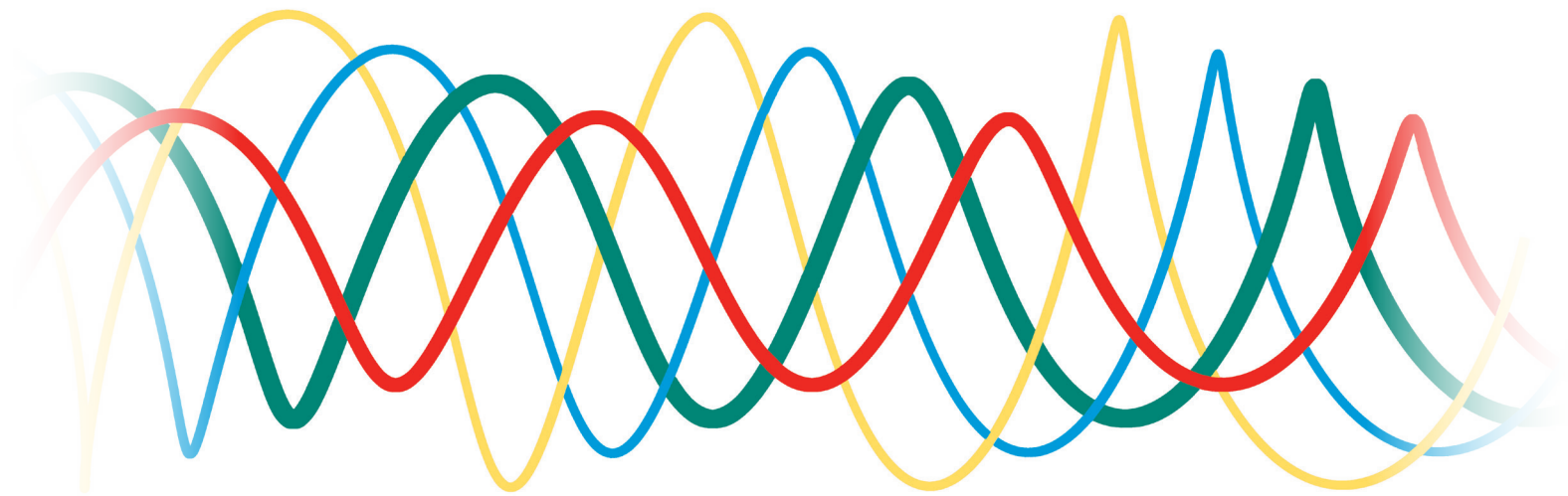


HAMMONDS FARM

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INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE CHELMSFORD DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

ID 872955

MATTER 9

THE ENVIRONMENT



GROSVENOR

**HAMMONDS
ESTATES**

Matter 9 – The Environment

On behalf of Grosvenor Developments Limited ('Grosvenor') and Hammonds Estates LLP ('Hammonds Estates') who are development partner and landowner of Hammonds Farm respectively ('the promoters'), the following information is provided in relation to Matter 9 – The Environment.

Main issues – Does the Plan set out a positively prepared strategy for conserving and where appropriate enhancing the natural, built and historic environment that is justified, effective and consistent with national policy? Does it adequately address climate change and other environmental matters and are the policies sound?

Countryside Policies - Strategic Policy S13 and Policies CO1-CO8

Green Belt

Qu.84 Strategic Policy S13 includes seeking to protect Green Belt from inappropriate development. Policy CO1 echoes this but also adds 'except in very special circumstances.' Policy CO2 sets out criteria for new buildings or structures within the Green Belt. Policy CO5 sets out criteria for infilling in the Green Belt. Policy CO6 provides criteria for changes of use and engineering operations. Policy CO7 identifies criteria for extensions to existing buildings in the Green Belt. Policy CO8 sets out criteria for rural and agricultural/forestry workers' dwellings. Are these policies consistent with national policy on Green Belt? If not what changes are necessary to make them compliant? Is it necessary to repeat national policy in the Plan?

9.1 No comment

Green Wedges and Green Corridors

Qu.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?**

9.2 Neither the NPPF nor the PPG define what constitutes a valued landscape. The promoters' response to Matter 6 identifies that green corridors may be regarded as valued landscapes. However, the absence of any definition within national policy or guidance means that whether a site or area constitutes a valued landscape needs to be considered in the context of case law.

- 9.3 Consideration of the Stroud¹ case confirms that the designated landscapes should not be equated with valued landscapes. It identifies that there must be ‘demonstrable physical attributes’ rather than just popularity in order for countryside to be valued.
- 9.4 Reference is also made in the Stroud case as well as Cheshire East², Forest of Dean³ and Cawrey⁴ to Box 5.1 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) issued by the Landscape Institute. This sets out a “*range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes*”. Box 5.1 identifies 8 features: landscape quality (condition), scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, recreational value, perceptual aspects and associations. It should be noted that this was not drawn up in the context of seeking to define valued landscapes within the meaning of NPPF, but it provides a useful indication as to whether a landscape is valued.
- 9.5 Paragraph 8.42 of the Pre-submission Plan (PSP) identifies that “*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*”. It goes on to state that “*the river valleys are locally valued by residents and used as corridors of movement by people and wildlife*”.
- 9.6 Paragraph 8.43 of the PSP states “*where the river corridors extend into the open countryside, they perform a different role. They are still attractive and distinctive landscapes that tend to be agricultural and rural in nature, but are still characterised by a mix of landscape features and are crossed by Public Rights of Way*”. These areas are designated as Green Corridors.
- 9.7 In order to establish whether land identified as Green Wedge or Green Corridor comprises a valued landscape it is necessary, based on case law, to establish whether these areas have demonstrable physical attributes that take these areas beyond ordinary countryside. Paragraph 6.78 of the PSP states that the methodology for identifying the Green Wedges and Green Corridors and their boundaries is set out in the Green Wedge and Green Corridor Assessment (EB094A). However, this evidence, which is crucial to the identification of these areas, does not explicitly assess whether these areas comprise valued landscapes.
- 9.8 In respect of Green Wedges, paragraph 16 of EB094A identifies the value of Green Wedges but does not express this in terms of valued landscapes. Furthermore, there is no consideration within the report as to whether the Green Wedges or Green Corridors identified by the study comprise valued landscapes.
- 9.9 The field study proformas used within EB094A to determine the character, function and appropriate boundaries of each parcel use a number of parameters, but these don’t fully cover the range of factors identified in Box 5.1 of the LVIA guidance to identify valued landscapes.

