

Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment

Uttlesford District Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

October 2023



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Chapter 1

Introduction and context

1.1 LUC was commissioned in June 2023 to prepare the Landscape Character Assessment for Uttlesford District Council. This study updates the 2006 landscape assessment. The study area covers the whole of the district and is shown in **Figure 1.1**.

1.2 The Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment provides a robust evidence base to underpin the review of the Local Plan and to assist in the local planning process. It is intended to both inform work on policy development and development management, guiding development that is sympathetic to local character and the qualities of the landscape. It can help inform locational policies for strategic development as well as appropriate design and mitigation, providing baseline evidence for more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). It can also provide a framework for more detailed landscape studies and sensitivity assessments.

1.3 Wider application of the Landscape Character Assessment includes land management, notably implementation of agri-environment schemes (including the new Environmental Land Management Scheme – ELMS), and land use change to achieve net zero, including opportunities for woodland creation.

1.4 In summary, the document can be used to consider landscape character when considering any type of change. This includes opportunities for conserving existing character, strengthening, and enhancing character as well as opportunities to create new character.

1.5 A User Guide is provided in **Appendix A**.

The role of Landscape Character Assessment

1.6 Natural England defines landscape character as:

“a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse” **[See reference 1]**

1.7 Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing such variations in character across a landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of features and attributes (characteristics) that make different landscapes distinctive. The landscape is the result of the interaction between people and place which gives an area a local identity. The ‘landscape wheel’ below illustrates how the different natural, cultural, and perceptual attributes of a landscape combine to produce character. The process of Landscape Character Assessment is described in “An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (Natural England, October 2014).

1.8 Understanding the character of place and evaluating an area’s defining characteristics is a key component in managing growth sustainably and ensuring that the inherent character and qualities of Uttlesford’s landscape can continue to be appreciated. Understanding of character can be used to ensure that any change or development does not undermine whatever is valued or characteristic in a particular landscape and help guide positive change that conserves, enhances, restores, or creates local character.

Figure A: The Landscape Wheel (Natural England, 2014)

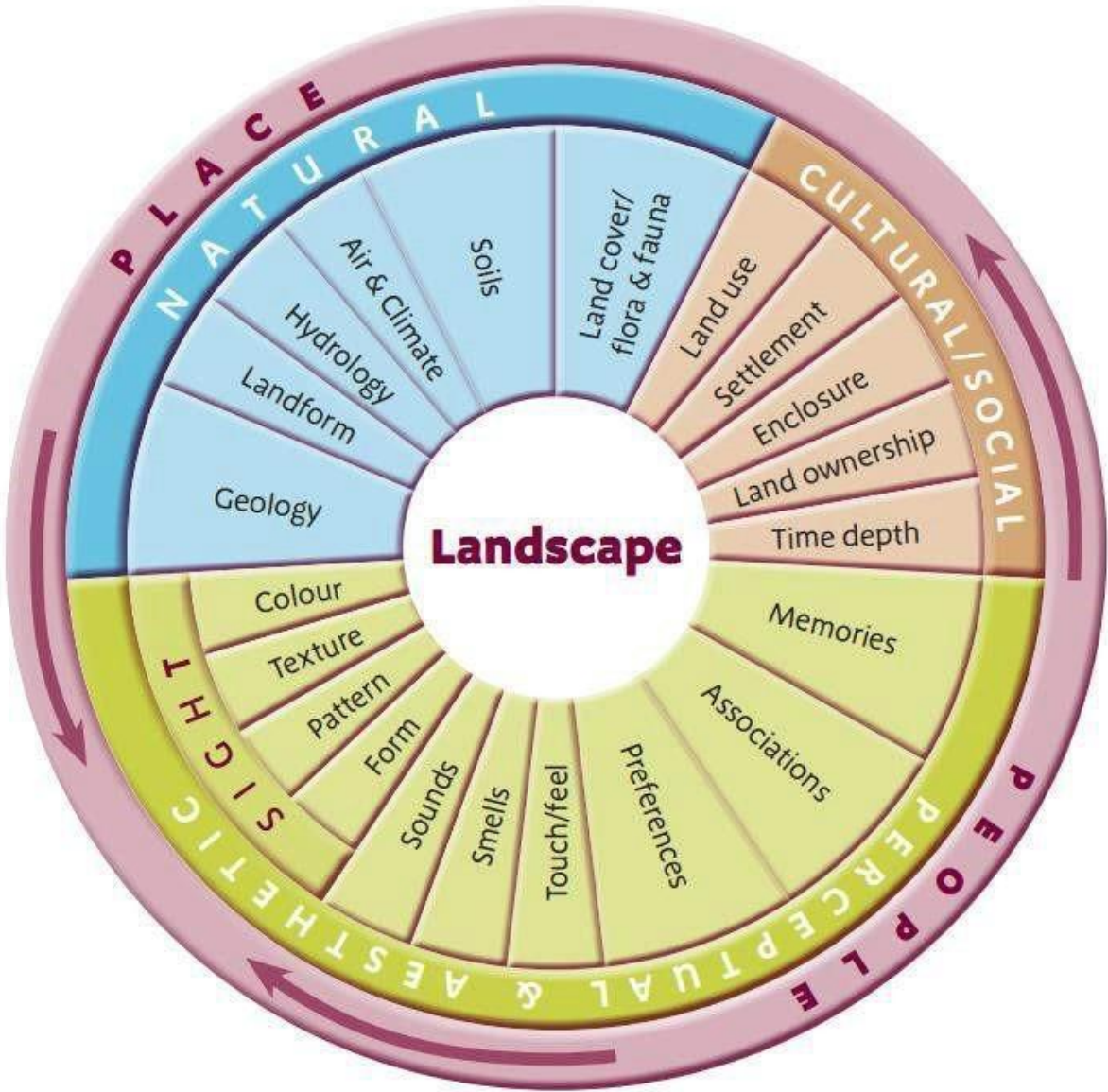
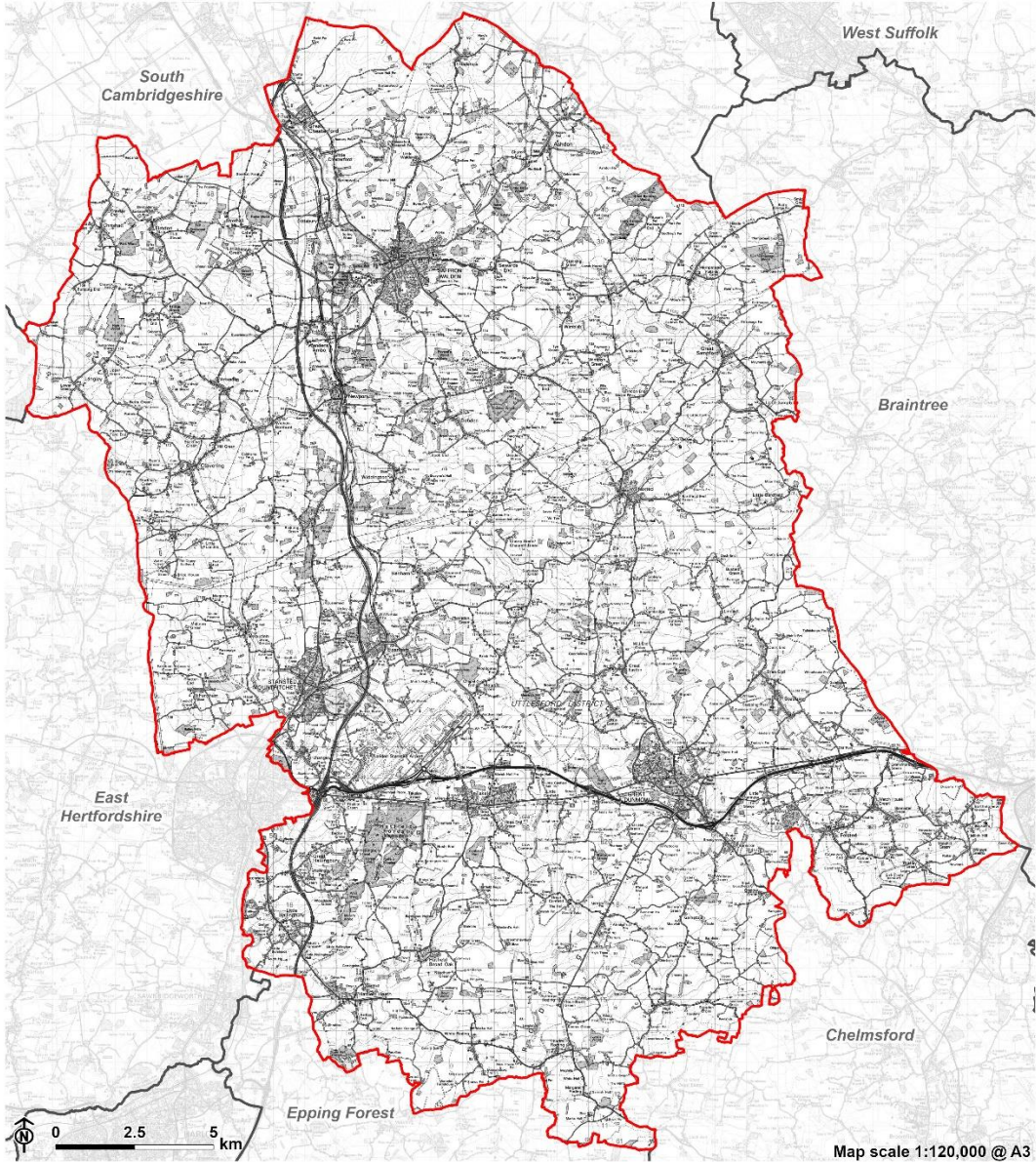


Figure 1.1: Location of Uttlesford

Figure 1.1: Study boundary and location

Uttlesford LCA update
Uttlesford District Council



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- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary



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Policy context

The European Landscape Convention

1.9 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies. The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded, or outstanding:

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

1.10 The ELC puts emphasis on the whole landscape and all its values and is forward looking in its approach, recognising the dynamic and changing character of landscape. Specific measures promoted by the ELC of direct relevance to this study include:

- the identification and assessment of landscape; and
- improved consideration of landscape in existing and future sectoral and spatial policy and regulation.

1.11 This Landscape Character Assessment builds on the 2006 Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment and has regard for local landscape studies within the district, and landscape studies for adjacent authorities. This updated Landscape Character Assessment helps to reaffirm the importance of landscape, coordinate existing work and guide future work to protect, manage and plan the landscape.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.12 The revised NPPF, published in July 2021, states in paragraph 174 that:

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

1.13 The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance which recognises the role that Landscape Character Assessment plays in helping to understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape. This assessment for Uttlesford provides evidence to help protect valued landscape and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Local policies

1.14 The new Uttlesford Local Plan will be delivered by the summer of 2024. This landscape character assessment will form a sound evidence base to support landscape policy in the local plan.

Relationship to published landscape studies

1.15 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a variety of scales and levels of detail. The Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment is part of a hierarchy of landscape character assessment information cascading down from the national to the local level.

National level

1.16 At a national level, England is divided into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs). Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity. There are descriptive profiles available for each NCA setting out information on landscape character, changes in the landscape and an assessment of ecosystem services delivered (Natural England, 2014) [\[See reference 2\]](#).

