



NOVEMBER  
2018

# Chelmsford Local Plan Examination

Hearing Statement

Matter 9: The Environment

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of  
Cogent Land LLP

ICENI PROJECTS LIMITED  
ON BEHALF OF COGENT  
LAND LLP

November 2018

## **Iceni Projects**

London: Da Vinci House, 44 Saffron Hill, London, EC1N 8FH  
Glasgow: 177 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LB  
Manchester: 68 Quay Street, Manchester, M3 3EJ

t: 020 3640 8508 | w: [iceniprojects.com](http://iceniprojects.com) | e: [mail@iceniprojects.com](mailto:mail@iceniprojects.com)  
linkedin: [linkedin.com/company/iceni-projects](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iceni-projects) | twitter: @iceniprojects

Chelmsford Local Plan



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## 1. MATTER 9: THE ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Icení has prepared this Matters Statement, on behalf of Cogent Land LLP, in response to the Inspector's Matter 9 questions on the Environment. We address specific issues around the Green Corridors proposed in the Submission Local Plan.

1.2 This Statement should be read alongside our Appendix A1: 'Landscape Representations: Landscape Appraisal of Green Corridor Parcel CE5', prepared by ETLA. This provides a summary landscape appraisal of Parcel CE5 and detailed justification behind our primary issues below.

**85. Strategic Policy S13 also states that the main river valleys are identified as valued landscapes and designated as green wedges and green corridors. This is reiterated in Policy CO1.**

**a. Are these valued landscapes in the context of paragraph 109 of the Framework and if so is this based on robust evidence and are they clearly justification?**

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1.3 We do not consider that the main river valleys are valued landscapes in the context of the Framework (paragraph 109) or that the Green Corridors should be designated as valued landscapes.

1.4 Policy S13 and Policy CO1 refers to 'river valleys' as being valued landscapes which can only assumed to be based on the findings of the evidence base i.e. the Amec Foster Wheeler Report '*Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys*' [EB094A]. However, the Amec Report does not make reference to valued landscapes in either the report or methodology and the policy objectives do not recommend that the corridors are designated as 'valued landscapes'.

1.5 Furthermore, the parcel extents identified in the Amec Report extend to land beyond the 'river valley' (that feature that the Policy specifically identifies as the 'valued landscape'), and therefore should not form the basis of parcels of 'valued landscape'

1.6 The Submission Plan (paragraph 6.78) sets out that the Green Wedges and Green Corridors are designated for their landscape value; whereas the Amec Report references 'special qualities'. The special qualities are not specifically listed anywhere in within the Amec Report or methodology; and are only referred to in a wider sense with reference to landscape character, biodiversity and recreational resource.

1.7 It should be noted that the Amec Report does not seek to specifically control development which Policy CO1 clearly seeks to do; but rather, in respect of Green Corridors, the report says that a Proposed Policy Objective should be to ensure that proposals for new development have particular

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regard to the special qualities of the Green Corridors and in sympathy with the setting. As a result, the level of restriction placed on development within Green Corridors is not justified and is not what the evidence base recommends.

- 1.8 In identifying valued landscapes, the Landscape Institute provides helpful guidance through '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition)*' and Box 5.1 in particular. It sets out a range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes. These include landscape quality (condition), scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, recreational value, perceptual aspects and associations.
- 1.9 The Amec Report does not use these factors in a clear and transparent way to identify 'value' of each parcel or the extent of each parcel. Instead, it rather relies on geographic features which may cut through areas which share similar characteristics and qualities and / or include areas of different qualities and characteristics. This approach does not result in parcels of consistent and identifiable value and is flawed.
- 1.10 It is not clear that the main river valleys are valued landscapes. The decision to define the river valleys as valued landscapes by designating Green Corridors and Green Wedges is not justified and is not supported by robust evidence. Therefore, the approach is not sound.

**b. How have green wedges and green corridors and their respective boundaries been determined? Are their designations supported by appropriate methodologies and criteria?**

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- 1.11 It does not appear that the boundaries of the Green Wedges or Green Corridors have been specifically considered within the Council's evidence base. The Amec Report appears to have taken the broad parcels as defined and subsequently assessed the performance of these.
- 1.12 The methodology uses a hierarchical process to establish boundaries to the land Parcels (roads, property boundaries etc) [EB094A - refer to paragraph 2 of section 2 page 5], however, as set out in our Appendix A1, ETLA considers that this does not sufficiently account for landscape character, which the Amec Report states is a key factor of the special qualities of the Green Corridor.
- 1.13 The consequence of this method has resulted in areas of lesser sensitivity which exhibit less of the special qualities of the river valley corridor being identified within the parcels, and omitting areas that are more consistent with the river valley corridor landscape character.
- 1.14 An example of this can be shown through Parcel CE5. The northern part of Parcel CE5 has been included despite the fact it has more urbanising influences and does not exhibit the characteristics of the river valley corridor that other parts of Parcel CE5 do, and conversely, other areas are omitted



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that are more consistent with the river valley corridor in landscape character and visual terms, namely land to the east of Hammonds Road.

- 1.15 At present, the determination of the Green Corridors and their respective boundaries are not justified.

**c. Have the purposes of green wedges and green corridors been clearly defined within the Plan and does land with their boundaries meet the required purposes?**

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- 1.16 It is our understanding through the evidence base that the purpose of the Green Wedges and Green Corridors is to protect the 'special qualities' of the landscapes.
- 1.17 In its interpretation, the wording of the Submission Plan differs to the wording that is suggested within the Amec Report under 'policy objectives'. The Submission Plan seeks to resist development to protect the Green Corridors and identifies the Green Corridors as valued landscapes, whereas the Amec Report recognises that some development will occur (but should be particularly sensitive to the River Valley landscape) and that policy objectives seek to ensure that development has particular regard to the 'special qualities'.
- 1.18 As a result of this, the purposes of the Green Corridors have not been clearly defined. The purpose as set out in the Plan appears to have misinterpreted the evidence.
- 1.19 Furthermore, the land within the boundaries does not meet the required purposes as the land within the defined Parcels has not been assessed effectively with land included within the extent of the Parcels which should not be seen as a valued landscape.
- 1.20 A character-based approach to identifying the extents of parcels would result in more effective parcels based upon landscape character and therefore aligning with the Policy Objectives. In the case of Parcel CE5 for example, a landscape character approach would only designate the central and southern parts of Parcel CE5, along with land to the east of Hammonds Road as the Green Corridor and exclude land in the northern part of Parcel CE5.
- 1.21 A more detailed assessment is appended at Appendix A1 of this Statement, which demonstrates that the visual experience within the northern part of Parcel CE5 is different to the visual experience within the southern and central part of Parcel CE5, in that the northern part (which includes the Site) has more urbanising influences and does not exhibit the characteristics of the river valley corridor that are present in the central and southern parts of Parcel CE5, and is more undulating with elevated areas.
- 1.22 This policy is not supported by evidence and is therefore not justified.

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**86. Are the criteria for green wedges and green corridors set out in Policies CO3, CO5, CO6, CO7 and CO8 justified, effective and consistent with national policy**

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- 1.23 The criteria for Policy CO3(a) significantly restrict the level of development which can take place within a Green Corridor. The evidence base does not justify this level of restriction.
- 1.24 The Plan is ultimately inconsistent with Amec Report [EB094A, Proposed Policy Objectives] which set out that proposals for new development should have regard to the special qualities, but it does not preclude development coming forward. The Plan [Policy CO3(a)] is overly restrictive; and does not allow for sufficient balancing of considerations should sustainable development proposals be brought forward.
- 1.25 An additional criterion should be inserted into Policy CO3(a) which reads:
- ‘residential development adjoining an existing settlement boundary where it contributes to improving the quality of the urban settlement edge and would maintain the special qualities of the Green Corridor’
- 1.26 As drafted, the criteria for Green Corridors is not justified by the evidence base and should be amended to provide a greater level of flexibility.