¹ *Stroud DC v Secretary of State and Gladman Developments Limited* [2015] EWHC 488 (Admin)

² *Cheshire East BC v SS CLG* [2016] EWHC 694 (Admin)

³ *Forest of Dean District Council v Secretary of State and Gladman Developments* [2016] EWHC 2429 (Admin)

⁴ [2016] EWHC 1198 (Admin)

- 9.10 There is therefore a lack of evidence and justification for identification of Green Wedges and Green Corridors as valued landscapes, and some of the features identified could be found to contradict the factors used to identify a valued landscape. Taking parcel CE5 as an example, statements that *“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”* and *“A high voltage transmission line traverses southwest-northeast”*, would suggest that its perceptual aspects (a landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity) do not accord with a valued landscape.
- 9.11 It is unclear from policies S13 or CO1 or the accompanying reasoned justification how the boundaries of the green wedges and green corridors have been determined. The reasoned justification instead refers the reader to the methodology set out in the Green Wedges and Corridor Assessment (EB094A) for identifying their boundaries. While we accept that roads and rights of way etc. are on occasion, the appropriate boundaries to identify the parcels identified for study, we believe that these should be refined during the study. It is inappropriate that the study only identified a reduction in the parcel boundaries for areas CE3, CE4 and CW7. These areas and boundary changes reflect the boundaries of strategic growth sites 3a, 3b, 3d, and the parcel CW7 boundary change pulls back the boundary from a hedgerow to a track (with land within and outside the parcel remaining within the Green Belt). The use of roads as a means of identifying the valued landscape area is flawed as parcel CE6 illustrates. This area covers four landscape character areas identified in the Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments September 2006 (EB099), the Lower Chelmer River Valley Floor, Lower Chelmer River Valley, Little Baddow and Danbury Wooded Farmland and Boreham Farmland Plateau. This land rises up to approximately 60m at Little Baddow and approximately 35m at Boreham. The extent of this parcel cannot be justified as a main river valley landscape as described in paragraph 8.43 of the PSP when it clearly extends beyond the river valley.
- 9.12 The green corridor along the River Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation (Chelmer East) has not been accurately determined to reflect the valued part of the landscape. Appendix 6 to Hammonds Estates’ representation (PS1045) provides a detailed review of the Chelmer East green wedge and green corridor. It concludes that the green corridor boundary north and south of the River Chelmer should be drawn in line with the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation conservation area, flood zone, the 18m contour, hedgerow vegetation, drainage ditches and reservoirs and the historic environment landscape character zone (Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation).
- 9.13 Wood’s technical note in topic paper 5 (TP005) explains that the proposed boundary closely conforms to the boundary of landscape character area A7 and that Hammonds Road is a logical and defensible boundary. This is a simplistic and wholly inaccurate assessment of the parcel that does not consider the vegetation, land use, historic landscape characterisation, visual constraints and more detailed topography. The technical note concentrates on a number of photographs taken from a limited area between Hammonds Farm and Rumbold’s Farm. This is a very small part of parcel CE5 and does not accurately reflect the whole parcel, both north and south of the River Chelmer. The explanation in the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area Appraisal appended to this document

(appendix 1) more accurately reflects the landscape and visual analysis of this parcel.

Page 19 of appendix 1 states that "Passing beneath the elevated A12 bypass, there are views towards Rumbold's Farm with its collection of buildings and farm machinery to the southeast, whilst the visual intrusion of the A12 embankment and its moving traffic is soon reduced by the row of cricket bat willows beside the towpath.

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

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

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

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

- 9.14 In addition, the Essex Wildlife Trust Living Landscapes initiative map identifies a project area (area 41 Lower Chelmer) along the River Chelmer. This is reproduced in figure 4.9 of the council's Appendix 14 Chelmsford Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan 2018-2036 (EB021A). This figure overlays the living landscapes initiatives onto the proposed green wedges and corridors. It can clearly be seen from this plan the River Chelmer east green corridor is significantly wider than the Living landscapes initiative area. As a comparison, the proposed green corridor of the River Chelmer north almost entirely follows the boundary of the living landscape area and is in some places narrower than the living landscape area.
- 9.15 The council have reconsidered the existing green wedge west of the A12 and have concluded that it was too wide. They have therefore reduced its width on the southern side to almost follow the conservation area boundary, facilitating strategic growth sites 3a, 3b, 3d. It is necessary to walk the length of the footpath that runs along the River Chelmer to fully understand the visually contained nature of the majority of this river corridor.
- 9.16 The boundaries of the Green Corridor east of Chelmsford are not supported by an appropriate methodology and criteria and are not justified.
- 9.17 Adjusting the boundary of the green corridor to follow the promoters suggested boundary (appendix 6, PS1045) boundary would not compromise the ability of this land to attain the functions of the green corridor i.e. as a valley network that connects a suite of green infrastructure or to meet the policy objectives set out in EB094A.

- 9.18 In the introduction to Woods Report (page 11, TP005), Woods asserts that the promoter's revised boundary would mean that the Hammonds Farm development would be sited outside the Green Corridor. This is inaccurate as the Hammonds Farm proposal would utilise the revised green corridor as a riverside country park with enhanced biodiversity and recreational resources, which would conserve the existing natural and cultural heritage features. It will also connect with the proposed country park that forms part of site allocation 3a to the west of the A12 and to a linear park along Sandon Brook to be provided as part of the Hammonds Farm proposals, providing a comprehensive and attractive recreation route along the river valley corridors.
- 9.19 Whilst the purposes of the green wedges are reasonably well defined in Strategic Policy S13, the purposes of Green Corridors are not clearly defined, either through Strategic Policy S13 or through Policy C01. Supporting text at paragraphs 8.42 and 8.43 provides some further amplification of their purposes but this is not sufficiently clear and does not provide clarity on the distinction between the purposes of Green Wedges and Green Corridors. EB094A does not help clarify this issue as paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 are solely related to Green Wedges. There is inadequate definition of the role of Green Corridors in the plan and they are not justified through evidence.
- 9.20 Whilst some land within the boundary of the River Chelmer East Green Corridor meets the (albeit unclear) purposes identified in supporting text, the boundaries are not justified by evidence. The wider boundary proposed in the PSP is beyond the floodplain, and is located beyond the conservation area. Whilst there are footpaths within the council's boundary beyond the immediate river corridor, the principal footpath providing access for local residents is that along the river itself. All of the public rights of way can be incorporated into the proposals for Hammonds Farm, with wider public access provided through the provision of a new country park along the river corridor.

Qu.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?

- 9.21 At part B of Policy CO6 reference is made to permitting changes of use that would not adversely impact on the role, function, character and appearance of Green Wedges and Green Corridors as set out in Policy C01. Given the lack of clarity on the role and function of Green Corridors in particular, Policy C06 is not justified or effective.