1.17 Uttlesford is covered by two NCAs:

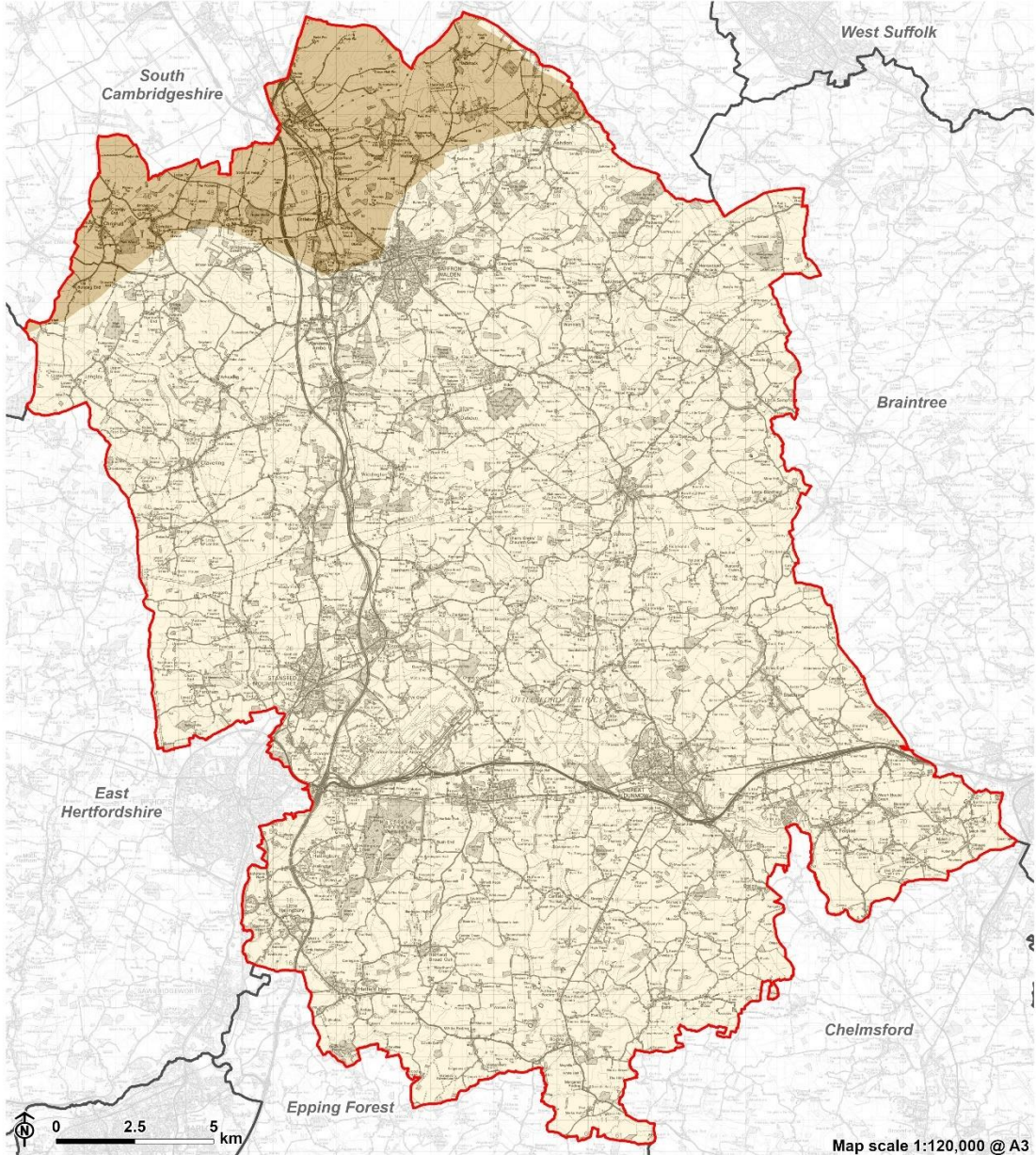
- **NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland** covers the majority of the district. It is an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside, on a gently undulating chalky boulder clay plateau, with numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau.
- **NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk** covers the north of the district. It is a narrow chalk ridge of smooth, rolling chalkland hills, generally under cereal production.

1.18 National landscape character areas within and surrounding Uttlesford district are illustrated on **Figure 1.3**.





Figure 1.2: National Character Areas

Figure 1.2: National Character Areas

Uttlesford LCA update
Uttlesford District Council



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-  Uttlesford district boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority boundary
- National Character Area**
-  East Anglian Chalk
-  South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland

12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/Figure 1.2: National Character Areas P 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Chapter 2

Method

Approach

2.1 This Landscape Character Assessment follows the method promoted by Natural England through 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014) [See reference 3], which embeds the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) within it.

Process of assessment

2.2 The process for undertaking the study involved the following key stages:

- Review & baseline data collation;
- Desk-based study to update the LCA;
- Field survey; and
- Draft and final reporting.

2.3 The initial desk-based stage involved the collation of a wide range of up-to-date mapped information to 'sense-check' the existing landscape classifications and to update the baseline. Designations relating to cultural heritage, nature conservation and landscape were checked for any changes since the original LCA. Data used within the report, including data collated in the GIS database is shown in **Appendix C**.

2.4 The field survey involved checking key characteristics, collect perceptual information, take photographs and observe forces for change.

Outputs

2.5 This Landscape Character Assessment is presented by Landscape Character Area (LCA), arranged within their respective Landscape Character Types (LCT). These are provided in **Chapter 5**.

2.6 Each LCT section begins with an overview map showing the location of the LCT within the district and provides a very short description of the type.

2.7 The individual LCA profiles are structured as follows:

- A location map (1:25,000 scale) which shows the extent of the LCA and its relationship with other LCAs;
- Representative photographs of the area;
- Key characteristics in bullet point format, providing a thorough description of the character of the LCA;
- A description of the natural influences on the landscape including designated habitats;
- A description of the most significant cultural influences in the landscape including designated cultural heritage assets;
- A description of the most significant perceptual and aesthetic influences in the landscape;
- An evaluation comprising:
 - Landscape qualities – the landscape features and qualities that are particularly valued for their contribution to landscape character, i.e. if any one of these attributes ceased to exist it would change the character to the detriment of the landscape;
 - Forces for change acting on the landscape;
 - An overall landscape strategy to guide the future direction of the landscape based on opportunities for conservation, restoration, enhancement and creation; and

Chapter 2: Method

- Guidance on how the strategy can be achieved to ensure future change respects local character. The guidelines can be considered as part of development management, for example guiding mitigation or enhancement, or influencing wider land management decisions for the rural environment.

Chapter 3

Formative influences

3.1 This chapter summarises the main physical and cultural influences that have shaped the landscape of Uttlesford district. The detailed description of different LCTs, that appear in Chapter 5 of this report, highlight the key characteristics (both positive and negative) and valued attributes that are of most significance to the landscape concerned.

3.2 The landscape of the district has evolved through the interaction of the natural environment and human activities, through the combination of physical and cultural influences. Physical influences such as geology and landform, together with the pattern of settlement and land use are key determinants of landscape character.

Physical influences

3.3 The physical components of the landscape have the most tangible and fundamental influences upon its character, being the most permanent and least changeable aspect of its appearance. The underlying geology creates the 'backbone' of the landscape. The actions of weathering, erosion and deposition alter the landform, consequently influencing hydrological patterns and affecting the nature of soil conditions. This affects how humans have used and continue to exploit the landscape for agriculture, settlement, and industry and, consequently, influences the nature of the vegetation and fauna that the landscape can support.

Geology

3.4 The oldest rocks in Uttlesford were laid down between 440 and 360 million years ago. The underlying geology is split into two distinct regions. To the

Chapter 3: Formative influences

south, the majority of the district is underlain by the clays, silts and sands of the London Clay Formation formed during the Palaeogene period. The north of the district is underlain by chalk Formations, formed during the Cretaceous period, which form a series of low hills. Between these two main bedrock types, a narrowband of clay, silt and sand of the Thanet Formation and Lambeth Group runs from Stansted Mountfitchet through Thaxted and Little Sampford. Bedrock geology is shown in **Figure 3.1**.

3.5 Overlying this bedrock are a number of different geological layers that have formed and undergone erosion through marine, fluvial and glacial processes between 135 million years ago to the present to form the present rock structure. The superficial geology is dominated by the deposition of glacial tills, gravels and sands laid down during the Quaternary Period when the area was subjected to periodic ice advances and retreats as the climate cooled and warmed. This led to a complex mix of glacial, proglacial and periglacial deposits overlying each other, forming gently undulating hills and valleys with a corresponding mixture of soils and vegetation cover. Along the river courses alluvial sand and gravels provide well-drained fertile soils on undulating valleys. Superficial geology is shown in **Figure 3.2**.

3.6 The majority of soils within the district are lime-rich loamy and clayey, with impeded drainage, and have high natural fertility. In the north around Saffron Walden and Great Chesterford soils are lime-rich and have a reduced natural fertility; while Great Dunmow and Stebbing are slightly acid and have low natural fertility. The majority of the district is classified as Grade 2 (very good) soils, with Grade 3 (good) along the course of the Rivers Chelmer, Cam and Stort. Agricultural Land Classification is shown in **Figure 3.3**.

Landform and hydrology

3.7 The landform is generally rolling, generally between 70 metres and 100 metres. The highest altitudes are in the north-west, reaching 130 metres, where the chalk hills outcrop as an extension of the Chilterns. Slopes are less steep in the south and south-east of the district, to the west of Saffron Walden.

Chapter 3: Formative influences

3.8 Uttlesford has a large intricate network of rivers and streams, which largely run north-south. Principal watercourses within Uttlesford are the Cam, Chelmer, Pant, Pincey Brook, Roding, Stansted Brook and Stort. Most of the rivers run to the Thames river basin or towards the North Sea; only the Cam flows northward into Cambridgeshire. To the north the valleys become steeper and more deeply cut. The topography and drainage pattern are shown in **Figure 3.4**.

Land cover and ecological character

3.9 The rural landscape is predominantly used for arable agriculture, with some improved pasture on flat or gently undulating land. The rich soils are intensively cultivated, and large cereal fields are a major feature of the landscape. The arable field margins occasionally support uncommon plants such as cornflower, broad-leaved cudweed, corn cleavers and shepherd's needle.

3.10 There are significant areas of remaining semi-natural habitat that make an important contribution to the area's distinctive character. The presence and distribution of these habitats is strongly influenced by geology and landform, and include woodland, grassland, freshwater and open water habitats. Many sites where these habitats occur are nationally designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) at Hatfield Forest and Hales Wood, or locally designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) or Local Nature Reserves (LNR). Nature conservation designations are shown on **Figure 3.5**.

3.11 Woodlands are scattered across the district, with the largest continuous area at Hatfield Forest. Hatfield Forest is designated as a SSSI and NNR. It is the last small Royal Forest to remain virtually intact in character and composition. Ancient woodland, practically all of which have been coppiced since medieval times or earlier, is found throughout the district on the various soil types. They provide valuable habitats for invertebrates, dormouse and breeding birds. Many of the areas of ancient woodland are ancient Pedunculate Oak-Hornbeam coppice with standards. Woodland coverage is shown on **Figure 3.6**.

Chapter 3: Formative influences

3.12 There are a number of broad types of grassland determined by the plant species, which are largely influenced by the soil type and underlying geology. A lot of the grassland has been drained and agriculturally improved for pasture, but some remnant semi-natural grasslands of conservation importance remain. These include two small areas of calcareous grassland on the chalk hills at Debden Water SSSI near Newport, and a further small area of calcareous grassland as well as unimproved neutral grassland at Ashdon Meadows SSSI near Saffron Walden.

3.13 Hedgerows are important landscape and ecological features, linking woodland blocks and integrating them with areas of farmland, as well as providing a valuable, complex wildlife habitat. Hedgerows also line most rural lanes, and alongside the species-rich verges and hedgebanks can be diverse reservoirs of native wildflowers. Hedgerow management varies, creating different character and visual effects where they have been over-trimmed, rejuvenated, dense and well managed or tall and overgrown.