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**A1. APPENDIX – LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL OF GREEN CORRIDOR  
PARCEL CE5**

# **LANDSCAPE REPRESENTATIONS: LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL OF GREEN CORRIDOR PARCEL CE5**

For Cogent Land Ltd

November 2018

0160-R01\_V3

# **ETLA**

Eleanor Trenfield Landscape Architects Ltd

CONTACT

Eleanor Trenfield

[www.etla.studio](http://www.etla.studio)

[eleanortrenfield@etla.studio](mailto:eleanortrenfield@etla.studio)

Canterbury Innovation Centre, University Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7FG

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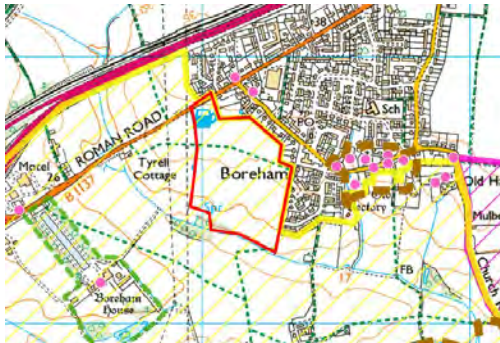
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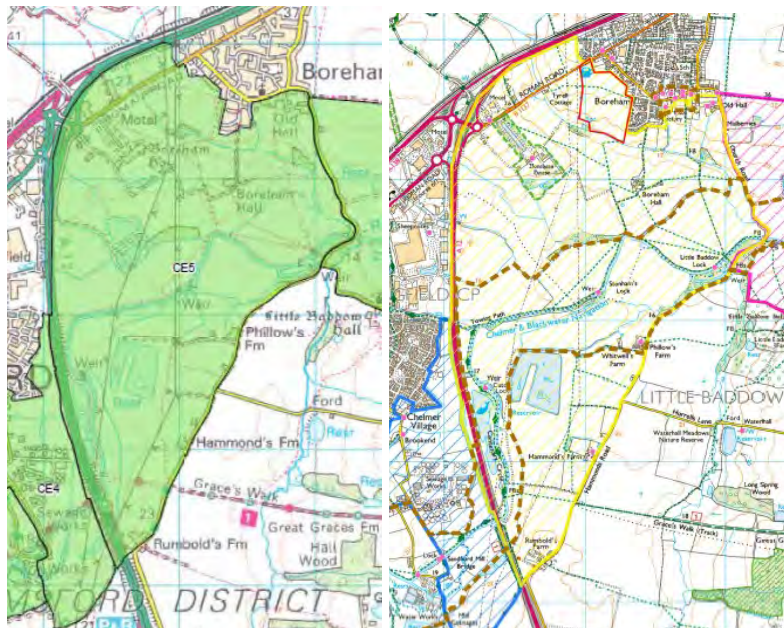
Eleanor Trenfield Landscape Architects Ltd

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Eleanor Trenfield Landscape Architects Ltd (ETLA) were instructed by Cogent Land Ltd to undertake a summary landscape appraisal (LVA) of land adjoining the south-western edge of Boreham, illustrated below by the red line boundary, ('the Site'):



- 1.2 The LVA has been undertaken to inform representations to respond to the Inspector's questions in respect of Matter 9 of the Chelmsford Local Plan Examination, with particular reference to the issue of Green Corridors (draft strategic policy SI3, reiterated in draft policy CO1).
- 1.3 Land to the south-west of Boreham is proposed to be included within a proposed Green Corridor (termed Parcel CE5), as set out within the 'Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys' document written by Amec Foster Wheeler (February 2017. 'the Amec Report').
- 1.4 Parcel CE5 is illustrated below by the green hatch, extracted from Figure 3.7 of the Amec Report and covers an extensive area of land between the A12 and Church Road. Cogent Land's Site is located on the northern edge of Parcel CE5, adjacent to Boreham and to the south of the B1137:



*Extent of Parcel CE5. The image on the right shows the Site's location in the northern edge of Parcel CE5 adjacent to Boreham.*

- 1.5 Parcel CE5 is drawn around the southern and south-western edges of Boreham, using the residential property boundary edges to define the extent of the Green Corridor. Other boundaries to Parcel CE5 are the A12, Hammonds Road and Church Road. The B1137 (Main Road) extends through the northern part of Parcel CE5.
- 1.6 The ETLA appraisal will undertake the following:
- i) An appraisal of Parcel CE5;
  - ii) An appraisal of Cogent Land's Site and its relationship with the wider landscape;
  - iii) An appraisal of the draft green corridor policy, the evidence base as set out within the Amec Report and its methodology; and
  - iv) Analysis of the extent to which Site contributes to the special qualities of Parcel CE5 and whether its inclusion is justified and effective.
- 1.7 Relevant plans and photographs are appended to this appraisal.
- 1.8 Under Matter 9 paragraph 85 of the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions relating to the Examination of the Chelmsford Local Plan, Week 3, the Inspector has raised the following questions:

*"Green wedges and green corridors*

*85. Strategic Policy S13 also states that the main river valleys are identified as valued landscapes and designated as green wedges and green corridors. This is reiterated in Policy CO1.*

*a. Are these valued landscapes in the context of paragraph 109 of the Framework and if so is this based on robust evidence and are they clearly justification?*

*b. How have green wedges and green corridors and their respective boundaries been determined? Are their designations supported by appropriate methodologies and criteria?*

*c. Have the purposes of green wedges and green corridors been clearly defined within the Plan and does land with their boundaries meet the required purposes?*

*86. Are the criteria for green wedges and green corridors set out in Policies CO3, CO5, CO6, CO7 and CO8 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?"*

- 1.9 The hearing statement prepared by Iceni address these questions directly, supported by the work that this ETLA appraisal has undertaken, specifically in relation to Parcel CE5 and the Site that Cogent Land Ltd are promoting as illustrated above.



## **2.0 APPRAISAL OF PARCEL CE5**

### **LOCATION AND LOCAL LAND USE**

- 2.1 Parcel CE5 ('the Parcel') is located to the east of Chelmsford, with the A12 road forming the western and north-western boundaries of the Parcel. The north-eastern boundary of Parcel CE5 is formed by the boundaries of residential properties within Boreham, the eastern boundary of the Parcel is formed by Church Road, and the south-eastern boundary of the Parcel is formed by Hammonds Road, which connects to the A12 to the south.
- 2.2 The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation (the 'river corridor') flows through the central part of the Parcel and in part adjacent to the A12. Tributaries flow across the Parcel.
- 2.3 In addition to the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation, land use comprises large scale irregular fields, some waterbodies including tributaries of the river and a reservoir to the west of Hammonds Road, part of Main Road B1137 (also referred to on OS mapping as Roman Road), scattered farm complexes, Boreham House and Boreham Hall. Other built form within Parcel CE5 is focused in the northern part of the Parcel, including a Premier Inn and the Grange restaurant. There are large agricultural units in the vicinity of the slip roads to the A12 from Main Road B1137, properties along Main Road include those on Paynes Lane and the cluster of development to the south of Main Road identified on mapping as 'Tyrell Cottage'.

### **ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY**

- 2.4 Parcel CE5 is crossed by a network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) including a route along the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation as well as connections between the river corridor and the wider landscape.

### **TOPOGRAPHY AND HYDROLOGY**

- 2.5 Parcel CE5 predominantly comprises a wide shallow valley, along which the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation flows, with topography typically between 15m to 20m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) across the Parcel. The exception to this is in the northern part of the Parcel (covering the Site), where land rises to the north-western and north-eastern extents of the Parcel, to Boreham and the Roman Road and A12. Levels in the northern part of Parcel CE5 extend up to 30-37m AOD.
- 2.6 Beyond Parcel CE5, land continues to rise to the north, with buildings within Boreham located across land at approx. 25m AOD to 37m AOD. Land remains relatively flat to the south-east of Parcel CE5, east of Hammonds Way for approximately 700m, then rises towards Little Baddow in the south-east.