Rural areas

Qu.87 Does the Plan clearly define what the Rural Areas are?

- 9.22 No comment

Qu.88 Strategic Policy S13 states that there are 'further areas within the countryside that are sensitive to change...'. What are these areas and is it clear how a decision-maker will consider development proposals within them? It also identifies that other areas of the countryside, including recognised areas of ecological, historic and functional importance will also

be protected from inappropriate development? What is meant by 'inappropriate development' in this context?

- 9.23 It is unclear what the PSP is referring to in respect of areas that are sensitive to changes. Given this, it is equally unclear how these will be considered in decision-making. It is unclear what is meant by inappropriate development. The PSP is therefore unsound.

Qu.89 Are the criteria for rural areas set out in Policy CO4, CO5, CO6, CO7 and CO8 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

- 9.24 No comment

Historic Environment Policies – Strategic Policy S5 and Policies HE1, HE2 and HE3

Qu.90 Does the Plan set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in accordance with national policy? Are the policies justified, effective and consistent with national policy? Are any proposed changes necessary for soundness?

- 9.25 Strategic Policy S5 does not accord with section 12 of the NPPF. It fails to
- Identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset (paragraph 129, NPPF)
 - Take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation (paragraph 131, NPPF) and
 - Assess the level of harm or loss of significance of a designated heritage asset and to consider the level of public benefit that may arise
- 9.26 In respect of non-designated heritage assets, Strategic Policy S5 does not reflect the requirement set out at paragraph 135 of the NPPF that a “*balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset*”.
- 9.27 Strategic Policy S5 must be amended in respect of the above points for reasons of soundness.

Qu.91 What is the purpose of Strategic Policy S5 and is it necessary when detailed criteria for the historic environment are set out in Policies HE1-HE3?

- 9.28 No comment

Qu.92 Is Policy HE1 justified, effective and consistent with national policy? Does the policy promote development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets which would enhance or better reveal their significance in accordance with paragraph 137 of the Framework? Are any changes necessary for soundness?

- 9.29 No comment

Qu.93 Are Policies HE2 and HE3 sound?

9.30 No comment

Protecting the Natural Environment

Qu.94 Is Strategic Policy S6 justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

- a. Are the changes proposed by the Council in SD002 necessary for soundness?**
- b. What does the term 'amenity interests' mean within the context of the policy?**
- c. Is it clear how a decision-maker should use this policy when considering potential development?**
- d. The supporting text includes seeking new strategic greenspaces including two new Country parks and reference is made to green infrastructure allocations which are identified on the Policies Map. Are these and similar allocations clearly defined within site specific policies?**

9.31 Strategic Policy S6 fails to recognize the hierarchy of different designated sites, as required by paragraph 113 of the NPPF, and is unsound.

9.32 It is unclear from proposed change AC23 how contributions are to be sought. Such contributions must comply with the CIL regulations, including the restriction on pooling of S160 contributions.

9.33 The country parks proposed at North East Chelmsford and at East Chelmsford are required to be provided through their respective policies. However, both areas lie outside the site allocation boundaries.

9.34 At West Chelmsford and Great Leighs land for future recreation use/SUDS is identified, but they lie outside of the site allocation boundaries and there is no reference in either policy to a requirement to provide this new strategic infrastructure, which paragraph 5.32 states is required "to support strategic site allocations in Great Leighs and West Chelmsford".

9.35 There is no certainty in the PSP that the new strategic greenspaces required to support the plan will be provided. It is considered that the plan is not therefore positively prepared or effective and is unsound.

Qu.95 Taking into account the Council's proposed changes to Policies NE1 and NE2 as set out in SD002, will these achieve soundness? Why does part B to Policy NE2 refer to 'non-protected' landscape features? Are these landscape features of importance but are not statutorily protected or designated? Is it clear what these landscape features are and is the policy sound in this regard? Are any further changes necessary?

9.36 No comment

Climate change and other environmental matters

Qu.96 *Section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that development plan documents must (taken as a whole) include policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. Does the Plan comply with this requirement?*

9.37 The approach taken in the PSP will not secure sustainable development that mitigates climate change, as required by the NPPF, as it does not set out adequately how future reduction of the use of the private car will be promoted and achieved.

9.38 A key part of the vision for Hammonds Farm is to achieve a substantial degree of self-containment with regard to the mix of uses and ability of future residents to access a wide range of services and facilities on foot and by bike, as well as by public transport, including connections into the city centre, to Beaulieu station and to the wider rural area (see chapter 4, Hammonds Estates' representation (PS1045)).

Qu.97 *Are the provisions set out in Policy NE3 regarding flooding and SUDS justified and consistent with national policy? Are any changes necessary for soundness?*

9.39 Criterion A) ii) does not comply with the NPPF and should be removed for reasons of soundness.

Qu.98 *In relation to Policy NE4 does the policy provide a positive strategy for renewable and low carbon energy generation that is effective and in accordance with national policy?*

9.40 No comment

Qu.99 *Policy PA1 seeks to protect existing amenity. Is the policy sound?*

a. *Is it clear what protecting 'amenity' means and that this relates to living conditions for existing residents in part i?*

b. *Is it clear what protecting 'the wider amenities of the area' means?*

9.41 No comment

Qu.100 *Policy PA2 sets out requirements for development on or near to hazardous substance sites or land and within or adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) or where an air quality impact assessment has been provided. Are these requirements sound? In relation to Part B of Policy PA2:*

a. *The title implies that this only relates to the AQMA, though the policy also refers to air quality impact assessments. Is this correct? Has there been an assessment of the forecast future levels of traffic emissions related to the planned growth and is it likely to affect the air quality in other areas during the Plan period?*

b. *In relation to the AQMA:*

- i. To what extent are traffic emissions identified as the reason for the designation of the AQMA? What are the latest monitoring results, in particular levels of NO2?*
- ii. To what extent is development during the Plan period including completions, commitments and allocations, likely to affect the emission levels in the AQMA during the Plan? And what are the predicted emissions?*
- iii. What plans are in place to reduce levels of emissions in the AQMA?*

9.42 No comment

Matter 9 appendix

**Appendix 1 Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area – Conservation
area appraisal (March 2009)**

**Appendix 1 Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area – Conservation
area appraisal (March 2009)**

Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation Conservation Area

Conservation area
character appraisal

Consultation draft

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Introduction

Purpose of this appraisal

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

This appraisal has several aims:

