreational resources.
- ▶ To ensure that proposals for new development have particular regard to the special qualities of the Green Corridors and in sympathy with its setting.
- ▶ To maintain a network of informal open space and nature conservation sites and increase access for recreational purposes.
- ▶ To conserve and manage the river banks and their margins to protect and enhance existing biodiversity, along with wider biodiversity and landscape management where appropriate.
- ▶ Target specific areas of the Green Corridors for landscape enhancement works, reinforcing their special qualities.
- ▶ Promote tree and hedge planting along built edges secured through planning permissions and in partnership with initiatives from conservation groups and landowners.



5. Conclusions: Green Wedges, Green Corridors and Planning for Green Infrastructure in Chelmsford

5.1 Study Conclusions

1. This study has demonstrated the spatial and functional continuity of the River Valleys as the basis for their recognition as Green Wedges within an adjacent to the built-up area and Green Corridors across their wider extent. Their boundaries are definable through landscape character and functions and planning policy can be devised which recognises and protects their special qualities and value to the City as a coherent network.
2. The boundaries of the existing Green Wedges has been reviewed and refined to better reflect their separation function and the particular value and intensity of recreational resources within them. Green Corridors, whilst more extensive in their character, have a recognisable coherence in landscape, recreation and biodiversity terms and can be defined on plan and in policy to help protect these qualities. As an example, a strong sense of visual continuity is present, both in the Rivers Valleys as key geographical feature and in their associated vegetation. Figure 5.1 illustrates the role of the White Willow as a 'signal' tree species helping to define landscape character of the River Chelmer in particular, but which also has cultural significance across the area.
3. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 summarise potential areas for action in respect of immediate and more ambitious budgets, recognising that interventions can be demanding on resources and need to be tied into specific programmes.

Table 5.1 What can be done 'within current budgets'?

Action	Target Area
Footpath Signage	Ensure continuity in signage along key routes and critical intersections, ensuring the most is made of existing resources (e.g. Essex Way, Centenary Circle).
Leaflets	Circular walks and cycle rides which promote the City's open spaces as recreational spaces. Themed leaflets e.g. river valley landscapes and their biodiversity; recreational cycle-route.
Review of tree planting and management	Address instances of new planting failure (e.g. at Sandford Mill) and areas denuded of tree cover e.g. floodplain between the A1114 Essex Yeomanry Way and the River Chelmer. Systematic use and maintenance of white willow to help reinforce river valley character.
Links with recreation, health and biodiversity	Make connections between policy areas which Corporately promote Chelmsford as an attractive, healthy and active City with ready access to well-maintained greenspace.
Check development contributions and site masterplanning linkages	Any development in the vicinity of Wedges and Corridors.

Table 5.2 What is more ambitious?

Action	Target Area
Cycle path extension	Parcel CE2 (A138 Chelmer Road to Sandford Mill) – cinder tracks using existing riverside path? Parcel CN2 (to Mill Lane) – cinder tracks – new route required. Parcels CW7 and CW8 – access/safety enhancement across the A414 at Hylands Park.

Extensive tree planting including community forestry in some locations	Parcel CN2 in particular to counteract farm abandonment and subdivision of the land for horsiculture. Parcel CE4 to strengthen landscape character where this has been eroded by subdivision of the land (water treatment works, fragmented and larger residential development) Parcels CW9 and CW10 to strengthen landscape character where extensive agricultural uses have eroded landscape structure.
Footpath connectivity – linking shorter and longer circulars	All Corridors
Joining new development into River Valleys	CN2 Chells Development across the A130 Essex Regiment Way.
Visitor management in ‘hot-spots’	CE6 Paper Mill Bridge CE2 Sandford Mill CW9 Galleywood Common

Figure 5.1 Landscape continuity: the role of the White Willow (*Salix alba* spp.)



5.2 A Green Infrastructure-led Approach

Rationale

4. The long term of planning of Green Infrastructure needs to be centred on a Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy which considers, strategically and holistically, the needs and opportunities associated with planning for open spaces, natural resources and landscapes across the City Council area. GI Strategies vary greatly in their focus, approaches and intended outcomes, reflecting their specific geographies and past approaches to resource planning. Nevertheless they share a number of common features which could be usefully drawn upon should the City Council determine that a GI Strategy would be a helpful policy instrument. These are:
 - ▶ The mixture of spatial and thematic approaches which uses core assets such as river valleys as the starting point for cross-cutting themes such as tree planting, biodiversity management and access enhancement.
 - ▶ Multifunctionality (i.e. addressing multiple interests) as a central principle, reflecting advice and guidance from statutory agencies.
 - ▶ Placement of the Strategy as part of a wider suite of interrelated strategy and policy documents concerning biodiversity, the historic environment, sport and recreation and climate change, for example.
 - ▶ Partnership working, both within the Strategy areas and cross-boundary, between local authorities, statutory agencies, interest groups and local communities.
 - ▶ A clear action plan which is realistic in nature, tied into existing initiatives, costed, and is capable of producing tangible outcomes in the short and longer term.