## **VEGETATION**

- 2.7 Land use within Parcel CE5 comprises predominantly arable fields, the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation and its tributaries, reservoirs and some buildings (scattered in the south, more concentrated in the north as identified above).
- 2.8 The vegetation within Parcel CE5 comprises blocks of mature trees and tree belts, including willow blocks and belts associated with the river corridor. Other structural vegetation locally includes native species trees and hedgerow which delineate field boundaries and are present along ditch lines.
- 2.9 In the northern part of the Parcel, there is a more varied mix of tree species, associated with Boreham House (more ornamental including evergreen conifers) and associated with properties along Roman Road (including for example leylandii hedging at Tyrell Cottage and ornamental planting associated with the Premier Inn external areas).

## **DESIGNATIONS**

- 2.10 Parcel CE5 is not currently covered by any landscape designations.
- 2.11 The corridor of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation is a Conservation Area<sup>1</sup> (the western part of which extends east-west across Parcel CE5). There is also a Conservation Area within Boreham to the north of CE5.
- 2.12 There are some listed buildings within Parcel CE5 focused along Hammonds Road in the south-east part of the Parcel, 1 property on Main Road and Boreham House in the north-western part of the Parcel, and 2 properties in the north-eastern part of the Parcel near Church Lane within Boreham. There are also 3 listed lock features along the River Chelmer.
- 2.13 The grounds of Boreham House are identified as a Registered Park and Garden.

## **VISUAL APPRAISAL**

- 2.14 This section is to be read in conjunction with the Viewpoint Locations Plan 0160-L04, and the corresponding photographs 0160-L05.
- 2.15 13 viewpoints were selected, representative of the views experienced within Parcel CE5. As set out below and supported by the photographs, the northern part of the Parcel exhibits distinctly different characteristics to the central and southern part of the Parcel.

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<sup>1</sup> The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area (CBNCA) was designated in 1991, and the appraisal states that the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation is of considerable architectural, historical and scenic interest. Figure 36 illustrates the extent of Zone 5, and key features, footpaths and views

**The northern part of Parcel CE5 (covers the Site)**

2.16 Photographs 1, 1a, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6a illustrate the following visual observations for the northern part of Parcel CE5, as experienced from roads and PRowWs:

- It is a gently undulating, relatively open landscape, with buildings prominent within the foreground and middleground of views associated with the settlement edge of Boreham, and scattered built form including Boreham House and Boreham Hall which are both visually prominent within Parcel CE5. The agricultural sheds at Boreham Hall are conspicuous on the skyline when viewed from the river corridor. The Site is therefore perceived in the context of this settlement edge
- The main road and its associated buildings, in combination with the settlement of Boreham, the views of the eastern edge of Chelmsford, and the pylons present within the Parcel have an urbanising influence on views, as does the presence of the A12. The frequent traffic movements along the A12 and Main Road are visible / partially visible from much of the northern part of Parcel CE5;
- As illustrated within photographs 2 and 5 (on elevated land south of Boreham), there are elevated views across the middle part of Parcel CE5 towards elevated land to the south-east at Little Baddow;

2.17 During the Site visit, the lack of tranquillity was particularly evident in the north-western part of Parcel CE5, given that the traffic on the A12 to the west and north was visible and audible.

**The central and southern parts of Parcel CE5**

2.18 Photographs 6, 8, 9, 10 and 12 are taken adjacent to the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation (in the central and southern part of the Parcel). Photographs 7, 10, and 13 are taken along the roads forming the Parcel's eastern and south-eastern boundaries. Compared to the northern part of the Parcel:

- The central and southern area of Parcel CE5 is predominantly flat, forming the shallow, wide river valley of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation;
- The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation watercourse and its locks are a distinctive, key feature within the river valley (central and southern part of Parcel CE5);
- Planting associated with the river valley includes native trees and hedgerows and a large proportion of willow trees including some areas of established and newly planted willow plantations along the river, all of which give the landscape a distinct character, different to the northern part of Parcel CE5;
- The pylons that cross Parcel CE5 detract from its overall visual amenity;
- The traffic noise from the A12 to the west is audible (though not visible), detracting from the tranquillity of the area;

- There are reciprocal views to the elevated land at Boreham from PROWs in the central part of Parcel CE5 looking north, where built form within Boreham and its associated tree structure forms the skyline to views in this direction. This is not the case in the southern part of the Parcel where the combination of vegetation structure and flat topography result in the screening of views of Boreham;
- There are views towards the rising land associated with Little Baddow to the south-east of Parcel CE5, where this forms a wooded skyline and backdrop to views beyond the river valley landscape; and
- The views from the roads which form the eastern and south-eastern edges of Parcel CE5 illustrate that the open, low lying river corridor landscape extends eastwards, including to the east of Hammonds Road (however this land to the east of Hammonds Road is not part of any Parcels within the Amec report).

2.19 The above demonstrates that the visual experience within the northern part of Parcel CE5 is different to the visual experience within the southern and central part of Parcel CE5, in that the northern part (which includes the Site) has more urbanising influences and does not exhibit the characteristics of the river valley corridor that are present in the central and southern parts of Parcel CE5, and is more undulating with elevated areas.

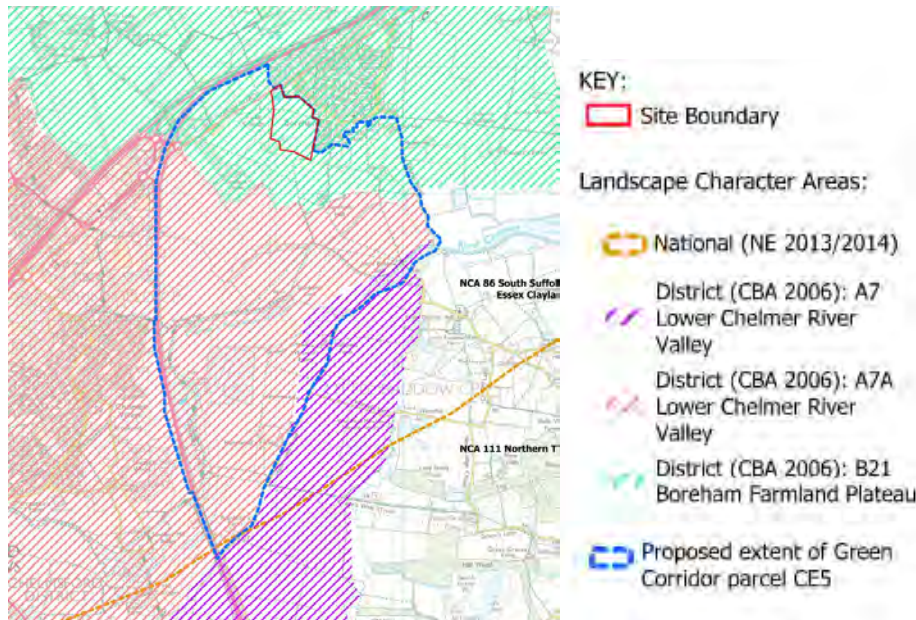
2.20 Reciprocal views between the northern and central parts of Parcel CE5 are obtained, where land is more elevated in the areas associated with the urban edge of Boreham. Where views are obtained from the central part of Parcel (the river valley corridor) to the elevated areas at Boreham, which includes the Site, these are viewed as part of the background to the view, seen in the context of the buildings in Boreham which forms the backdrop to the view.

2.21 The northern part of Parcel CE5 has a visual relationship with the rest of the Parcel insofar that it (and the development on the eastern edge of Chelmsford) forms part of the visual setting to the river valley corridor, being more undulating and more urbanised than the corridor itself.

2.22 The land to the east of Hammonds Road is more visually consistent with the visual characteristics of the central and southern parts of Parcel CE5, however this was not included within any land Parcel in the Amec Report.

## PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

2.23 The extent of landscape character areas relevant to Parcel CE5, at a national and district scale, are illustrated below:



Extract from ETLA drawing 0163-L03 to illustrate the extents of landscape character areas, as identified at a national and district level. The blue outline is the extent of the proposed Green Corridor Parcel CE5.

2.24 Parcel CE5 is located within the following landscape character areas (LCAs):

- *National Character Area Profiles, Natural England, 2014*: At a national scale, Parcel CE5 and the Site is within NCA 86: south Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, the key characteristics of which include an undulating landscape of gentle slopes, watercourses winding slowly across flood plains, presence of ancient woodlands and large often ancient hedgerows linking woods and copses forming wooded skylines, a predominantly arable landscape with a wooded appearance, dispersed settlement pattern with larger 20<sup>th</sup> century development which has taken place around Chelmsford, Harlow and Stevenage, and a strong network of PRoWs providing access to the lowland English countryside.
- *Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments, Chris Blandford Associates, 2006*: At a district scale, Parcel CE5 is formed of two character areas, namely LCA B21 which forms the northern part of the Parcel and covers the Site and LCA A7A (which is a sub-unit of A7) forms the majority of the rest of the Parcel. LCA A7 forms the eastern edge of Parcel CE5, extending eastwards towards Little Baddow.
- LCA B21: Boreham Farmland Plateau is described as comprising irregular field patterns of medium sized arable and pastoral fields marked by hedgerows (some gappy and fragmented), banks and ditches, small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape, gently undulating, the A12 is described as dominant and reduces the

sense of tranquillity. The LCA is described as being of low to moderate sensitivity to change.

- Sub-unit LCA A7A: Lower Chelmer River Valley is described as a mixture of arable and pastoral fields on the valley floor with extensive linear poplar and willow plantations identified as a distinctive feature in close proximity to the river. Tree cover is identified as high along the banks of the river with willow and poplar plantations and alder and willow woodland common features. Where unconstrained by trees, views are described as open and occasionally panoramic, and views along the river valley corridor are described as framed. The LCA is described as being of relatively high sensitivity to change.

2.25 The published assessments by Chris Blandford Associates illustrate that the northern and southern parts of Parcel CE5 exhibit different landscape characteristics and different sensitivities to potential change, given their attributes and influences. This finding is consistent with the observations made during the ETLA site visit and visual appraisal set out above which identifies that there was a distinct difference in character, topography and features between the northern part of Parcel CE5, compared to the central and southern parts of Parcel CE5.

2.26 Furthermore, the published LCAs serves to illustrate the point that the land to the east of Hammonds Road is of greater affinity with the river corridor landscape of Parcel CE5 than the rising land in the northern part of the Parcel, given that it is characterised within the same character area LCA A7.

### **3.0 APPRAISAL OF THE SITE**

#### **LOCATION AND LAND USE**

- 3.1 The Site is located on the south-western edge of Boreham, and is an agricultural field. Its northern and eastern boundaries are formed by rear garden fences and other boundary features of adjoining properties. Its southern and western boundaries comprise a ditch (watercourse) and tree belts.

#### **ACCESS AND RIGHTS OF WAY**

- 3.2 There is a PRoW which extends east-west through the northern part of the Site and along the eastern boundary of the Site, connecting westwards to Roman Road, and southwards to a network of PRoWs, providing access to the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation, to Church Road to the east.

#### **TOPOGRAPHY AND HYDROLOGY**

- 3.3 The Site slopes southwards, from around 35m AOD to 20m AOD, falling gently in the upper (northern) part of the Site and more steeply in the lower (southern) part of the Site.
- 3.4 The southern boundary is formed by a ditch.

#### **VEGETATION**

- 3.5 Vegetation is limited to the boundaries of the Site, namely its western and southern boundaries as described above.

#### **DESIGNATIONS**

- 3.6 The Site is not subject to any designations and is not adjoined by any listed buildings or conservation areas. There is a conservation area within the eastern part of Boreham, separated from the Site by intervening residential properties and roads.

#### **VISUAL APPRAISAL**

- 3.7 The Site is located in the northern part of Parcel CE5. The Visual Appraisal for Parcel CE5 set out within section 2 of this ETLA report demonstrates that the visual experience within the northern part of Parcel CE5 is different to the visual experience within the southern and central part of Parcel CE5.
- 3.8 Photograph 2 of the views appended to this appraisal illustrates the characteristics of the Site, and its sloping landform, falling to the south, resulting in views of residential development adjoining the Site in the foreground to the north and east, and longer distance views to the south and south-east across Parcel CE5 towards Little Baddow on rising land to the south-east, which forms a wooded hill backdrop to the view.

- 3.9 With regards to views into the Site, the Site is partially visible from the PRoWs to the south of the Site, where the Site is seen as part of the rising landform associated with the village of Boreham (as illustrated within Photograph 3).

### **PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS**

- 3.10 The Site is located within the following landscape character areas:

- At a national scale, The Site is within NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, as set out within section 2 of this appraisal.
- At a district scale, the Site is within LCA B21: Boreham Farmland Plateau, which is described as comprising irregular field patterns of medium sized arable and pastoral fields marked by hedgerows (some gappy and fragmented), banks and ditches. Small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape. The landscape is describes as gently undulating, and the A12 is described as dominant and reduces the sense of tranquillity. The LCA is assessed as being of low to moderate sensitivity to change.

### **POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.11 With regard to the potential for development within the Site, this appraisal finds that:

- The Site is more closely associated with the settlement edge of Boreham given its landform and location, and does not share the special qualities of the river corridor landscape associated with the central and southern part of Parcel CE5;
- There are views into and from the Site from the southern part of Parcel CE5, however, where visible, the Site is perceived in the context of adjoining built form within Boreham and not part of the river valley corridor landscape associated with the central and southern areas of Parcel CE5;
- Modern residential development on Boreham's edge has a strong detracting influence on the Site and the sense of tranquillity is low to moderate due to the visual intrusion of the settlement edge<sup>2</sup>.

- 3.12 It is therefore considered that there is potential for part of the Site to accommodate built form, with an opportunity to accommodate a substantial new green edge to Boreham which would round off the south-western settlement edge of the village and create a strong definition between Boreham and the wider river valley corridor to the south.

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<sup>2</sup> These are points raised within findings of the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment by Amec in 2017 for land Parcel BLP7, the nearest Parcel to be assessed within Boreham and can also be said for the Site given it is also adjoined by properties within Boreham. The Site was not included within this Study.



## **4.0 EVIDENCE BASE AND DRAFT GREEN CORRIDOR POLICY**

- 4.1 Chelmsford Borough Council has prepared a draft Local Plan ('dLP', January 2018) which is currently subject to Independent Examination, and proposes a planning framework to meet local development needs for the period up to 2036. The dLP is supported by an evidence base.
- 4.2 This ETLA appraisal focuses in particular on the proposed Green Corridor designation and evidence base, and therefore other landscape policies may be touched upon but not addressed in detail.

### **EVIDENCE BASE**

#### **Green Wedges and Green Corridors: Defining Chelmsford's River Valleys Review Report, 2017**

- 4.3 Undertaken by Amec, the purpose of this report, as stated in paragraph 1 is to undertake a review of the extent of and rational for the existing Green Wedges and to assess the potential extension of the Green Wedges along the valleys of the River Chelmer, Can and Wid.
- 4.4 The Green Wedges designation 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. At present the furthest extent of the Green Wedge is defined by the A12 east of Chelmsford.
- 4.5 Paragraph 7 refers to the Issues and Options Local Plan consultation which references 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.
- 4.6 Section 3.4 of the Amec Report identifies the extent of the green wedge and corridor of the River Chelmer East and Blackwater Navigation, formed by Parcels CE1 to CE6. Paragraph 17-18 states that:

*"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.*

*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.”*

- 4.7 Table 3.4 sets out the Parcel character analysis for each Parcel. The summary for Parcel CE5 is excerpted below:

**Parcel CE5: Land between the A12 and Hammonds Road and Church Road Boreham**

*Location:* Largely open land to the east of the A12, forming a substantial part of the easterly countryside context of Chelmsford.