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

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

Conservation Areas

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

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

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

Development and Planning Issues

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

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

Local Policy background

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

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

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

Emerging Statutory Planning Policy

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

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

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

Planning Guidance

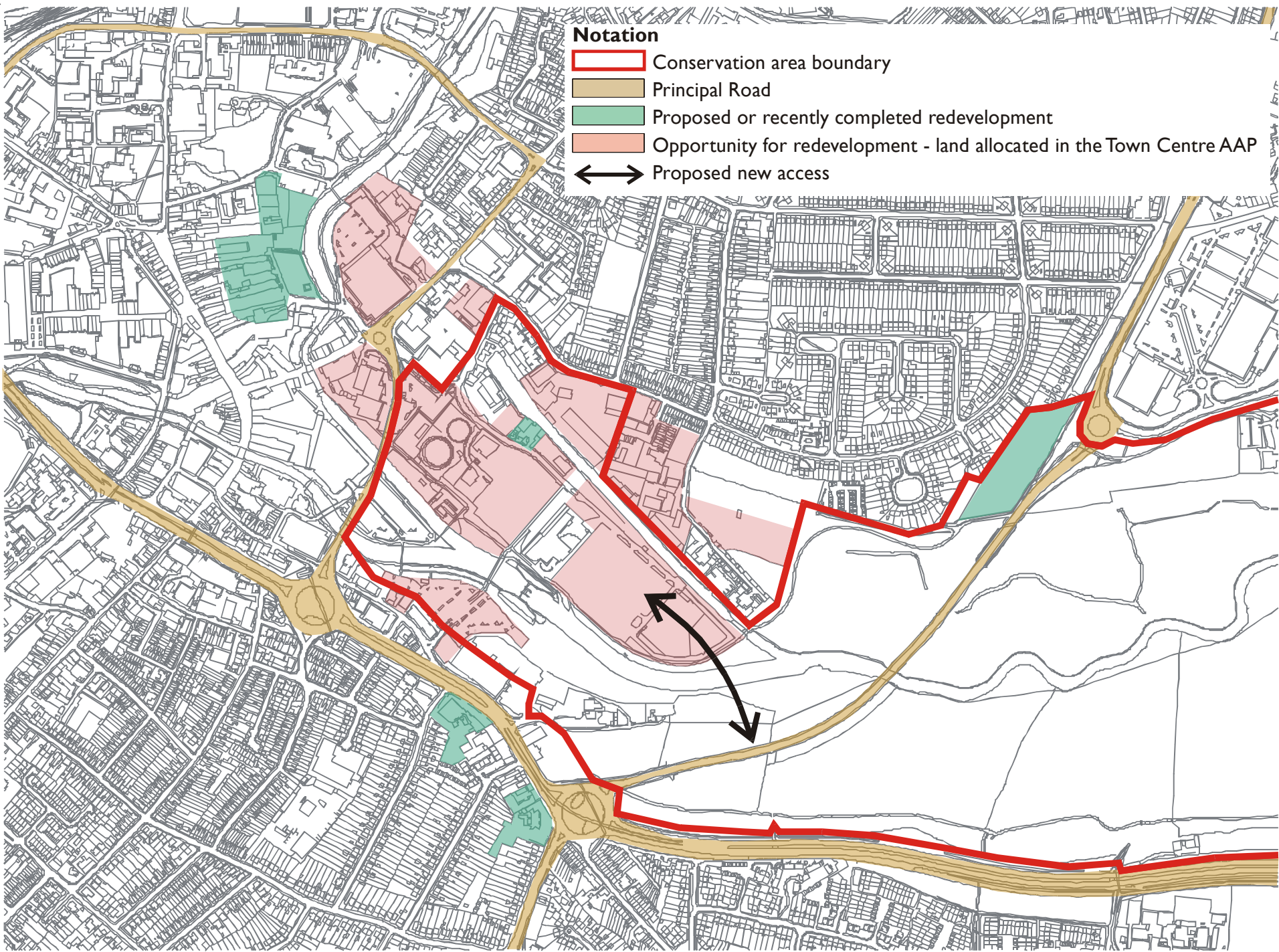
Several planning briefs were produced between 1999-2003 for the waterside area, setting out principles for the redevelopment of the area. These contain no formal status within the LDF but contain useful factual information and provide an indication of the Council's approach to development in this area.

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



Figure 1

Planning and development issues affecting the conservation area



Chelmer and Balckwater Navigation Conservation Area

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

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

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

Significance

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

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

Special Interest

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

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



Figure 2. The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation conservation area