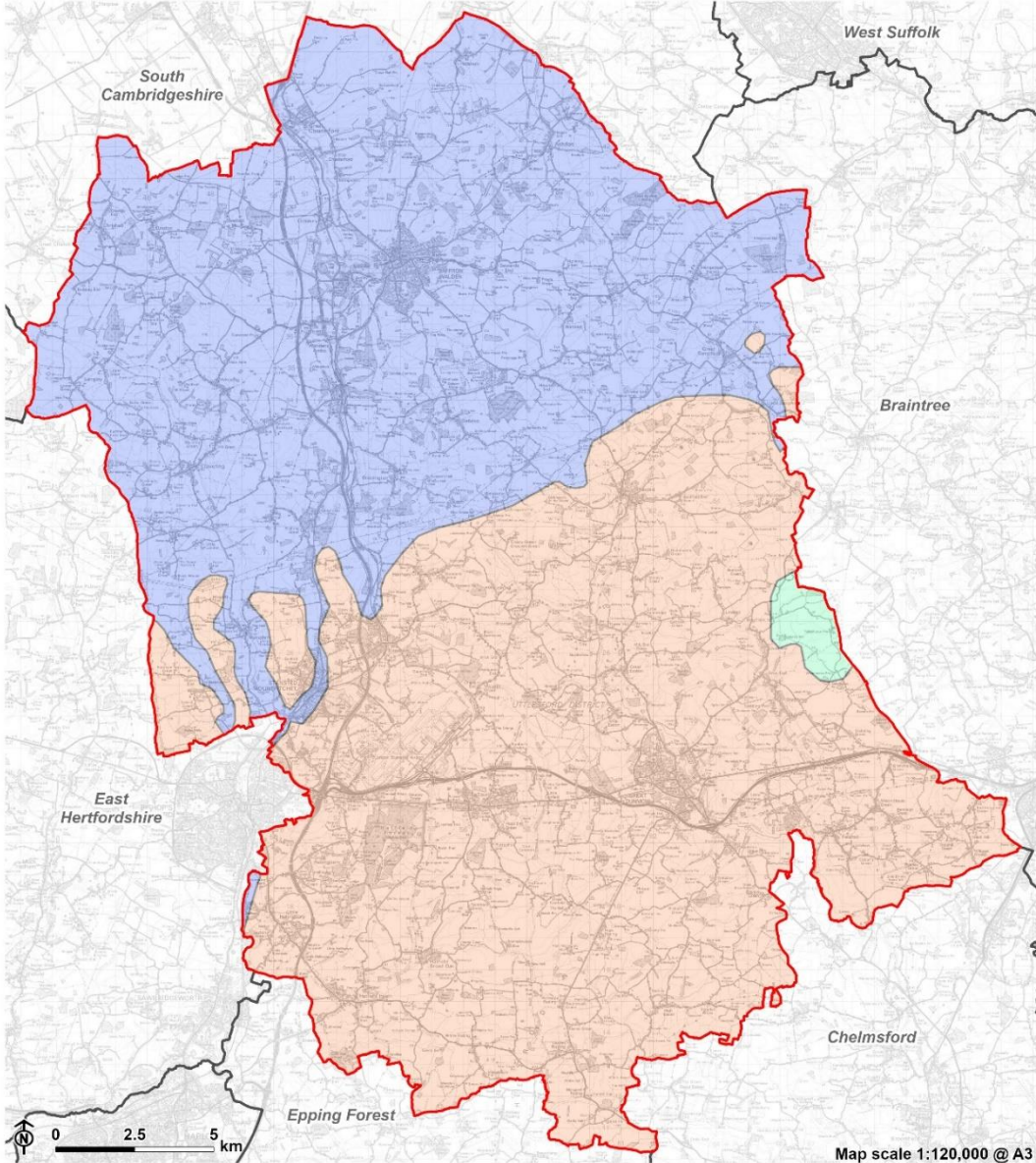
3.14 There is relatively little recorded wetland habitat in Uttlesford. Open water habitat in rivers and streams are found throughout the district. Many have been modified for flood alleviation or drainage. The rivers support a varied aquatic and emergent flora and scarce plants. Chalk streams and rivers in the north of the district, which rise from the chalk aquifer, are particularly rich in species. A number of animal species occur in the rivers, including the freshwater pea mussel, the white clawed crayfish, otters and water voles. The river corridors also provide rich foraging habitats for many of the ten species of bat recorded in East of England.

Chapter 3: Formative influences

Figure 3.1: Bedrock geology

Figure 3.1: Bedrock geology

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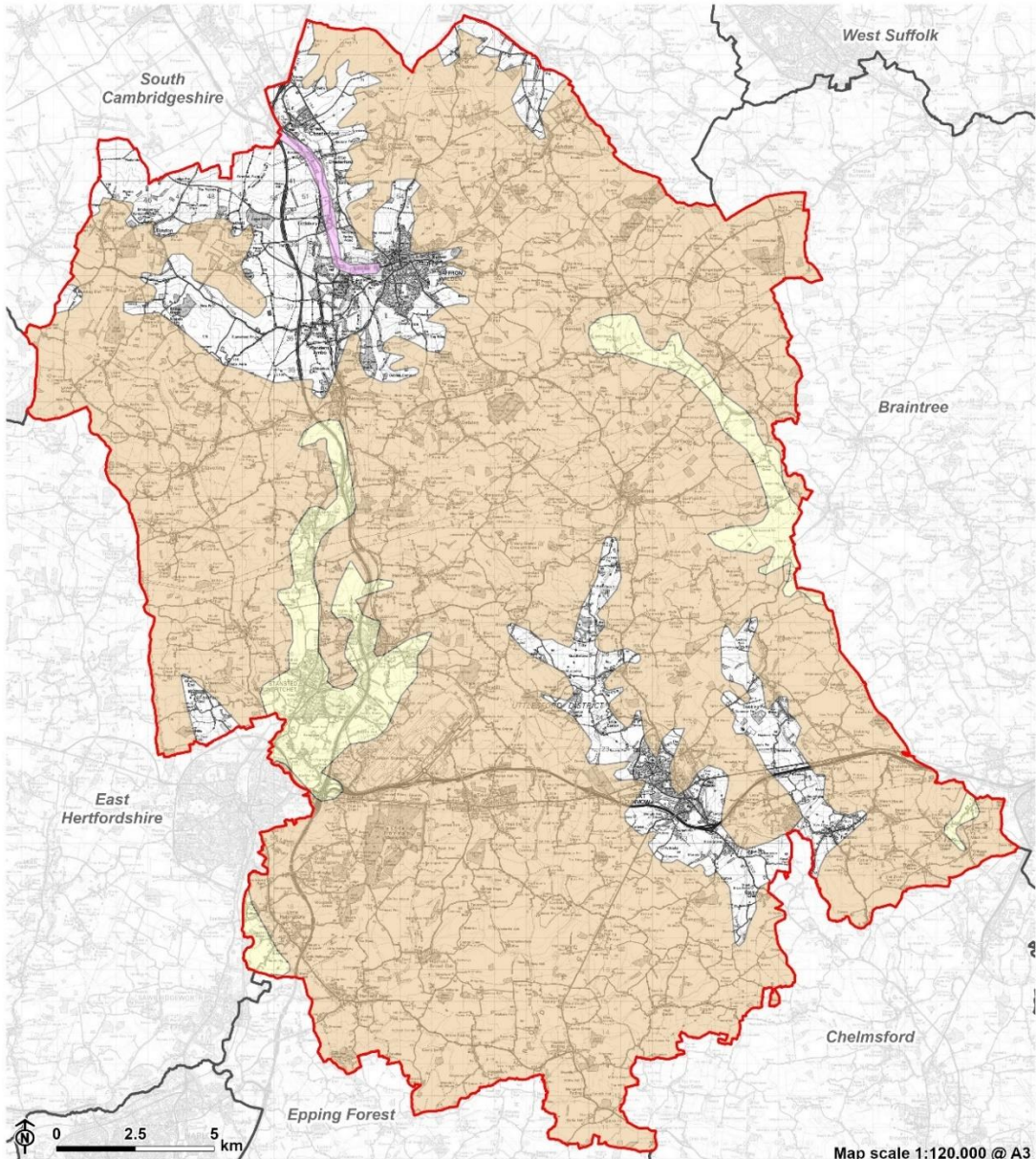
- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary
- Bedrock**
- Chalk
- Clay, Silt, Sand And Gravel
- Gravel, Sand, Silt And Clay

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Figure 3.2: Superficial geology

Figure 3.2: Superficial geology

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- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary
- Superficial**
- Alluvial Deposits - Clay, Silt And Sand
- Glacigenic Deposits - Diamicton (Clay, Sand And Gravel)
- Glaciofluvial Deposits - Sand And Gravel

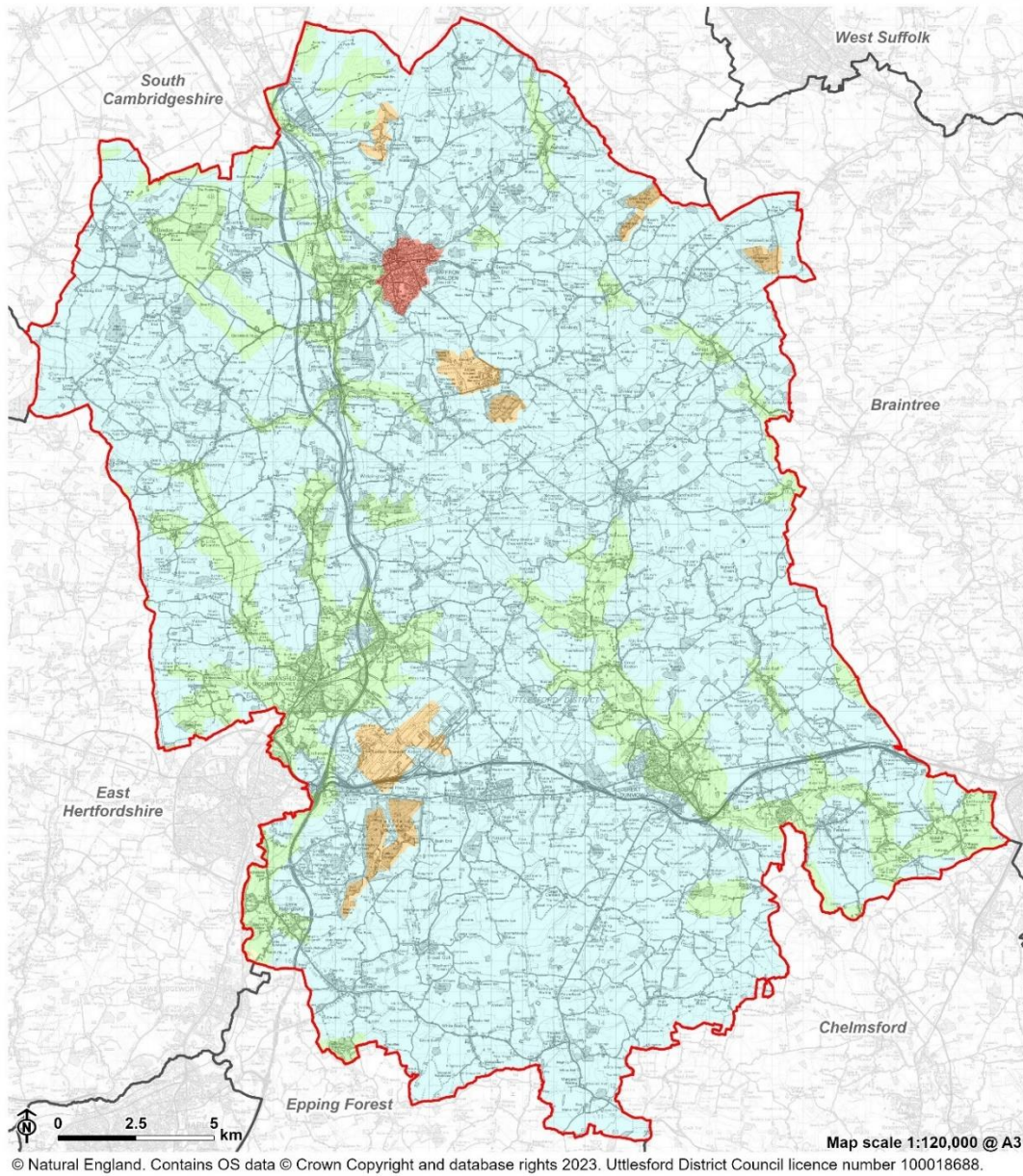
12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/Figure 3.2: Superficial geology P 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Chapter 3: Formative influences