*Land Use:* 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.

*Vegetation:* River valley landscape characterised by intermittent hedgerows along some field boundaries, including strings of willow (*salix alba* spp. and poplar (*populus* spp.) and occasional copses of the same. A high voltage transmission line traverses southwest – northeast.

*Nature Conservation/Cultural Heritage:* Boreham House is a Registered Park & Garden

*Landscape Character:* 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.

*Access:* Access is principally by a riverside footpath, fed by various minor paths to the north and south.

- 4.8 Under Section 4.2, paragraph 7, the appraisal states that:

*“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.” (ETLA emphasis)*

- 4.9 Under Section 4.3, paragraph 13 states that:

*“**The following policy objectives (developed into policy either separately or as a two-part policy) should be included in the Local Plan...** 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**” (ETLA emphasis)*

- 4.10 The Policy Objectives for Green Wedges and Green Corridors are as follows:

#### 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.

*(Extract from page 35 of the Amec Report, setting out the proposed policy objectives, which Amec recommend should be included within the Local Plan)*

- 4.11 The special qualities are not specifically listed anywhere within the Amec Report and methodology, and are only referred to in a wider sense with reference to landscape character, biodiversity and recreational resource.

#### DRAFT LOCAL PLAN, JANUARY 2018

- 4.12 The dLP states in paragraph 4.13 that it will **protect valued landscapes by designating Green Wedges and Green Corridors**, and protect and enhance the natural and built environment so that residents have access to good quality open spaces and wildlife can flourish.

- 4.13 Under draft Strategic Policy S13: The Role of the Countryside: the dLP states that:

*“The Council will ensure countryside that performs important national planning policy objectives such as the Green Belt, recognised areas of ecological, historic and functional importance will be protected from inappropriate development. Other landscapes that are locally recognised and valued for their intrinsic character and beauty are designated within the Local Plan.*

*The general extent of the Green Belt is established and will be maintained. The main river valleys are identified as valued landscapes and are locally designated as Green Wedges and Green Corridors. The countryside outside of the Urban Areas and Defined Settlement, not within the Green Belt, is designated as the Rural Area...*

- 4.14 Within the Justification text accompanying the policy, paragraph 6.78 states that:

*“Where the river valleys extend beyond the Green Wedges, they are designated as Green Corridors reflecting their identified landscape value. The methodology for identifying the Green Wedges and Green Corridors and their boundaries are set out in the Green Wedge and Corridor Assessment...”*

- 4.15 Draft Policy CO1: Green Belt, Green Wedges, Green Corridors and Rural Areas: states that:

*“When determining planning applications, the Council will carefully balance the requirement for new development within the countryside to meet development identified needs in accordance with the Spatial Strategy, and to support thriving rural communities whilst upholding the following planning objectives of each of the following areas:*

*...*

*B) Green Wedges*

*The crucial role of the main river valleys is where they permeate into the existing or proposed urban areas as Green Wedges. These form part of the wider river valley network which connects a suite of Green Infrastructure assets. They will be protected and enhanced as valued and multi-faceted landscapes for their openness and function as important green networks for wildlife, leisure and recreation, and for increased public access and enjoyment. Development which materially harms the role, function, character and appearance of this valued landscape will be resisted.*

*C) Green Corridors*

*The distinctive and valued landscape character of the main river valleys where they extend into the countryside beyond the existing or proposed urban areas and form part of the wider river valley network which connects a suite of Green Infrastructure assets will be protected as Green Corridors. Development which materially harms the character and appearance of this valued landscape will be resisted...”*

- 4.16 Under justification, paragraph 8.42 – 8.43 states that:

*“The NPPF also states that other valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced. The main river valleys in Chelmsford, in particular, form an attractive and important leisure and recreation resource containing wildlife habitats and represent the key component of Chelmsford’s strategic green infrastructure network. They also contain floodplains that provide flood storage capacity and can contribute to the objectives of the Water Framework Directive. The river valleys are locally valued by residents and used as corridors of movement by people and wildlife. For the purposes of implementing this policy, the main river valleys are the River Chelmer/Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation and Can/Wid valleys.*

*8.43 Where the main river valleys permeate into the existing or proposed built-up areas of Chelmsford, this identified value is amplified and development pressure is at its greatest. The unchecked erosion of open land in these sections of the river valleys would be harmful to the character and function of these areas and therefore it should be afforded greater protection. As such, Green Wedges will be designated within the river valleys to reflect this multi-faceted green network. Where the river valleys extend into the open countryside, they perform a different role. They are still attractive and distinctive landscapes that tend to be more agricultural and rural in nature, but are still characterised by a mix of landscape features and are crossed by Public Rights of Way. As such these areas will be designated as Green Corridors.”*

4.17 Draft Policy CO3: New Buildings and Structure in Green Wedges and Corridors states that planning permission will be granted for (limited) new buildings where development does not conflict with the purpose of the Green Corridor and is for, amongst other things, a local community facility, agriculture or forestry, local transport infrastructure, facilities for outdoor recreation, limited affordable housing, extensions to buildings, replacement buildings (identified within part A) and redevelopment of previously developed land (identified in part B).

4.18 Under Justification, para 8.53 states:

*“Green Wedges and Green Corridors are identified as valued landscapes as set out in the Green Wedge and Green Corridor Assessment. The crucial role of the main river valleys will be protected and enhanced as valued and multi-faceted landscapes for their openness and their function as important green networks for wildlife, leisure and recreation. New buildings within the Green Wedges and Green Corridors will be restricted to ensure that the openness of the valued landscapes is not adversely affected.”*

#### **ETLA Commentary on the draft Green Corridor Policies and evidence base**

4.19 This section of the ETLA appraisal sets out observations on the methodology used within the Amec Report relative to Green Corridors, and the interpretation of this evidence base within draft policy.

4.20 The following observations are made with regard to the Amec Report and methodology:

- No reference within the Amec Report is made to ‘valued landscapes’;
- The Amec Report states in paragraph 13 of section 4.3 that their proposed Policy Objectives should be included in the Local Plan, however, they are not included in their suggested phrasing, and have been interpreted differently within the draft policies and justification text of the dLP;
- The Policy Objectives with regard to Green Corridors are to protect and enhance the ‘special qualities’ of Green Corridors. The ‘special qualities’ are not specifically listed but are connected to landscape character, biodiversity and recreation;
- The Policy Objectives with regard to Green Corridors state that proposals for new development have ‘particular regard’ to these special qualities. This appears to be a more flexible interpretation than that which is set out within the dLP;

- The methodology uses a hierarchical process to establish boundaries to the land Parcels (roads, property boundaries etc, refer to paragraph 2 of section 2 page 5), however, ETLA considers that **this does not sufficiently account for landscape character, which the Amec Report states is a key factor of the special qualities of the Green Corridor.** The methodology for identifying boundaries has resulted in areas of lesser sensitivity which exhibit less of the special qualities of the river valley corridor being identified as part of the Parcel CE5 (namely the northern part of the Parcel), and conversely, omitting areas that are more consistent with the river valley corridor landscape character and special qualities of this landscape which are more sensitive to change (namely land to the east of Hammonds Road). **A more refined approach would be to adopt a more character-based approach to the boundaries,** rather than features which cut across / do not reflect consistent character areas, therefore giving a more accurate extent of the river valley corridor and special qualities that the policy objectives are seeking to protect.

4.21 The following observations are made with regard to the draft Local Plan:

- The 'Policy Objectives' as written within the Amec Report (and recommended for inclusion within the dLP), appear to have been interpreted in a more restrictive manner within the dLP than the suggested approach within the Amec Report; and
- In its interpretation, the wording of the dLP differs to the wording that is suggested within section 4.3 of the Amec under 'policy objectives'. The dLP seeks to resist development to protect the Green Corridors and identifies the Green Corridors as valued landscapes, whereas the Amec report recognises that some development will occur (but should be particularly sensitive to the River Valley landscape) and that policy objectives seek to ensure that development has particular regard to the 'special qualities'.