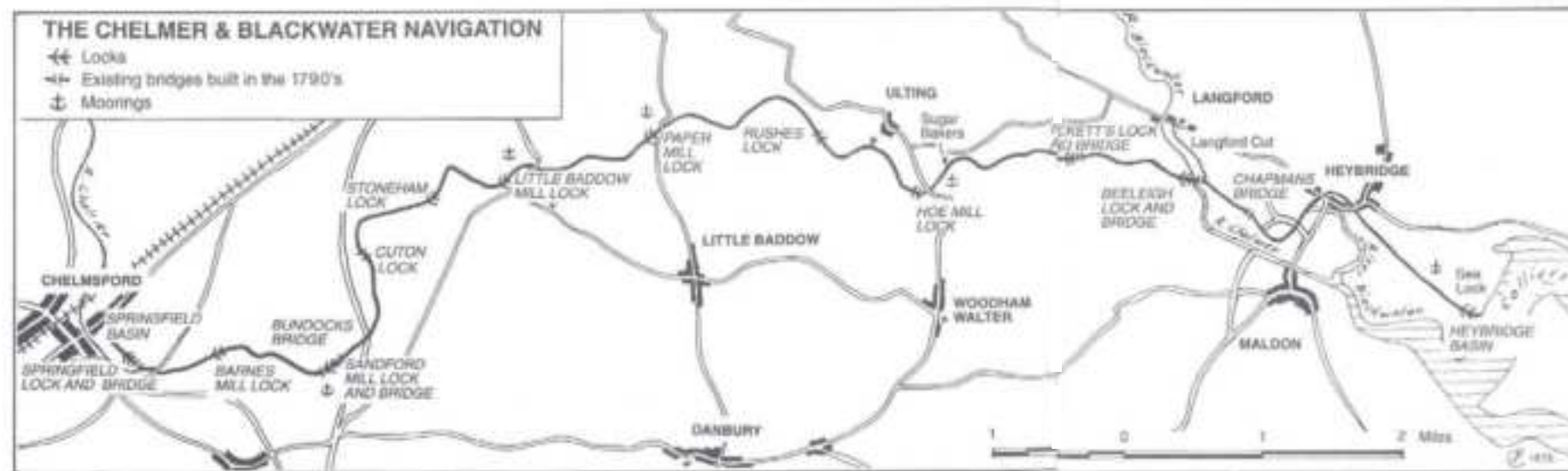
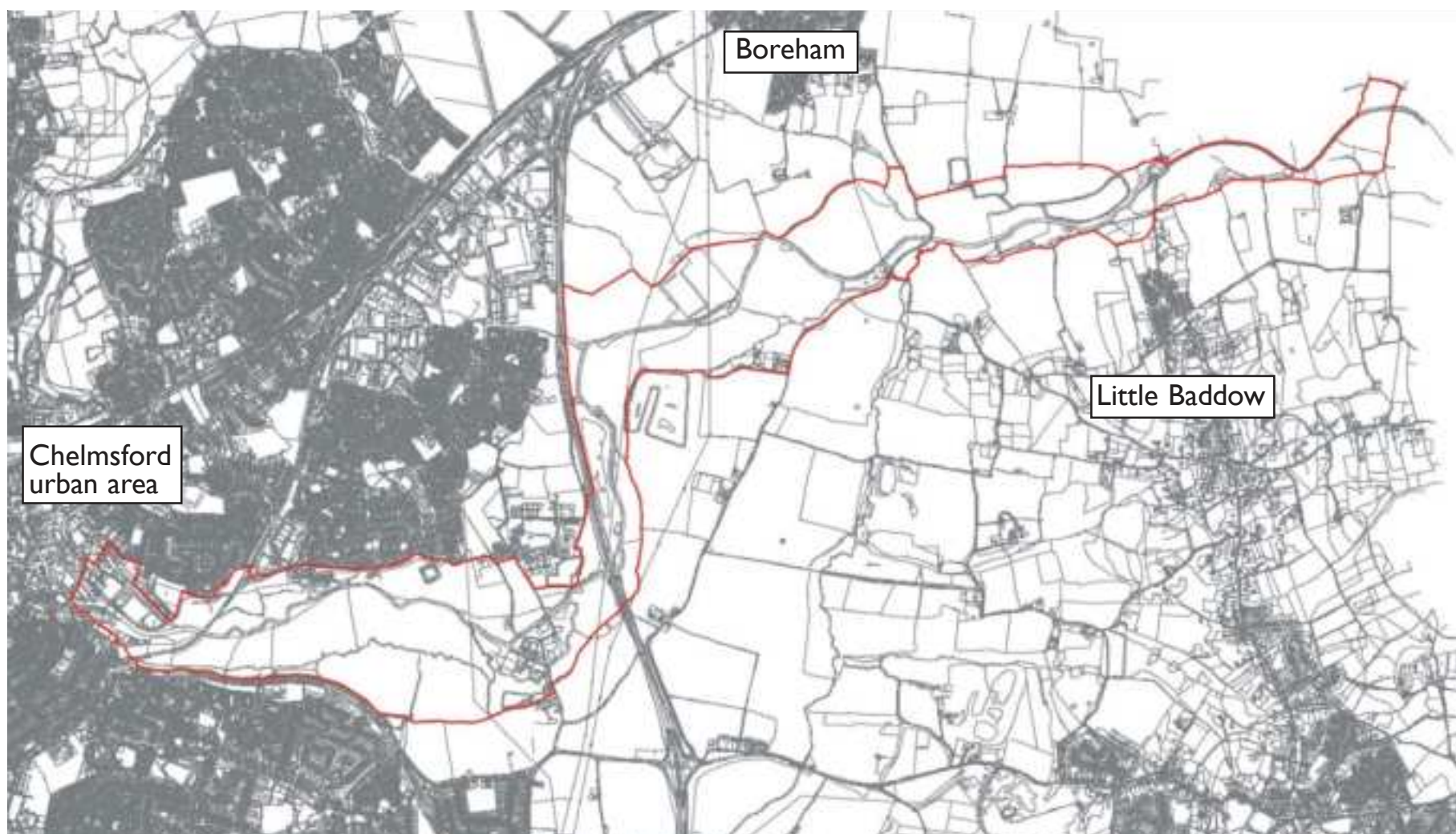


Figure 3. Area of Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation conservation area within the Borough of Chelmsford



- The technological interest of the navigations locks and bridges;
- The topography of the surrounding landscape, including the flood plain water meadows and agricultural land;
- Views of surrounding churches, including St Mary's Cathedral, Holy Trinity Church, Danbury St John the Baptist, Little Baddow St Mary the Virgin and Boreham St Andrew;
- Views to the navigation-related structures, including the bridges, warehouses, gas holders and mills;
- Trees and hedgerows;
- The area's ecological value;
- The changing setting of the navigation from urban to rural in the waterside area.
- Its present use for pleasure boats, walkers, cyclists and anglers.

Character Statement

The character of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation conservation area is a mature river valley whose landscape has been modelled by commercial navigation and waterway activity.

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

The open setting provided by most of the river valley and flood plain contrasts with the urban edge of the town centre. The remaining historic buildings, including the industrial structures, define the character of the area.