Figure 3.3: Agricultural Land Classification

Figure 3.3: Agricultural Land Classification

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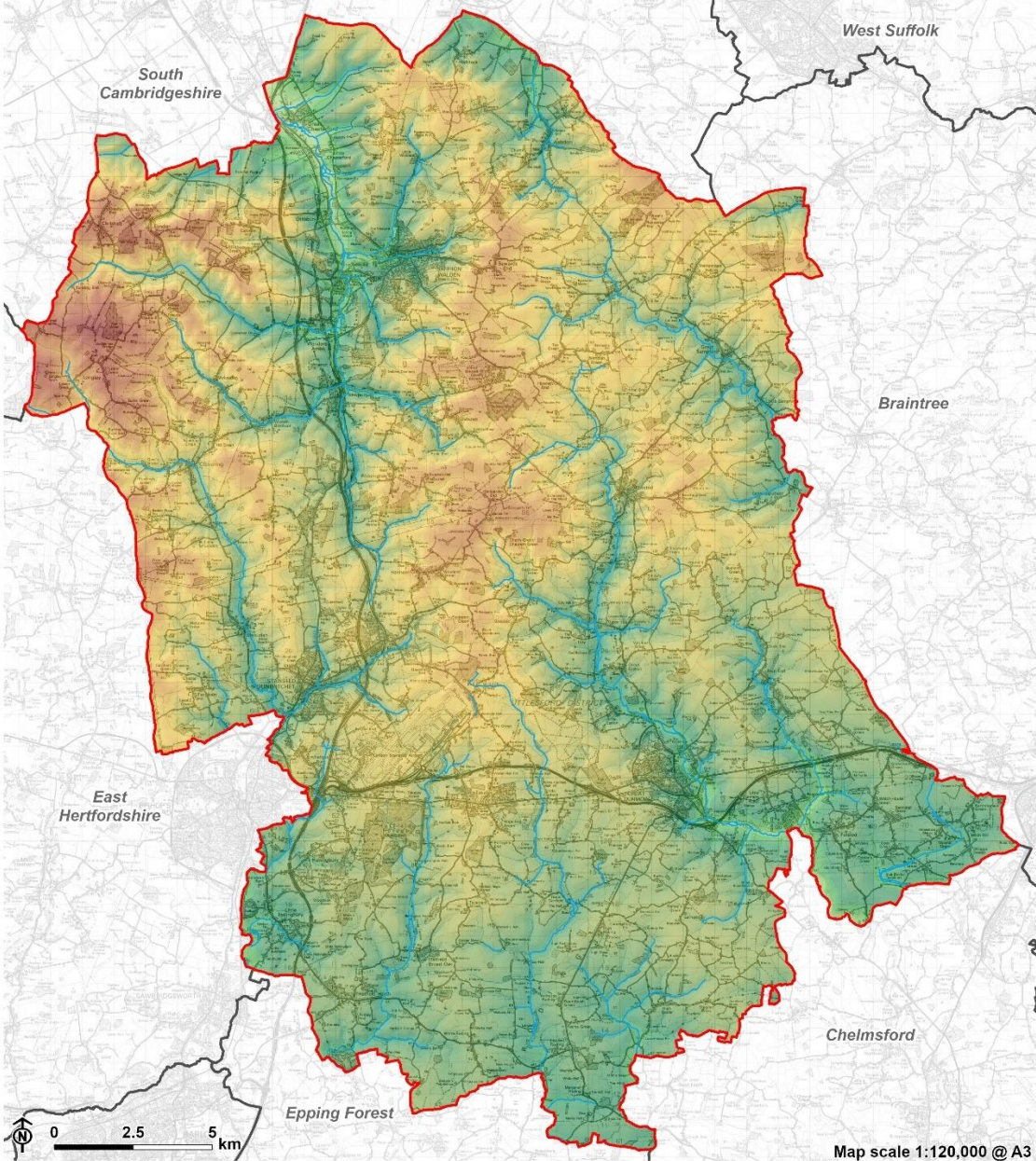
- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary
- ALC Grades**
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Non Agricultural
- Urban

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Figure 3.4: Watercourses and topography

Figure 3.4: Topography and watercourses

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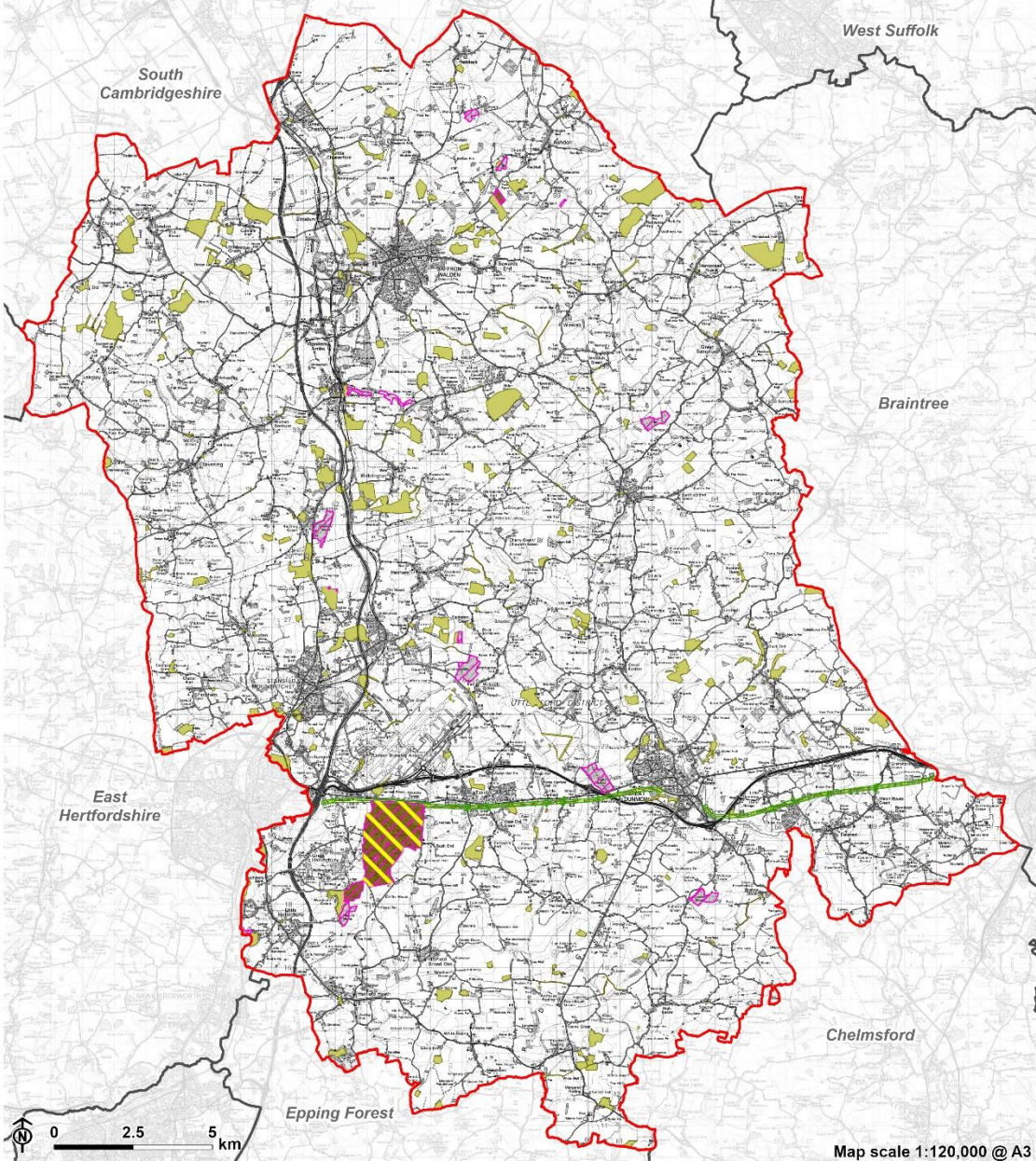
- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary
- Watercourse
- Elevation (m)**
- High: 150
- Low: 36

12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/Figure 3.4: Topography and watercourses P 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Figure 3.5: Nature conservation designations

Figure 3.5: Nature conservation designations

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- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary
- National Nature Reserve
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Country park
- Local Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Site

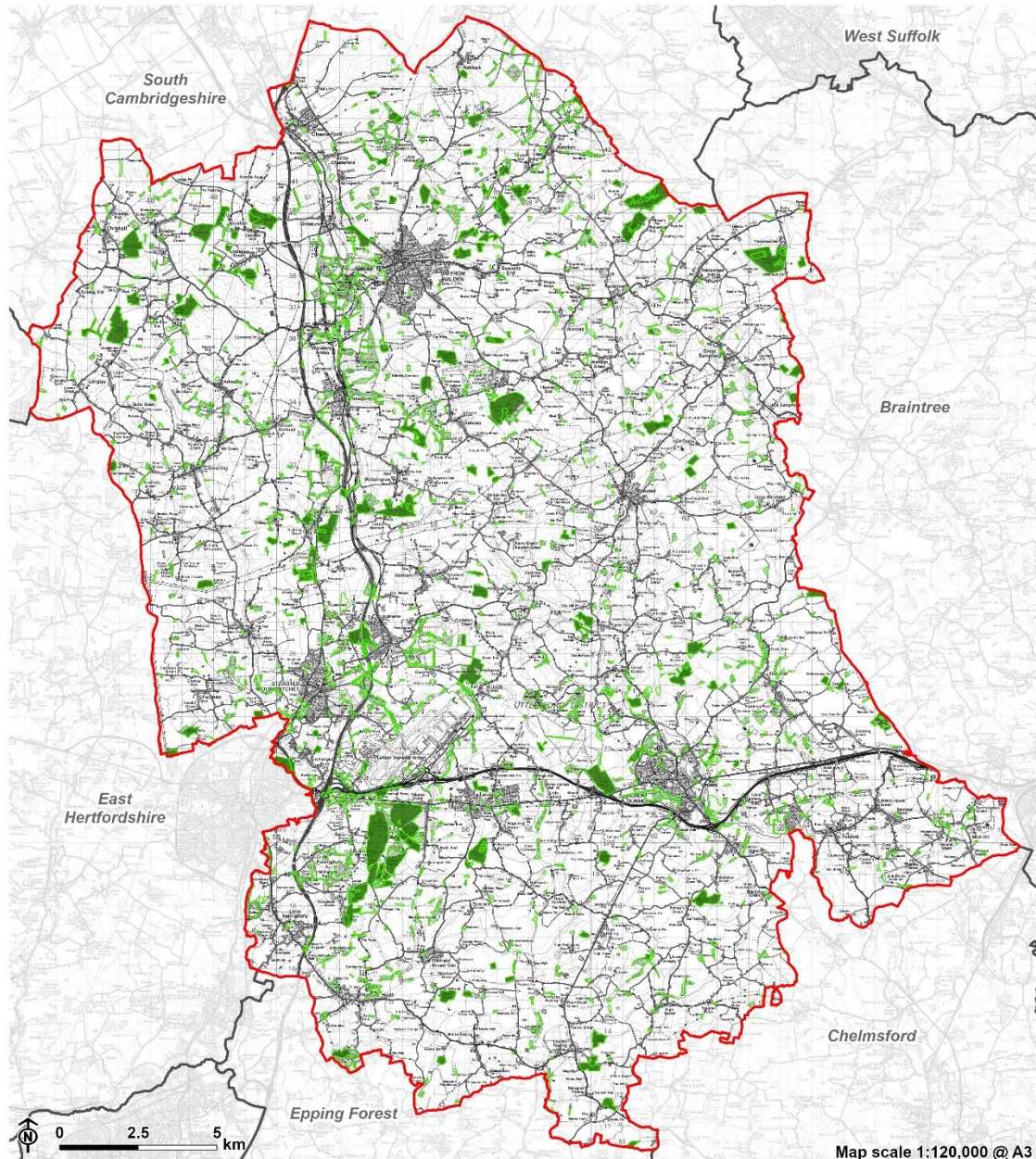
12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/Figure 3.5: Nature conservation designations P 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Chapter 3: Formative influences





Figure 3.6: Woodland coverage

Figure 3.6: Woodland coverage

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-  Uttlesford district boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority boundary
-  Ancient woodland
-  National Forest Inventory

12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/Figure 3.6: Woodland coverage 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Cultural influences

3.15 Uttlesford contains a wealth of archaeological sites, monuments and historic assets that reflect a long history of human settlement. These assets, many of which are statutorily designated, play a large part in defining the character of the landscape and the individuality of particular settlements.