4.22 Refer to the Hearing Statement by Iceni which proposes revised wording to the Green Corridor policy within the dLP.

## **5.0 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SITE CONTRIBUTES TO THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF PARCEL CE5**

- 5.1 Parcel CE5 is drawn tightly around the southern and south-western sides of Boreham, using the settlement boundary edges to define the extent of the Green Corridor.
- 5.2 As stated in section 4 of this appraisal, given the Policy Objectives of the Green Corridor to identify landscape character of the river valley corridor as a key factor of the special qualities on which the Green Corridor designation is based, at present, the Green Corridor is considered not to be justified, as it has not been based upon proportionate evidence of the existing landscape character.
- 5.3 A more refined, character-based approach to identifying the extents of Parcel CE5 would result in a more effective Parcel based upon landscape character and therefore aligning with the Policy Objectives. A landscape character approach would only designate the central and southern parts of Parcel CE5, along with land to the east of Hammonds Road as the Green Corridor, and exclude land in the northern part of Parcel CE5, including the Site.
- 5.4 This approach would better align with the findings of the published landscape character assessment for Chelmsford, which are also part of the evidence base of the dLP.
- 5.5 This appraisal finds that the Site is more closely associated with Boreham given its similar elevated landform, characteristics and location, such that it is perceived in the context of buildings and infrastructure. The Site is not perceived as part of the river valley corridor that the Green Corridor designation seeks to protect.
- 5.6 There is therefore potential for the Site to accommodate new buildings and a change in land use, with an opportunity to accommodate a new green edge to Boreham.
- 5.7 The position of the Site adjacent to Boreham and its extended settlement pattern would enable buildings within the Site to round-off the south-western edge of Boreham and with new planting create a strong definition between Boreham and the river valley corridor to the south.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

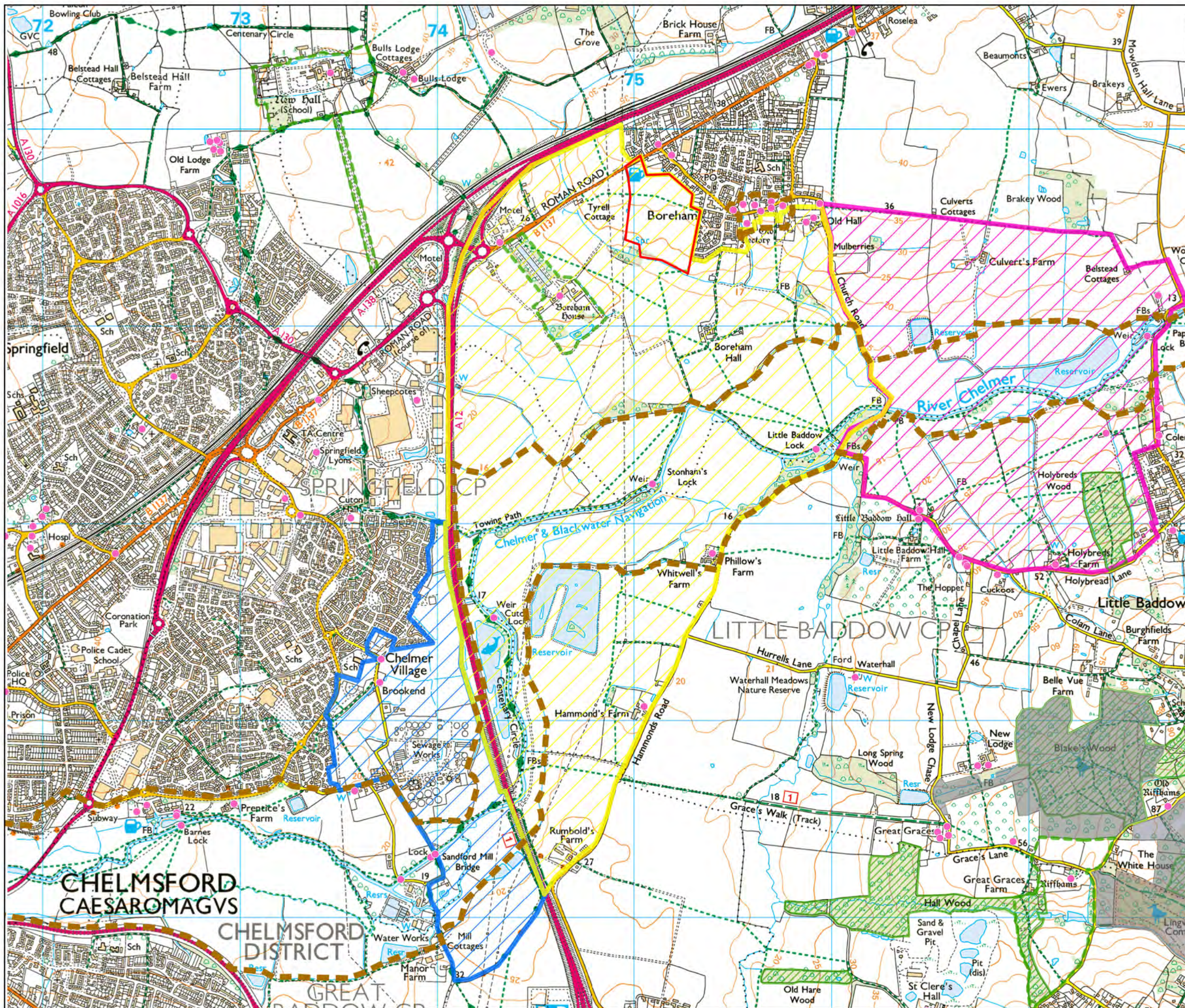
- 6.1 The Green Corridor would be a valuable strategic designation for long term green infrastructure provision, however, its proposed boundaries are not justified.
- 6.2 The proposed boundaries should be reviewed to better align with the landscape character as perceived 'on the ground' and defined by the published landscape character assessments, which form part of the supporting evidence base to the Local Plan.
- 6.3 A more refined, character-based approach to identifying the extents of Parcel CE5 would result in a more consistent Parcel, which would include land to the east of Hammonds Road, and exclude land in the northern part of Parcel CE5. This realignment would still protect the special qualities and function of the river valley corridor.
- 6.4 Furthermore, this appraisal finds that there is potential for development at the Site, which adjoins the southern edge of Boreham. This is because the Site is more closely associated with Boreham than the river valley corridor to the south.
- 6.5 With regards to development on the Site, this appraisal finds that there is potential to accommodate buildings and a change in land use, with an opportunity to accommodate substantial open space including a new green edge to Boreham. This would round off the south-western edge of the village and create a strong definition between Boreham and the wider river valley corridor and realigned Green Corridor to the south.