Origins and Historic Development

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



Figure 3I Character Area 2 Zone 3 & 4

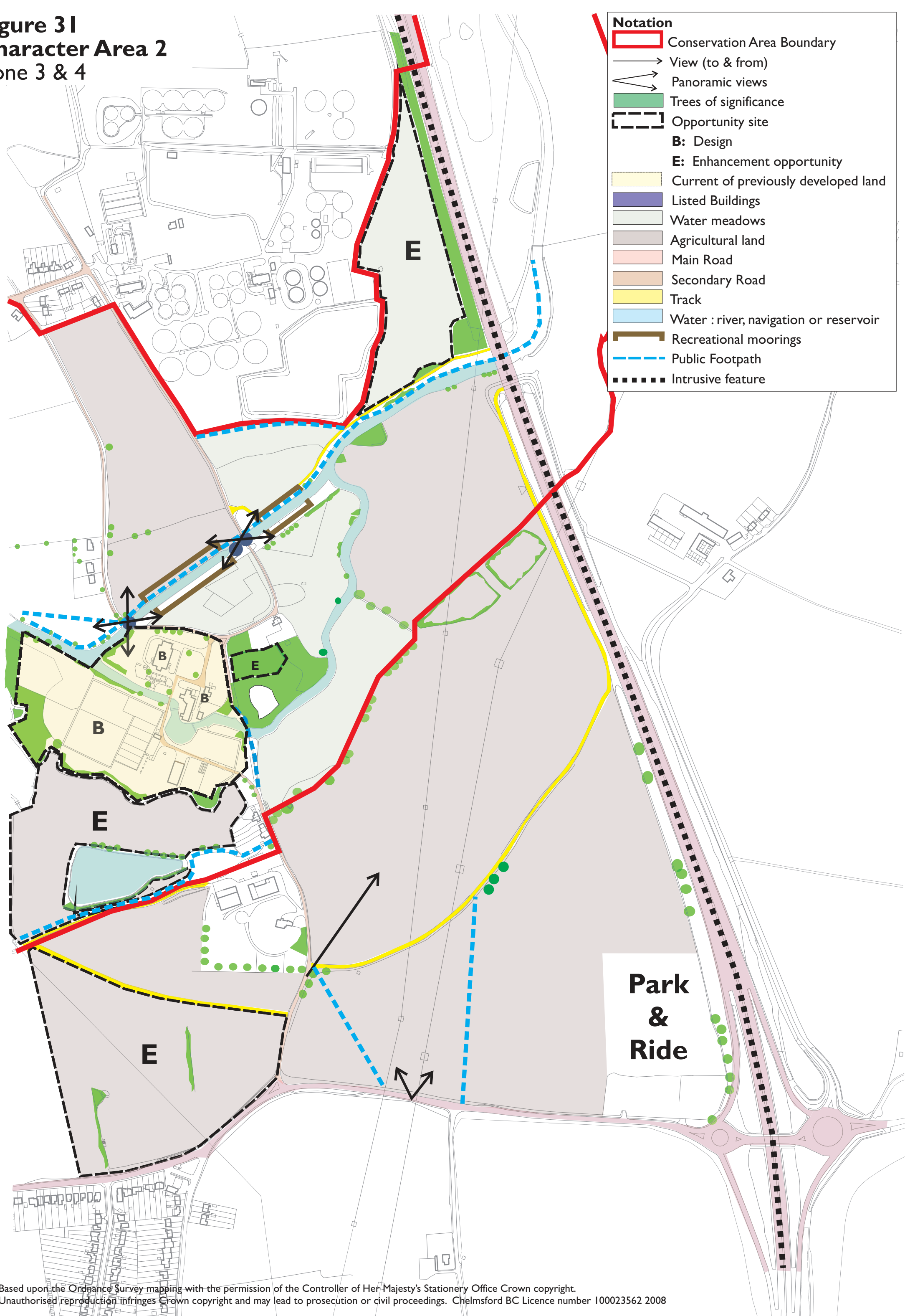




Figure 33 *Sandford Lock towards the A12*

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

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

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

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

Recommendations

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

Zone 4 – Sandford Mill - A12

Figure 31 – Zone 4, Landscape Assessment

Spatial Analysis

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

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



Figure 34

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

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

Recommendations

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

Zone 5 – A12 to Paper Mill Lock