3.16 There are 72 Scheduled Monuments covering prehistoric to modern periods, and 36 Conservation Areas, which vary in size from Saffron Walden to country estates and tiny villages. Approximately 3,700 listed buildings display a variety of styles representative of the best of architectural and historic designs from many centuries. There are also seven Registered Parks and Gardens, and numerous locally important parks and gardens. Cultural heritage designations are shown on **Figure 3.7**. This chapter is based on the Uttlesford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project (2009) [[See reference 4](#)].

Prehistoric (700,000 BCE -45 CE)

3.17 The first evidence of human occupation and activity in Uttlesford is from the warmer inter-glacial periods. Flint tools have been discovered from the Palaeolithic (500,000 – 10,000 BCE), largely in the gravels of the river valleys. These may have been preferred areas for early hunter-gatherers, or it may be that finds have survived better in the gravel conditions. The district was largely covered in wildwood forests at this period. Mesolithic (c.8000 BCE) finds indicate that Uttlesford was occupied during this period, with the river valleys providing focal points and possible routeways into the district.

3.18 During the Neolithic period (4000 – 2200 BCE) agriculture began, at first only augmenting rather than replacing the existing hunter-gather economy, land management practices dramatically altered, and probably involved increased clearance of woodland and more permanent settlement. Excavations have

Chapter 3: Formative influences

found evidence of flint-knapping, pottery and possible sarsen stones at Newport and Stansted.

3.19 The Bronze Age (2200 – 700 BCE) saw an increase in the size and social complexity of communities, and, notably, the first use of metalworking which allowed significant clearance of woodland and increase in agriculture. Many cropmark ring-ditches, the remains of early and middle Bronze Age barrows, have been identified across the district. By the Late Bronze Age (c 1000 BCE) the economy was fully agricultural, and evidence of the first definite settlements date to this period, including sites on the present location of Stansted Airport and the M11.

3.20 During the Iron Age (800 BCE – 45 CE) settlement developed rapidly. The area formed the border between the Iron Age tribes of the Trinovantes and the Catuvellauni. Excavations and aerial photography indicate that settlement was widespread across the district, not just in the river valleys. Hillforts are the largest surviving monuments in the landscape from this period, including Ring Hill Camp in Littlebury, which sits on the summit of a hill overlooking the River Cam.

Roman (43 – 410 CE)

3.21 Great Chesterford was the second largest walled Roman settlement in Essex. It began as a fort, and was replaced by a large and apparently planned town. A wall was built in the 4th century surrounding most of the settlement. Other Roman settlements were located at Great Dunmow and Leaden Roding, while smaller villas and farmsteads were located along the Roman roads towards Colchester and Harlow. Forts within the region may have been established after 60 CE in the aftermath of the Boudican rebellion.

Anglo-Saxon (410 – 1066 CE)

3.22 Saxon occupiers reused earlier settlements in Uttlesford, and also built new towns around, but at a distance from, the former Roman towns, which is probably not an accident. It seems to be an acknowledgement of the strategic importance of river confluences and the significance of the former Roman town, together with a desire to keep at a distance from them.

3.23 The present distribution of settlements, including church and hall sites, was already in place by the end of the Saxon period, as shown by their inclusion in the Domesday Book (1086).

Medieval (1066 – 1540 CE)

3.24 Motte and Bailey castles from the early-medieval period can still be seen at Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet and were probably established on unsettled sites by the new Norman lords.

3.25 Saffron Walden thrived as a centre for saffron production and the cloth trade, while Thaxted had a thriving cutlery industry. Many of the smaller settlements including Hatfield Broad Oak, Newport and Thaxted retain much of their original medieval extent and appearance.

3.26 The settlement pattern was essentially dispersed, with numerous farmsteads and moated sites, and church/hall complexes and greens forming focal points. The historic, winding and often sunken lanes which cross the district also mostly date from the Medieval period. Deer parks, hunting forests and parkland developed during the Saxon and medieval periods. Hatfield Forest is the best-preserved Royal hunting forest in Britain, first created for Henry I around 1100.

3.27 While the 13th century was a time of great prosperity and agricultural expansion, the 14th century was beset by economic and social unrest, poor

Chapter 3: Formative influences

harvests, wars, epidemics and rebellion. Many more marginal settlements were abandoned, never to be re-occupied.

3.28 Religious structures are some of the most striking features of the medieval landscape to survive, including parish churches, monastic establishments and religious houses. Leez Priory, south of Felsted, was one of 11 Augustinian houses in Essex, and contains all the main elements including remains of outer court buildings, foundations and fishponds.

Post-medieval and Industrial (1540 CE to present)

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

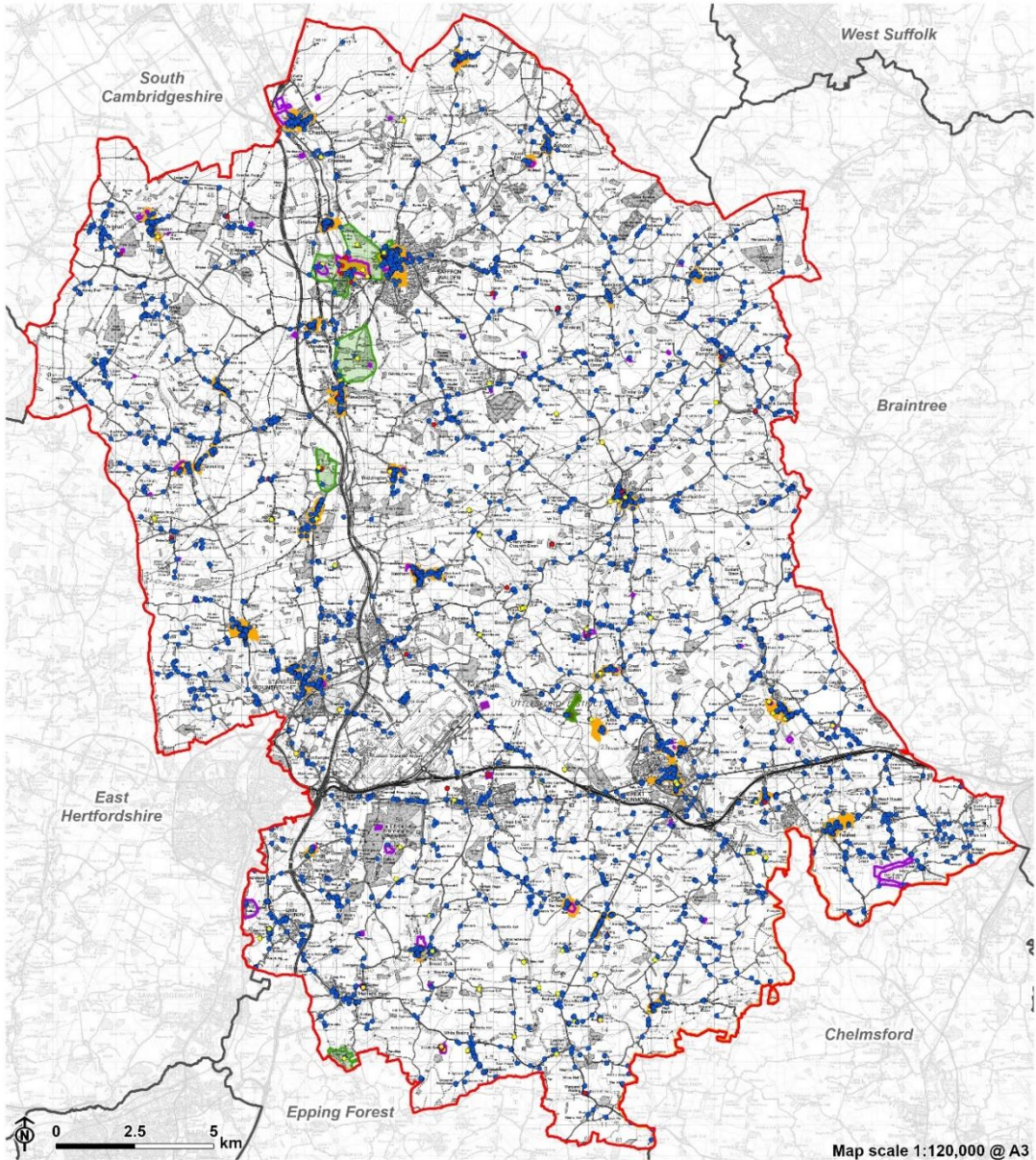
3.30 Railways were built across the district in the Victorian time, providing increased access to the towns and resulting industrialisation, although industries were largely based on agriculture. The main trades included maltings, breweries, tanneries, brickworks and textiles. The majority of the railway lines have since been decommissioned.

3.31 The modern period saw a change in the nature and scale of agriculture and altered the landscape structure through the amalgamation of smaller fields, and widespread removal of hedgerows. Characteristic barns and agricultural buildings were converted to housing. Airfields and defence lines built during the Second World War are also more recent additions to the landscape.

Figure 3.7: Cultural heritage designations

Figure 3.7: Cultural heritage designations

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Uttlesford District Council



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- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary
- Conservation Area
- Heritage at Risk
- Scheduled Monuments
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Listed building (grade)**
- I
- II*
- II

12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/Figure 3.7: Cultural heritage designations P 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Perceptual influences

3.32 The overall perception of Uttlesford is of a rural district, with a strong agricultural influence, and limited settlement, despite its proximity to Cambridge and London.

3.33 Settlements are largely concentrated in the south of the district along the A120 between Bishop's Stortford and Braintree. Limited trunk roads and railway connections, particularly in the north and east of the district result in a surprisingly remote character in places.