## **7.0 APPENDICES:**

### **Illustrative Material: Plans and Photographs**





- KEY:
- Site Boundary
  - Listed Buildings
  - Conservation Area
  - Registered Parks and Gardens
  - SSSI
  - Ancient Woodlands

Proposed Green Wedge and Green Corridor parcels:

- CE5
- CE4
- CE6

# ETLA

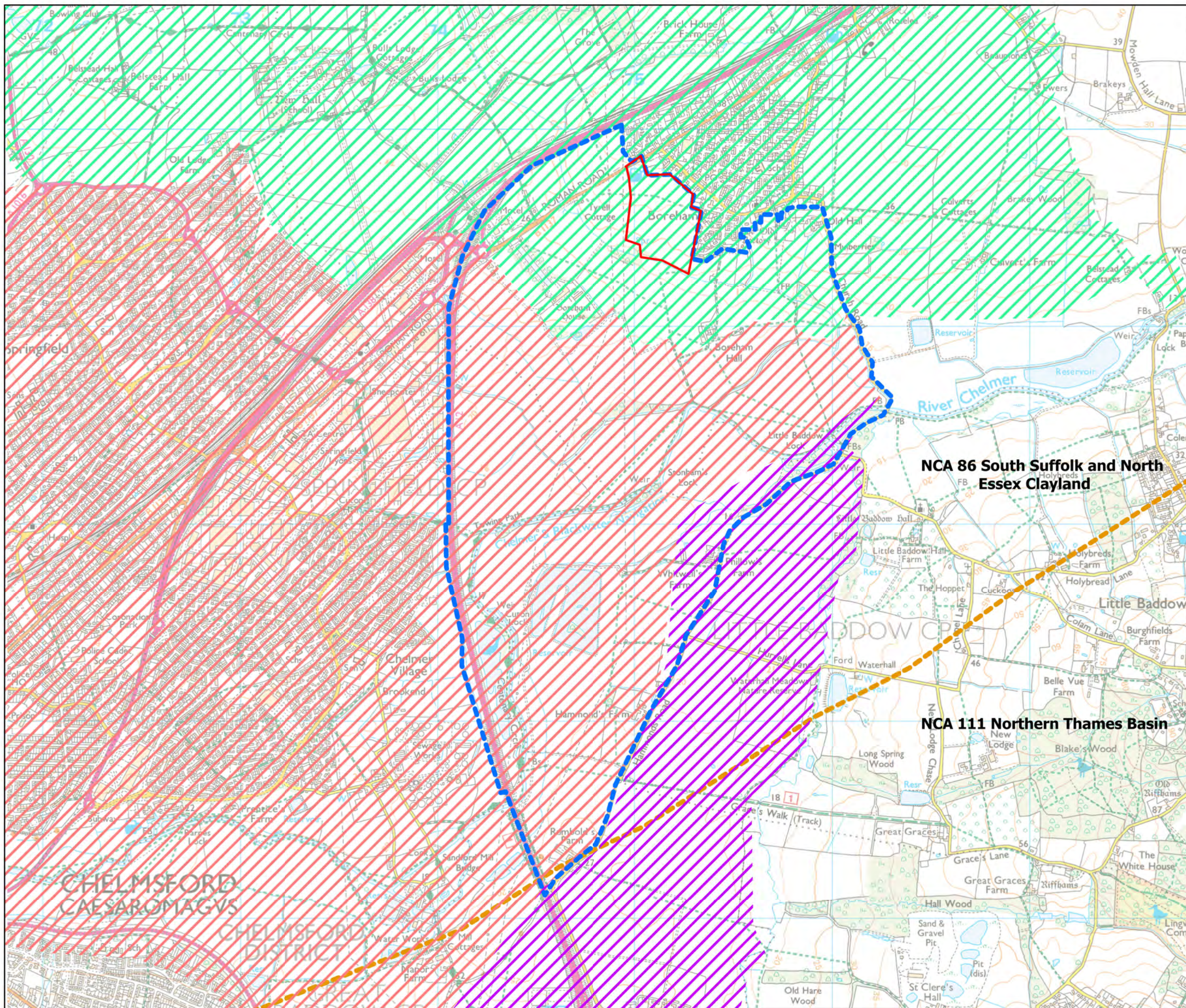
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Drawing Title	Site Context Plan
Drawing No	0160- L01
Status	
Date	11/2018
Scale	1:18,000@A3
Revision	

Meters

0 80 160 320 480

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# KEY:

Site Boundary

## Landscape Character Areas:

National (NE 2013/2014)

District (CBA 2006): A7  
Lower Chelmer River  
Valley

District (CBA 2006): A7A  
Lower Chelmer River  
Valley

District (CBA 2006): B21  
Boreham Farmland Plateau

Proposed extent of Green  
Corridor parcel CE5

# ETLA

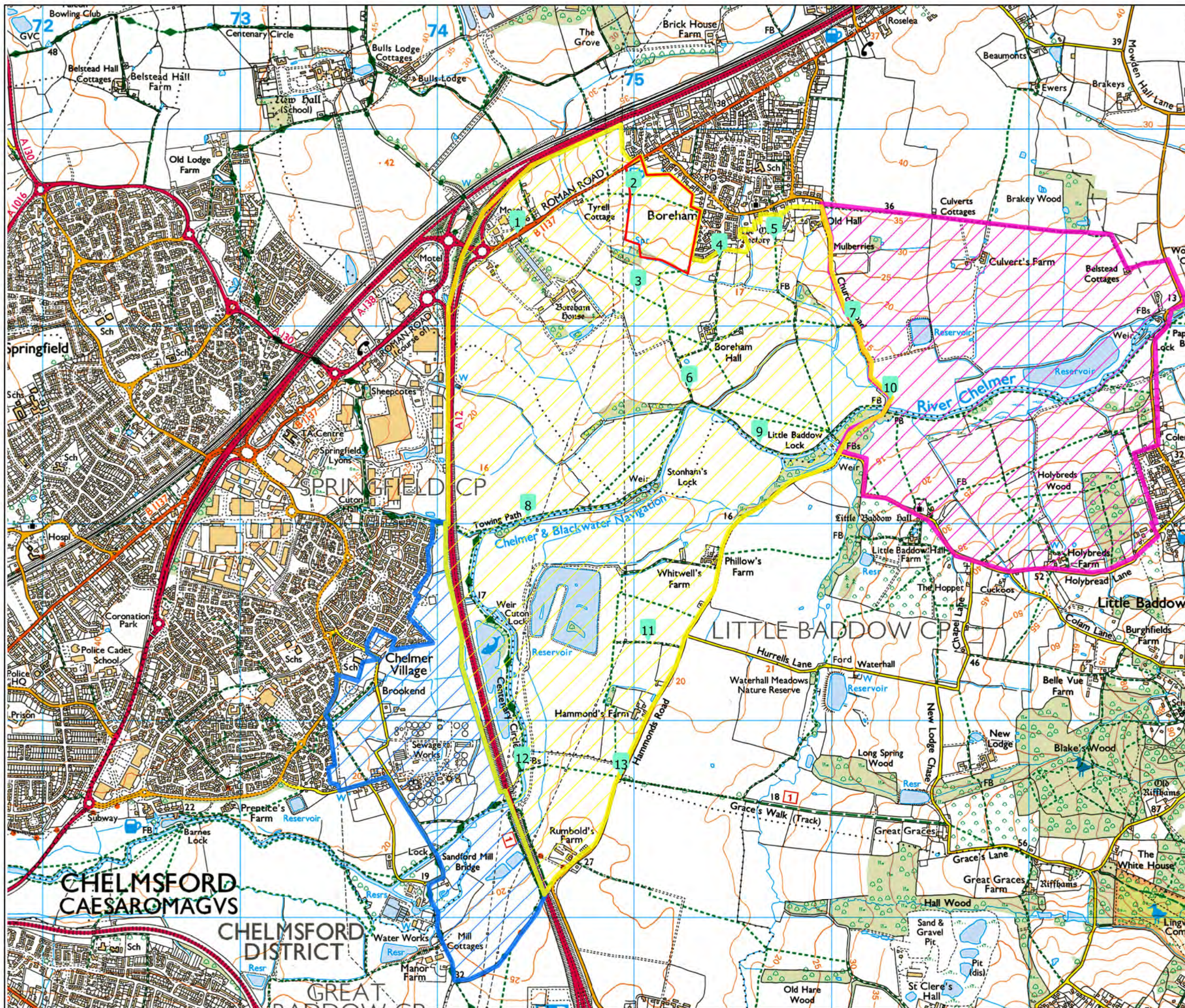
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Drawing Title	Map of published Landscape Character Areas
Drawing No	0160- L03
Status	
Date	11/2018
Scale	1:18,000@A3
Revision	

0 80 160 320 480 Meters



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KEY:

- Site Boundary
- Viewpoint Locations

Proposed Green Wedge and Green Corridor parcels:

- CE5
- CE4
- CE6

# ETLA

Project	Land at Boreham, Chelmsford
Drawing Title	Viewpoint Locations Plan
Drawing No	0160- L04
Status	11/2018
Date	1:18,000@A3
Scale	
Revision	