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

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

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

Spatial Analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 38 Cuton Lock



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

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



View to the A12 and Sheepcotes Industrial estate

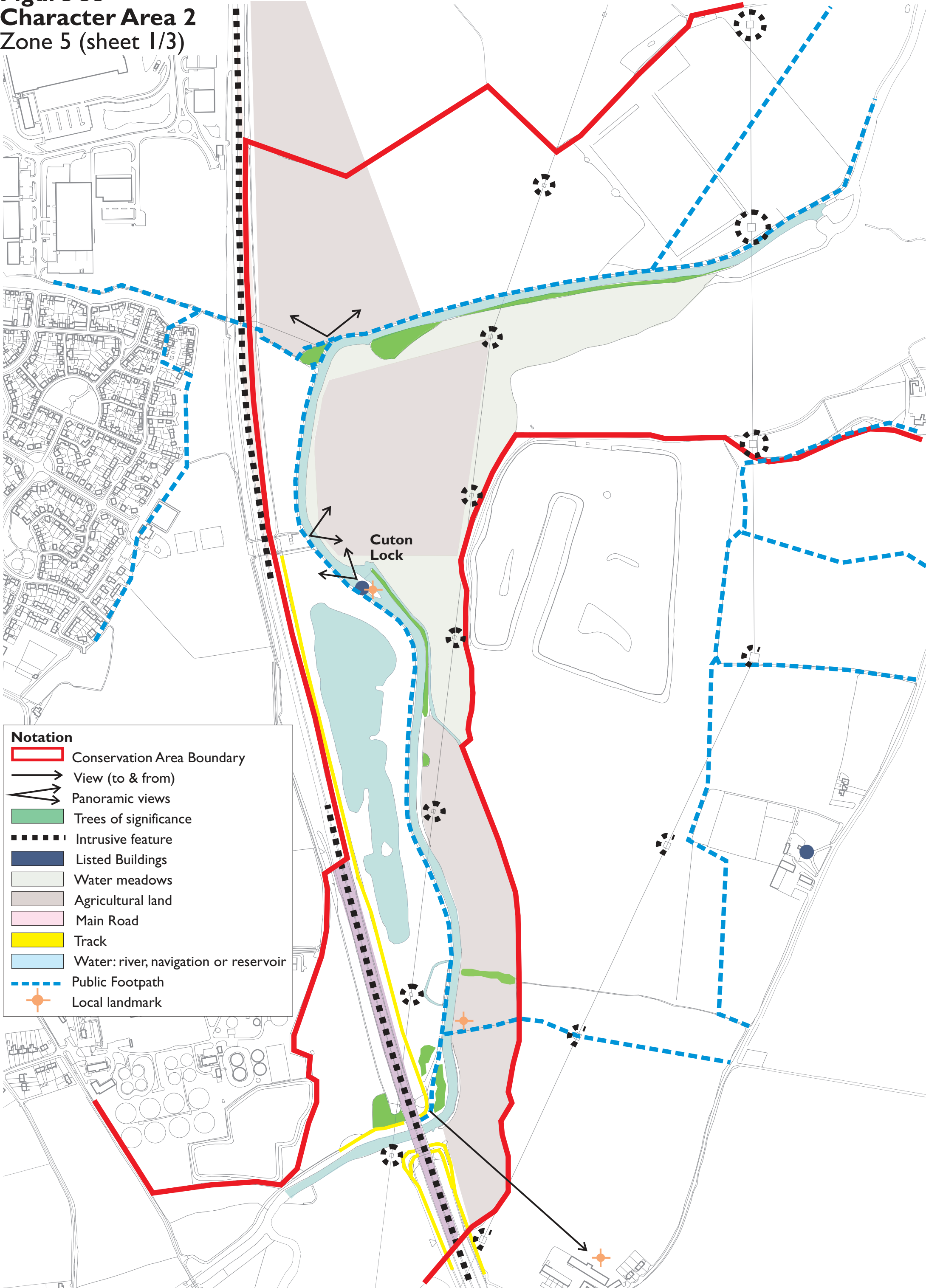
Figure 39

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



Figure 40

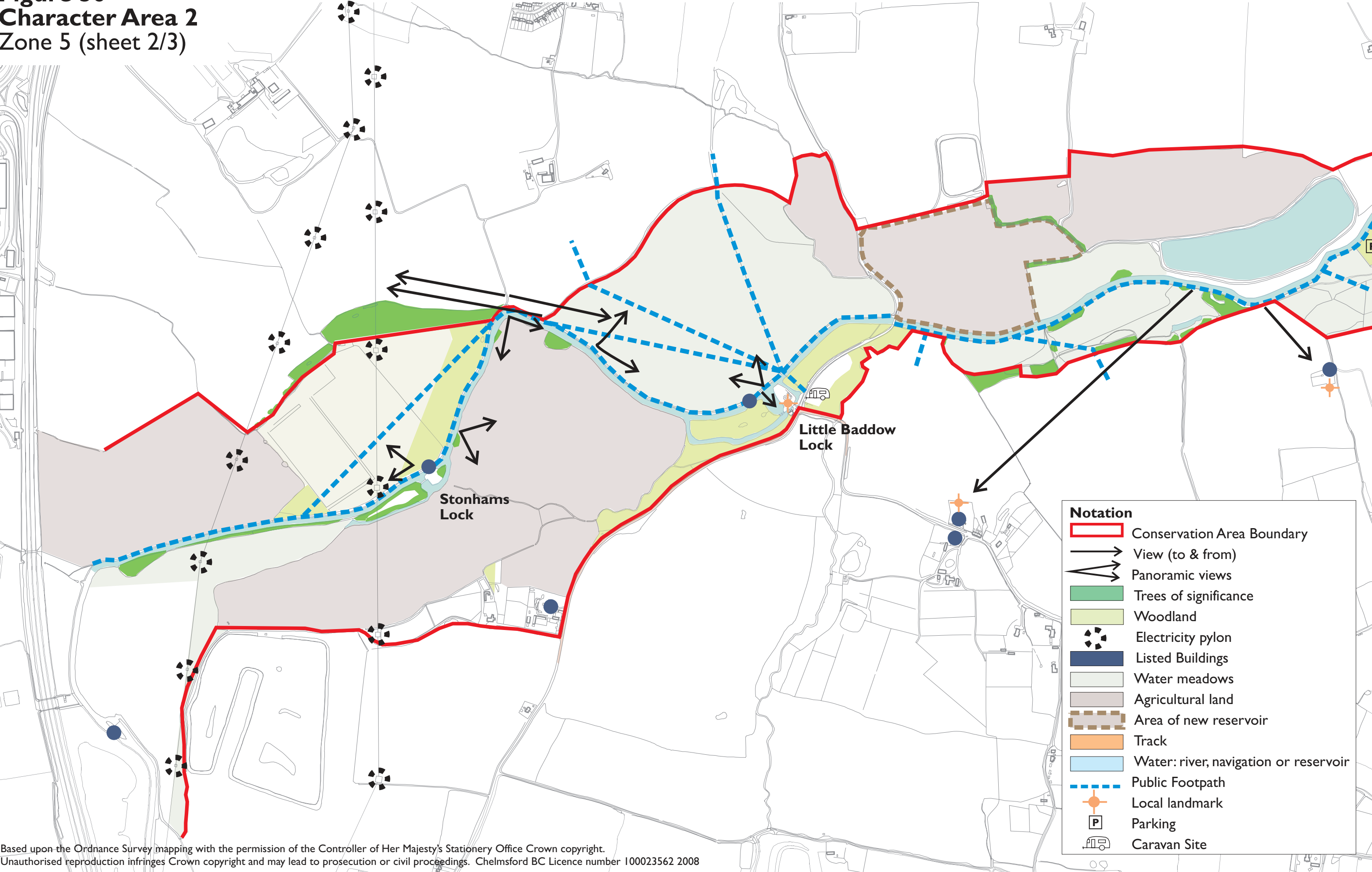
Figure 35
Character Area 2
Zone 5 (sheet 1/3)



Notation

- Conservation Area Boundary
- View (to & from)
- Panoramic views
- Trees of significance
- Intrusive feature
- Listed Buildings
- Water meadows
- Agricultural land
- Main Road
- Track
- Water: river, navigation or reservoir
- Public Footpath
- Local landmark

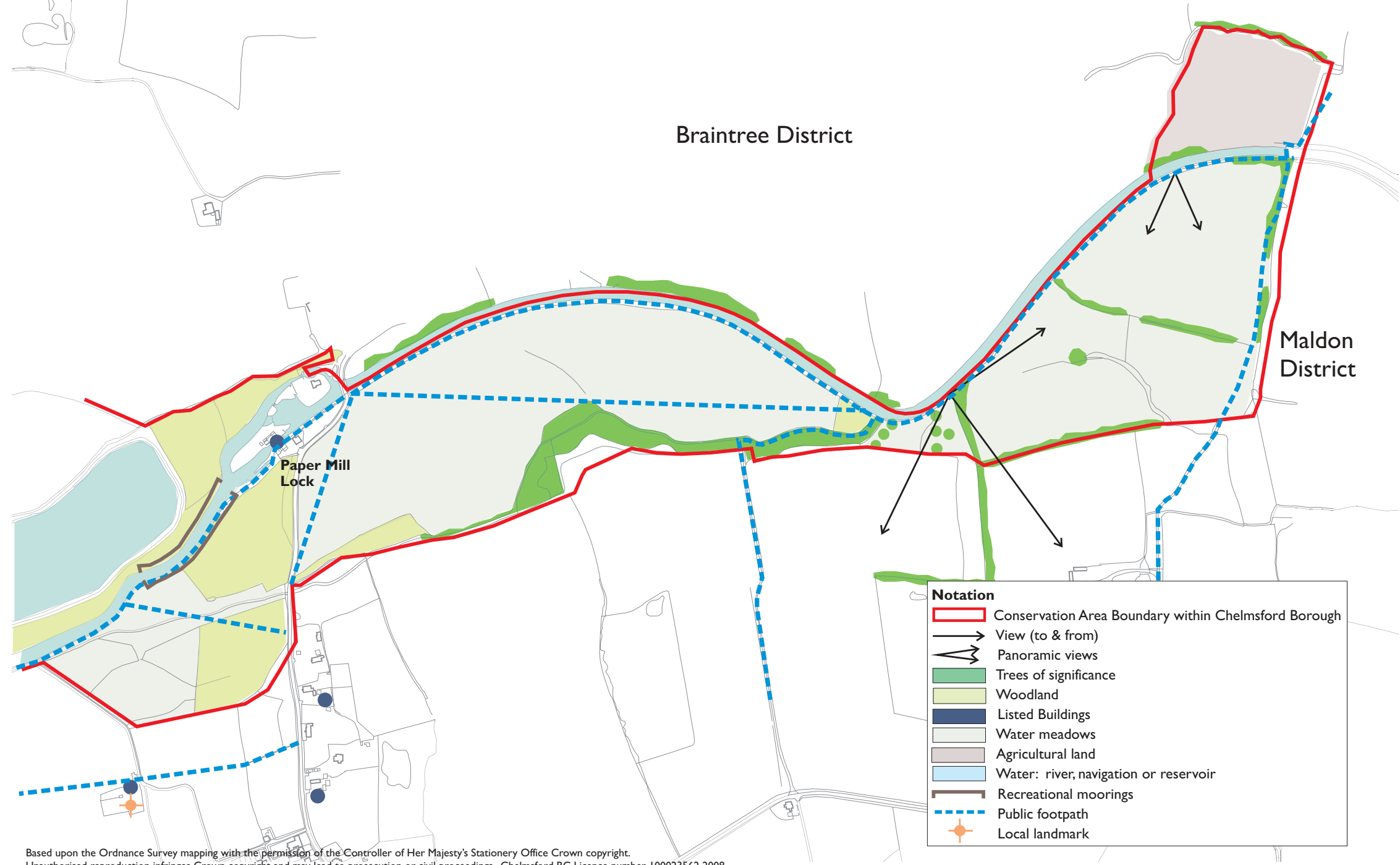
Figure 36
Character Area 2
Zone 5 (sheet 2/3)