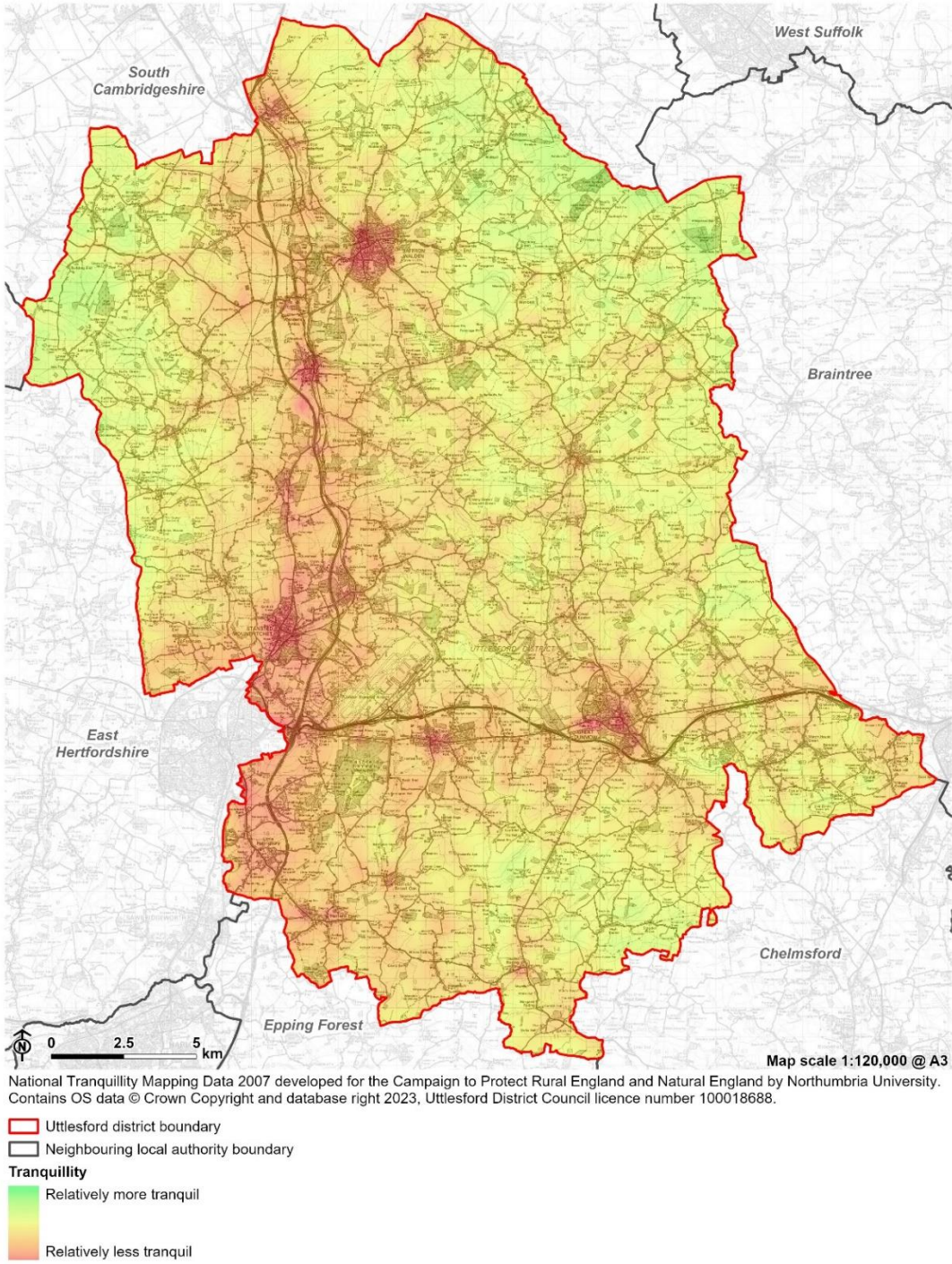
3.34 The M11, A120 and Stansted Airport have the largest modern influence on the local landscape character, and locally reduce perceptions of tranquillity. However, the Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ) policy has ensured that Stansted Airport remains 'an airport in the countryside', and its visual influence is limited. The most tranquil areas of the district are in the east, north and west, as shown on **Figure 3.8**.

3.35 Stansted Airport is the greatest source of light pollution with the district. The south belt of the district is impacted by the airport, A120 and large towns and village including Great Dunmow. Other light sources across the district are the main towns and villages and the M11. Very dark skies are found in small pockets in the north-east and north-west, as shown on **Figure 3.9**.

Figure 3.8: Tranquillity

Figure 3.8: Tranquillity

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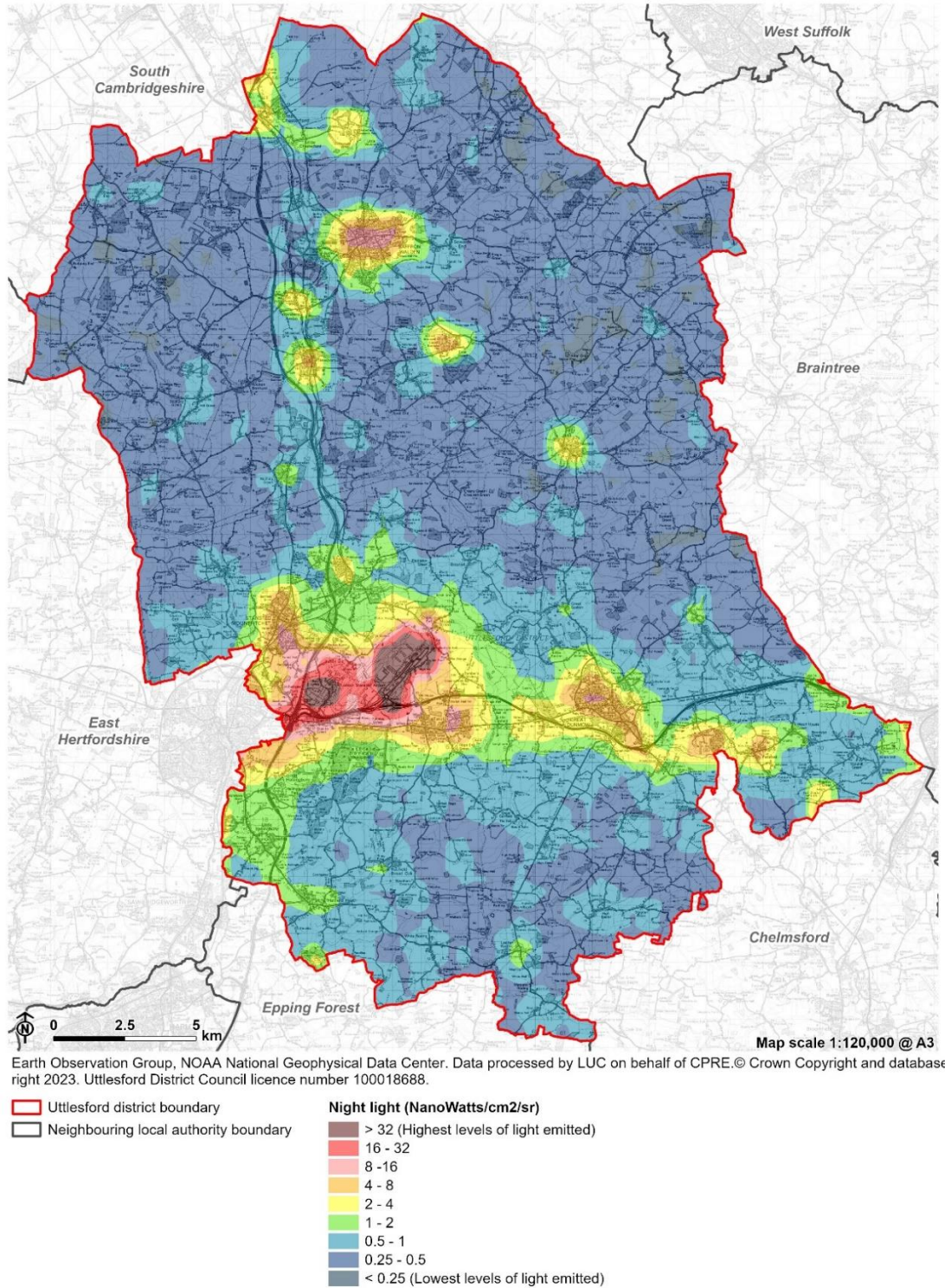


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Figure 3.9: Dark night skies

Figure 3.9: Dark night skies

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12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/Figure 3.9: Dark night skies P 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Chapter 4

Forces for change and issues

4.1 Uttlesford's landscape is constantly changing through human activity and natural processes. The cumulative effects of these processes can considerably alter the character of the landscape.

4.2 The individual Landscape Character Area (LCA) profiles include reference to key pressures, past, present and future, derived from a review of relevant information relating to land use, agricultural trends and development pressures. The main pressures that have potential to influence the landscape character of Uttlesford are set out below.

Climate change

4.3 Climate change is a major pressure on rural landscapes and is likely to result in increasingly unpredictable weather with hotter drier summers, more intense rainfall and longer dry periods resulting in the need for agriculture to adapt to grow different crops and develop more flexible and responsive land management practices. Hotter summers and increases in temperatures could result in increased demands for agricultural irrigation. Responses to climate change may also result in pressure for development of renewable energy.

4.4 Climate change resulting in more extreme weather could alter the species composition of existing species-rich woodlands and hedgerows, favouring species with lower water demand. Increasing incidences of pathogens may change the species mix of woodlands and higher temperatures and prolonged drought are likely to put woodlands under further stress and increase the risk of wildfires.

4.5 Climate change is also likely to affect other important semi-natural habitats, particularly river and wetland habitats throughout the district. This will include

Chapter 4: Forces for change

water shortages in summer and increased water flows and flooding in winter, causing potential damage to habitats and species. These changes may manifest themselves within the natural environment through changes in habitats and a decline of flora and fauna which are unable to adapt quickly enough to the changing conditions. Longer drier summers may affect dry grassland and increase the risk of fire. The changing seasons may also disturb migrating birds and invertebrates, as there will be an increasing mismatch in timing of the arrival of migratory species and food sources, affecting neutral grassland and woodland as well as intertidal habitats.

4.6 River valleys are at high risk of flooding from watercourses. Measures to provide flood protection may lead to conflict between defences and wildlife value. Increased frequency of flooding can lead to increased runoff of pollutants from the land. Conversely, hotter and drier summers result in lower summer river flows, which means there is less water available for dilution and dispersion of pollutants such as nutrients and contaminated sediments. The risk of eutrophication and algal blooms increases the longer nutrients remain in a water body.

4.7 Uttlesford District Council declared a climate and ecological emergency on 30 July 2019. It is committed to achieving net-zero carbon status for council owned property by 2030 and protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The Climate Crisis Strategy 2021-2030 sets a clear direction for the council for tackling the climate crisis. Mitigation and adaption to climate change, to achieve net-zero, is also changing the landscape. This includes the demand for renewable energy including new solar installations, wind farms, and associated grid connections.

Agricultural change

4.8 Changes in agricultural practices result in the need for farmers to diversify their operations to remain economically viable. In Uttlesford this has resulted in intensive arable farming and amalgamation of fields, which has changed the pattern and texture of the landscape. A decline in the traditional management of some field boundaries has led to fragmented or lost hedgerows and lost hedgerow trees. This erodes the underlying pattern of the landscape and has

Chapter 4: Forces for change

also contributed to the fragmentation of semi-natural habitats and reductions in biodiversity. A reduction in traditional pasture grazing of sheep and cattle, and an increase in horse grazing also alters the landscape character of the district.

Development pressure

4.9 Uttlesford is a rural district, however it is still subject to pressure for development and accompanying infrastructure, particularly major housing development. This poses a challenge, and potential opportunities, for the existing landscape character.

4.10 UDC have indicated that housing development is likely to come forward in allocations around Great Dunmow, Takeley and Priors Green, Stansted Mountfitchet, Thaxted, Newport, and Saffron Walden.

4.11 While these sites have not been formally approved at the time of writing, and may be subject to change, these allocations have been mapped to show the potential future growth in Uttlesford. This LCA has not sought to presuppose the final layout of these allocations. It recognises that within the boundaries large areas will not be developed for residential use, but will form important areas for open space, Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) and other amenity uses. Such areas will play an important role in shaping and defining the landscape in and around the urban areas.

4.12 Away from the main settlements, there is a characteristic pattern of dispersed, small rural settlement, often set around traditional village greens.