Meters

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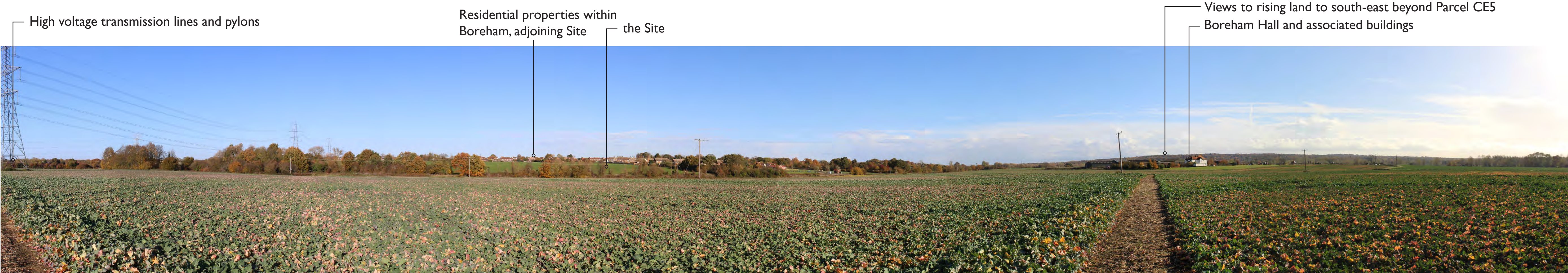




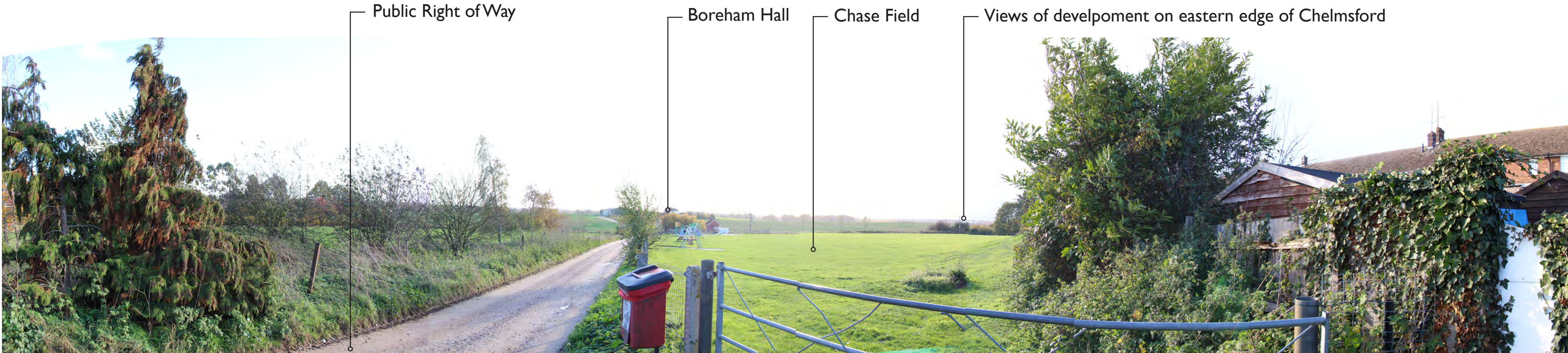
SCP 1: View from Roman Road in north-western part of Parcel CE5



SCP 2: View from within northern part of Parcel CE5, looking est towards the settlement edge of Boreham and longer distance views to the south-east



SCP 3: View from PRow, south of Site, looking north to east



SCP 4: View from Public Right of Way ast of Chase Field play area adjoining Boreham, looking southwards

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Land to the south of Boreham within Parcel CE5	
0160-L04- Site Photographs November 2018	
Date Taken	11.2018
Project No.	0160- L05
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SCP 5: View from Public Right of Way within north-eastern edge of Parcel CE5, looking southwards



SCP 6a: View from within CE5 looking north



SCP 6: View from within CE5 looking south towards the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation



SCP 7: View from Church Road along eastern edge of CE5

# ETLA

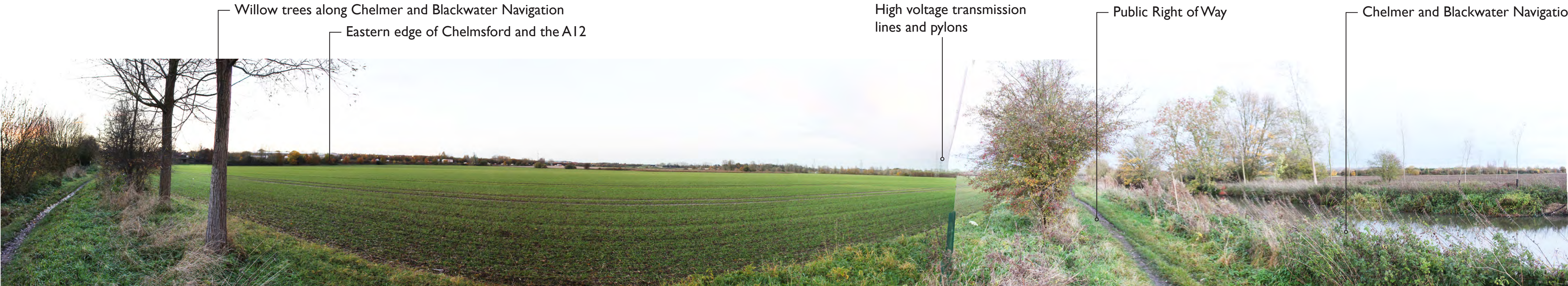
Land to the south of Boreham  
within Parcel CE5

0160-L04- Site Photographs  
November 2018

Date Taken 11.2018  
Project No. 0160- L05

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SCP 8: View from Public Right of Way along River Chelmer within western part of Parcel CE5, looking northwards



SCP 9: View from the footpath adjoining the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation within eastern part of CE5 looking north across the river valley corridor landscape towards Boreham



SCP 9a: View from the footpath adjoining the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation within eastern part of CE5, looking south across the river



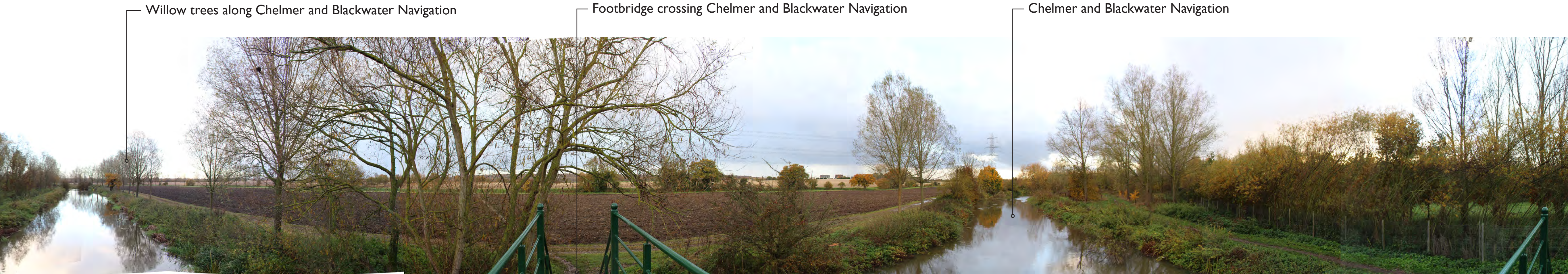
SCP 10: View from Church Road, along eastern edge of Parcel CE5

ETLA





SCP 11: View from Hammonds Road, forming south-eastern edge of Parcel CE5, looking north



SCP 12: View from footbridge over the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation within southern part of CE5, looking west



SCP 13: View from PRow accessed from Hammonds Road, in southern part of Parcel CE5, looking towards Chelmsford.

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Land to the south of Boreham within Parcel CE5	
0160-L04- Site Photographs November 2018	
Date Taken	11.2018
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