Green Infrastructure Principles

5. More formally, the core principles of a GI approach have been summarised⁹ as follows:
 - ▶ GI needs to be strategically planned to provide a comprehensive and integrated network
 - ▶ GI requires wide partnership buy-in
 - ▶ GI needs to be planned using sound evidence
 - ▶ GI needs to demonstrate 'multi-functionality'
 - ▶ GI creation and maintenance need to be properly resourced
 - ▶ GI needs to be central to the development's design and must reflect and enhance the area's locally distinctive character
 - ▶ GI should contribute to biodiversity gain by safeguarding, enhancing, restoring, and creating wildlife habitat and by integrating biodiversity into the built environment
 - ▶ GI should achieve physical and functional connectivity between sites at strategic and local levels

⁹ Town & Country Planning Association/The Wildlife Trusts (July 2012) **Planning for a healthy environment – good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity**

Green Infrastructure is 'a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities' (Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Policy Framework).

Multi-functionality is 'central to the green infrastructure concept and approach. It refers to the potential for green infrastructure to have a range of functions, to deliver a broad range of ecosystem services. Multi-functionality can apply to individual sites and routes, but it is when the sites and links are taken together that we achieve a fully multi-functional GI network' (Natural England (2009) Green Infrastructure Guidance. <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/94026>).

- ▶ GI needs to include accessible spaces and facilitate physically active travel
- ▶ GI needs to be integrated with other policy initiatives

Outline Structure for a Green Infrastructure Strategy

Using the above material, the contents of Green Infrastructure Strategy could comprise:

- 1. Purpose and Foundation of the Strategy**
 - 1 What is Green Infrastructure?
 - 2 Rationale and Strategic Fit
- 2. The Vision for Chelmsford's Green Infrastructure**
- 3. The Geography of Chelmsford's Green Infrastructure: Issues and Opportunities**
 - 1 Watercourses and Flood Risk Management
 - 2 Landscape and Cultural Heritage Protection and Enhancement
 - 3 Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement
 - 4 Health Improvement
 - 5 Access and Recreation Opportunities
- 4. Strategy Objectives and Key Interventions**
 - 1 Biodiversity
 - 2 Communities and Health
 - 3 Economy
 - 4 Water Management
 - 5 Heritage, Landscape and Townscape
 - 6 Access and Recreation
- 5. A Spatial Strategy for Chelmsford's Green Infrastructure**
 - 1 Scale and Focus of Effort
 - 2 Delivery
 - Partnership Working and Strategy Integration
 - Providing Green Infrastructure through New Development
 - Funding
 - Community Participation
- 6. Monitoring and Evaluation**
- Appendices**
 1. Current nature conservation work
 2. City-wide Strategies and their links to Green Infrastructure delivery
 3. Accessibility by Type of Open Space
 4. Chelmsford's Green Spaces

6. In terms of the practical implementation of Green Infrastructure objectives, Table 5.3 summarises typical activities associated with GI protection, enhancement and creation.

Table 5.3 Example Green Infrastructure Protection, Enhancement and Creation Actions

Overarching principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance stream and river corridors • Protect and enhance countryside character • Protect and enhance key biodiversity habitats • Enhance and create recreational and sustainable travel opportunities
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site management and buffering • Linking of networks where practicable • Restore functional stream corridors • Particular attention on connectivity role of hedgerows and small woodlands
Landscape Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect, enhance and restore landscape character, particularly through tree and hedge planting of specific species such as white willow

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect the enclosure pattern of specific landscape types• Protect and enhance historic features through buffering and sensitive restoration
River Corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce dependence on raised flood defences by creating natural flood storage• Ensure that the run-off from all proposed development is minimised as well as designing in SuDS.• Encourage the retro-fitting of SuDS where surface water flooding is a problem.• Tie SuDS into habitat creation.• Tackle issues of diffuse pollution in the catchment through the provision of advice to farmers under the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative.
Access and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that there is integration between the rights of way network, recreational way-marked routes and the cycle network.• Ensure recreational activity is compatible with landscape character, biodiversity and cultural heritage interests.• Adopt minimum quality standards, (commensurate with its location and scale) that sites and routes should be expected to achieve (Green Flag Award Programme, and the Country Parks Accreditation Scheme, as appropriate).
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotes sustainable movement by walking and cycling, reducing the need to travel by car linked to a wider transport strategy.





Appendix A

Parcel Profiles