Chapter 5

Landscape character of Uttlesford

5.1 This landscape classification identifies 3 generic landscape character types (LCTs), each representing a distinct identity and common geology, topography, land use and cultural pattern, listed in **Table 5.1** and illustrated in **Figure 5.1**.

5.2 The LCTs are subdivided into local landscape character areas (LCAs), which are discrete geographic areas that possess the characteristics described for the landscape type, but have recognisable local identity. The classification identifies 19 LCAs, listed below and shown on **Figure 5.2**.

LCT A River Valley includes:

- A1 Cam
- A2 Stort
- A3 Pant
- A4 Upper Chelmer

LCT B Farmland Plateau includes:

- B1 Ashdon
- B2 Hempstead
- B3 Debden
- B4 Thaxted
- B5 Broxton
- B6 Lindsell
- B7 Hatfield Forest

Chapter 5: Landscape character of Uttlesford

- B8 Stebbing Green
- B9 Roding
- B10 Barnston
- B11 Felsted

LCT C Chalk Upland includes:

- C1 Elmdon
- C2 Arkesden
- C3 Langley
- C4 Berden

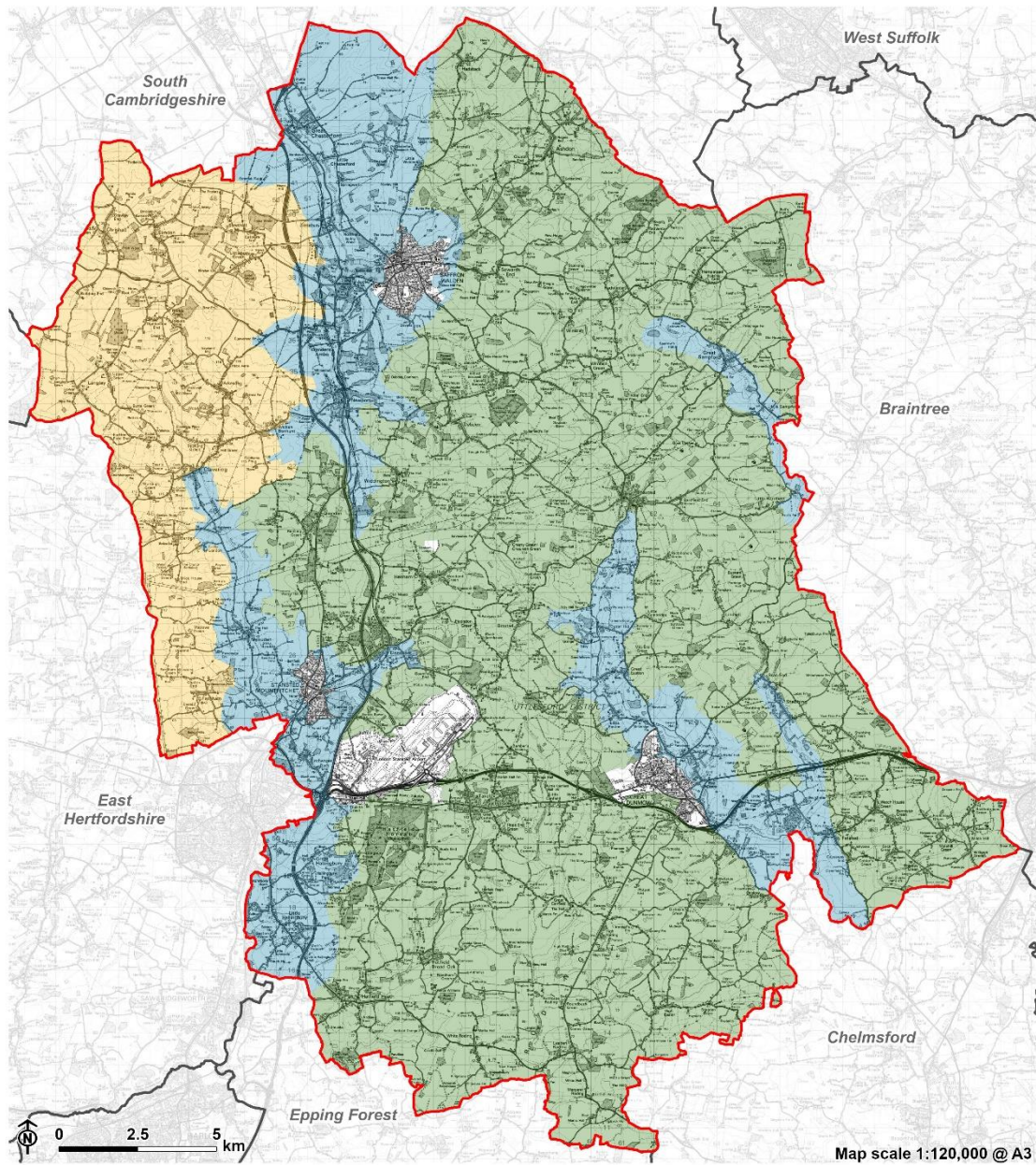
5.3 It is important to note that boundaries between one LCT or LCA and the next are transitional and there is rarely a clearcut change 'on the ground'.

5.4 This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 which provides an appropriate level of detail for the landscape character assessment at the strategic district scale. In considering any change in one character area the impact on views to/ from and the character of neighbouring areas should also be considered.

Figure 5.1: Landscape Character Types of Uttlesford district

Figure 5.1: Landscape Character Types

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Uttlesford District Council



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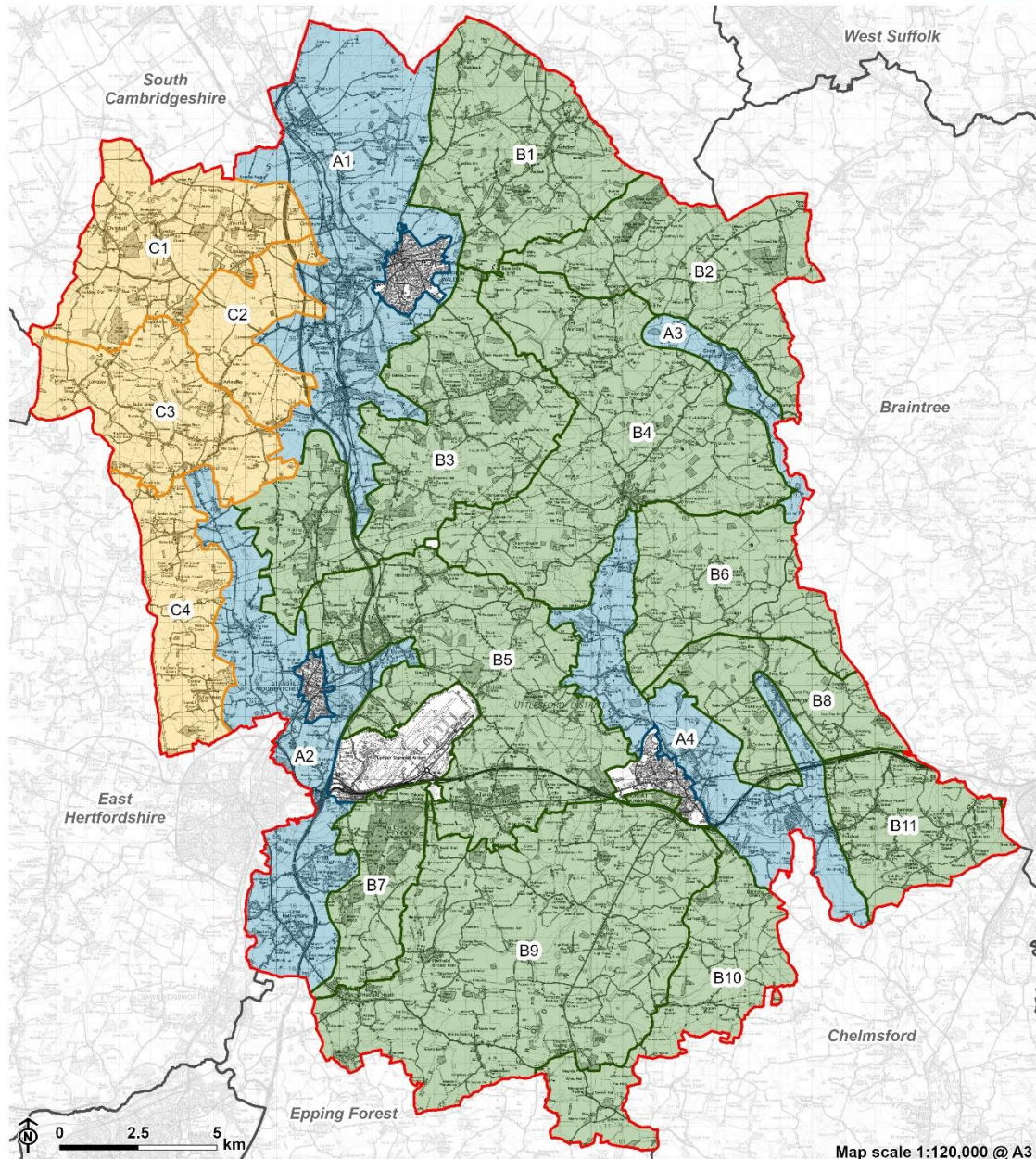
- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority boundary
- Landscape Character Type**
- Chalk Upland
- Farmland Plateau
- River Valley

12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/FIG5.1: Landscape Character Types P 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Figure 5.2: Landscape Character Areas in Uttlesford

Figure 5.2: Landscape Character Areas

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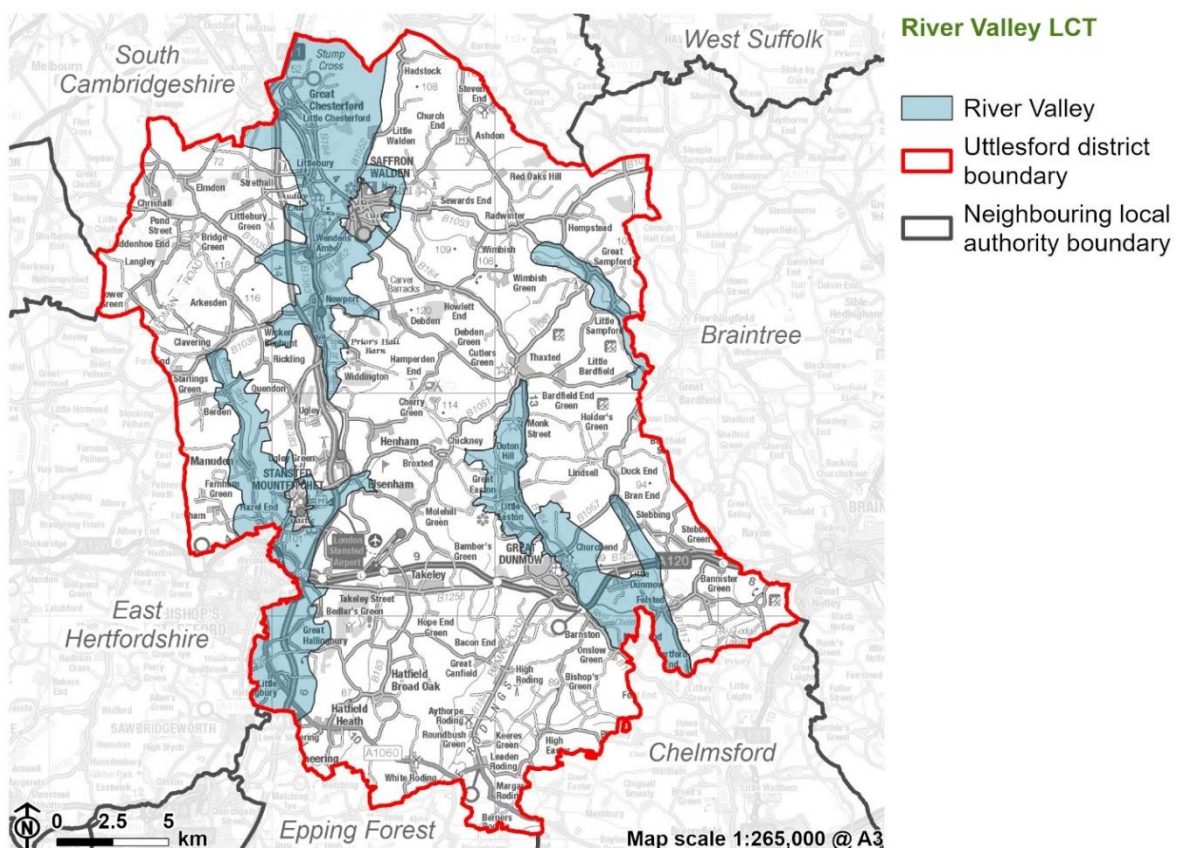
Map scale 1:120,000 @ A3