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

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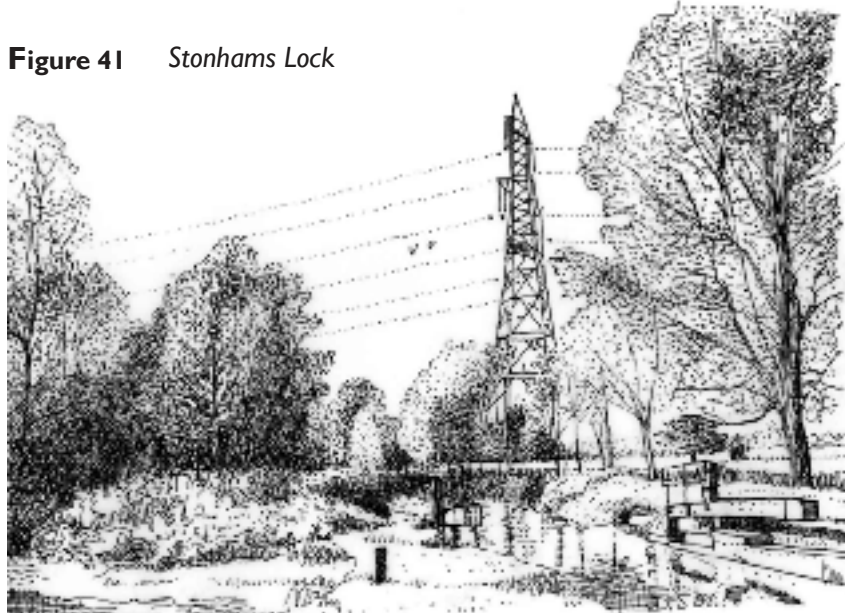
Figure 37
Character Area 2
Zone 5 (sheet 3/3)



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

Figure 41 *Stonhams Lock*



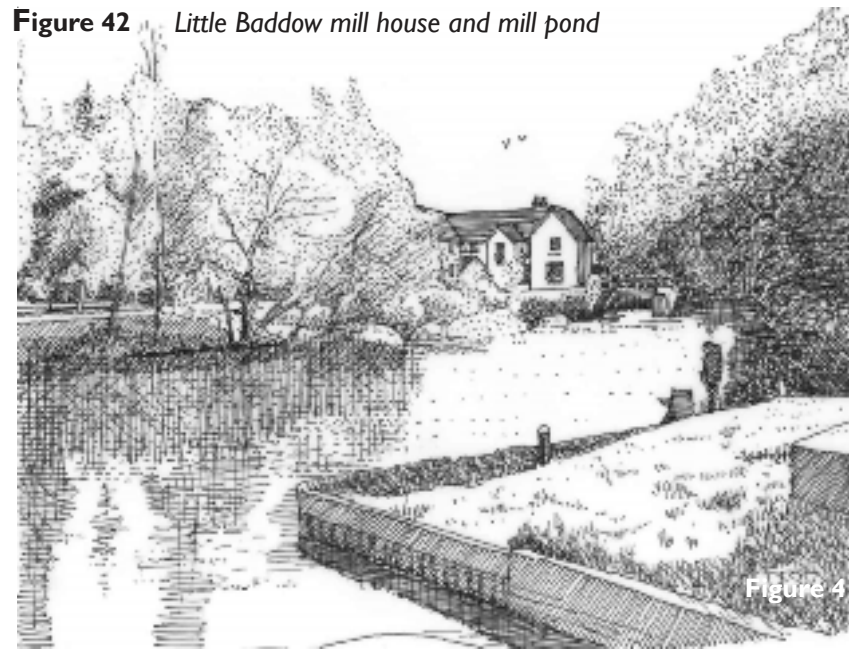
A backcloth of trees and hedges now contains the wider valley bottom and a water meadow character becomes more obvious. Panoramic views are frequent, and Danbury hill with its woodlands and church spire forms the southern skyline.

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

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

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

Figure 42 *Little Baddow mill house and mill pond*



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

Figure 43 *View towards Boreham*



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

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

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

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

Figure 44 *Paper Mill Lock*



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

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

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

Enhancement and Management Recommendations

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

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

Figure 45 East of Paper Mill Lock



Pressures for Change

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

Conclusions

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

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



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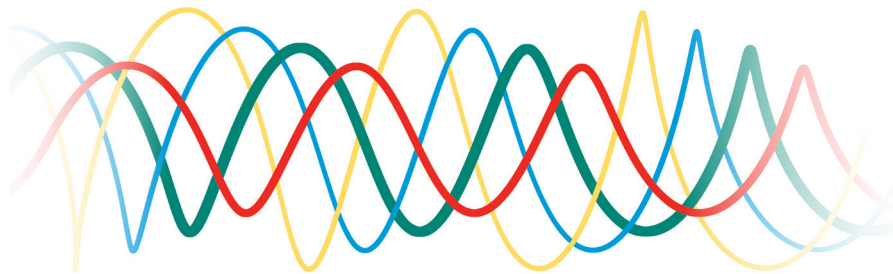
Annex A – Planning Policy Comparison

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

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

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