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Uttlesford district boundary | Farmland Plateau | B9: Roding Farmland Plateau |
| Neighbouring local authority boundary | B1: Ashdon Farmland Plateau | B10: Barnston Farmland Plateau |
| Landscape Character Area | B2: Hempstead Farmland Plateau | B11: Felsted Farmland Plateau |
| River Valley | B3: Debden Farmland Plateau | Chalk Upland |
| A1: Cam River Valley | B4: Thaxted Farmland Plateau | C1: Elmton Chalk Upland |
| A2: Stort River Valley | B5: Broxton Farmland Plateau | C2: Arkesden Chalk Upland |
| A3: Pant River Valley | B6: Lindsell Farmland Plateau | C3: Langley Chalk Upland |
| A4: Upper Chelmer River Valley | B7: Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau | C4: Berden Chalk upland |
| | B8: Stebbing Green Farmland Plateau | |

12535_002_r0_LCA_ReportFigures/FIG5.2: Landscape Character Areas 05/10/2023 EB:shayler_h

Landscape Character Type A: River Valleys

Figure 5.3: Location of LCT A River Valleys



5.5 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type (LCT) are:

- U-shaped or shallow landform which dissects boulder clay or chalky till plateau.
- Main river valley served by several tributaries.
- Flat or gently undulating valley floor.
- Contrast between intimate and wooded character on the valley floor and open character on valley sides.
- Settlement concentrated on the valley sides.

LCT A: River Valleys

5.6 The following Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are located within the River Valley LCT:

- A1 Cam River Valley
- A2 Stort River Valley
- A3 Pant River Valley
- A4 Upper Chelmer River Valley

LCA A1: Cam River Valley

Location and summary

5.7 This character area consists of a broad, rolling and open river valley drained by the River Cam and its tributaries, Debden Water and Wicken Water. Settlement is concentrated in Saffron Walden, which lies in the east.

5.8 Located in the north of the district, it is defined by the extent of the valley as it cuts through the chalky uplands to the north west and the clayland plateau to the south east. It extends from the Cambridgeshire-Essex border in the north to Newport at the M11 and the B1383 intersection. Saffron Walden is excluded from the assessment, as a larger urban area.

Figure 5.4: Location of A1 Cam River Valley

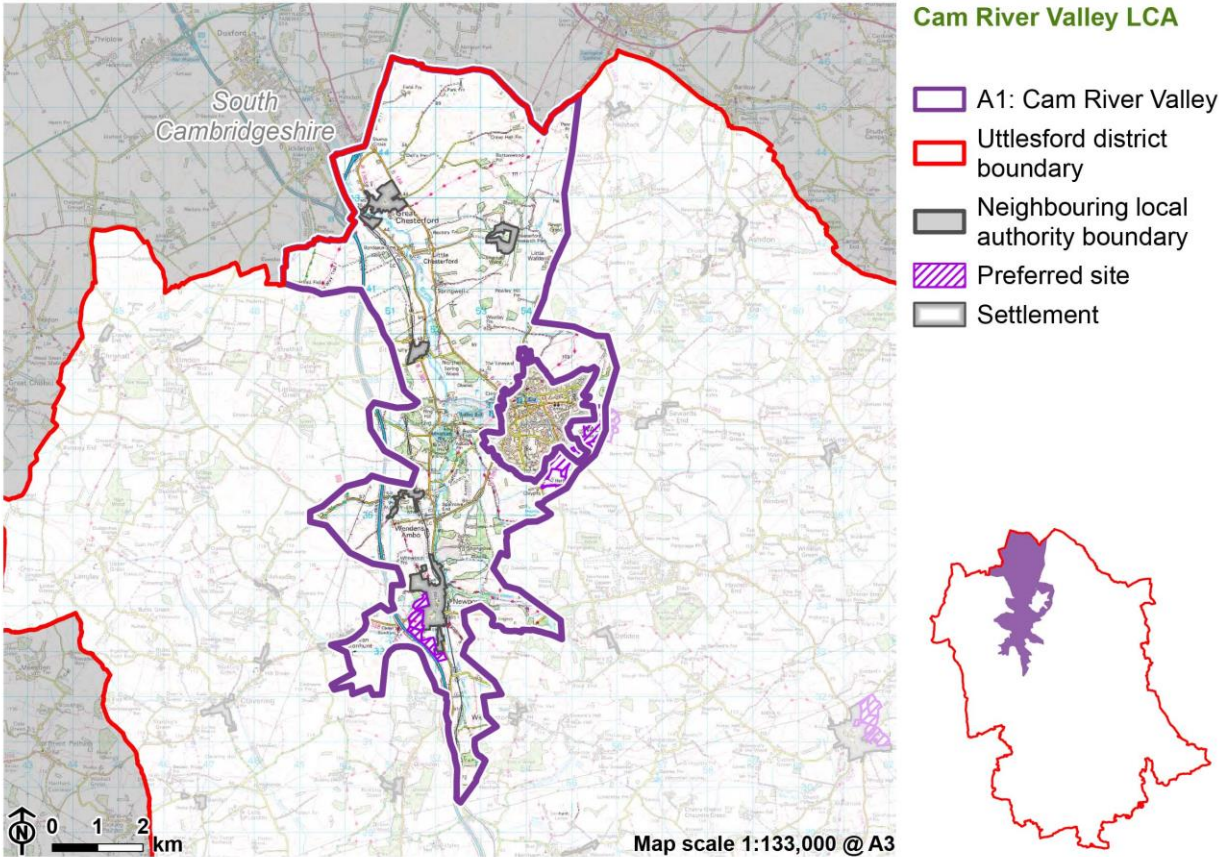


Figure 5.5: Typical view of the LCA: Rolling arable fields with small woodland blocks



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- A U-shaped valley of rolling, open farmland.
- The narrow river corridors of the Cam and its tributaries, Debden Water and Wicken Water wind through the rolling landform.
- A bedrock of chalky boulder clay gives rise to fertile soils.

LCT A: River Valleys

Land use and field patterns

- A landscape dominated by intensive arable farmland with some grazing pasture along the eastern slopes surrounding settlements.
- A large-scale regular field pattern reflecting late enclosure and later agricultural intensification. Fields are enclosed by low hedges, often fragmented, drainage ditches and occasional trees.

Trees and woodland cover

- An open landscape with limited tree cover except for small copses and riparian trees along the well-vegetated riverbanks.
- Areas of ancient woodland usually occur as large regular blocks associated with historic parks and gardens.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Small deciduous woodlands, unimproved grassland and fen habitats, some along road verges, provide variety within the intensively farmed landscape, most of which are designated as Local Wildlife Sites.
- Open water and lakeside habitats at Debden Water (SSSI) as well as the riverside habitats and meadows along the Cam and its tributaries are important for biodiversity.

Historic landscape character

- The landscape forms an immediate backdrop to the ancient town of Saffron Walden which dominates the eastern slopes of the valley.
- Historic field patterns include large common-fields of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type enclosed by post-medieval agreements and parliamentary enclosure act.
- Several historic designed landscapes are found along the river valley including the 18th century landscape park at Audley End.
- Locally distinctive building styles and materials including red brick, flint walls and thatched or tiled roofs, create a strong local vernacular.

LCT A: River Valleys

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- A well-settled landscape, with dispersed small villages and large farms located on the valley sides. Settlements are connected by busy roads.
- The valley serves as a crucial north-south transportation route for road and rail. The M11 runs along the western side of the valley.
- A network of footpaths includes the promoted routes of Saffron Trail and Harcamlow Way.
- The area is well-used for recreation, with visitors to Audley End and canoeing on the river.

Views and perceptual qualities

- An open landscape with wide cross-valley views from higher ground, sometimes framed by distant woodlands and copses. Views in the wooded river valley are more intimate.
- The church tower at Saffron Walden forms a distinctive landmark feature.
- Tranquillity is impacted locally by traffic noise on the M11 and larger roads and the railway line, and in proximity to the larger settlements.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.9 Broad rolling, open farmland that rises from around 40 metres AOD on the valley floor to its highest point at 110 metres AOD at Chesterford Research Park. The River Cam, also known as the River Granta, rises near Widdington just south of the character area and flows in a north-west direction into the character area via Newport and Great Chesterford.

LCT A: River Valleys

5.10 The character area is located on the New Pit Chalk Formation and Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation bedrock of chalky boulder clay, and overlain by a mosaic of Alluvium, River Terrace, Head, and glacial diamicton superficial deposits. The resulting soil is loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater, and freely draining lime-rich and base-rich soils. These soils are generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) and Grade 3 (good) agricultural land. Small-scale mineral extraction was once common, and disused clay pits and chalk pits can be seen on the lower slopes.

5.11 Due to the fertile soils, the landscape is mostly in arable cultivation. The field pattern is regular, bounded by low-clipped hedgerows, often fragmented, with occasional trees and scrubs. The eastern slopes are characterised by regular large-scale fields with some grazing pastures, whilst on the western slopes field boundaries are typically organic in shape.

5.12 The resulting landscape is open, with only small scattered woodland blocks (including ancient woodland) and copses. Tree and woodland cover is concentrated along the Cam, on the western valley slopes, and within a series of historic parks (Shortgrove, Audley End and Chesterford). The majority of these woodlands are priority habitat deciduous woodland. Some woodlands are classed as ancient woodland, with some plantations replanted with conifers.

5.13 Among the intensive farmland area are small patchworks of semi-natural habitats, including unimproved grassland or fen and wetland, many designated as LWS. Debden Water is designated nationally as a SSSI for its range of habitat types including tall fen, unimproved neutral grassland and species-rich calcareous grassland. Small areas of priority habitat floodplain grazing marsh are recorded along the Cam between Littlebury and Little Chesterford.

Cultural influences

5.14 Evidence of historic land use is dominated by large common-fields of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type, which developed here, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex. Some of these were enclosed by agreement in the

LCT A: River Valleys

early post-medieval period, the remainder being enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, partially as a function of the parliamentary enclosure act.

5.15 Historic settlements are generally located along the River Cam, with the eastern slopes dominated by the historic market town of Saffron Walden. The villages of Great Chesterford, Littlebury, Wendens Ambo and Newport feature clusters of listed buildings and all have designated Conservation Areas.

5.16 Great Chesterford and Newport have expanded, with modern settlement edges often exposed within the landscape. Significant commercial areas, which are not well-integrated into the landscape are also found on the edges of Great Chesterford and Newport, while Great Chesterford has a business park. Saffron Walden, which is excluded from the character area, has expanded into the river valley to the east.

5.17 Outside of the main settlements, isolated farmsteads and small hamlets such as Little Walden, Little Chesterford and Wendens Ambo are dispersed over the rolling farmland. They also contain clusters of listed buildings often designated as Conservation Areas.

5.18 Colour-washed, thatched or mellow red brick houses are found throughout the valley which enhance its visually rich heritage, and there are some outstanding historic farm buildings, including red brick or black timber-framed and boarded barns.

5.19 Parklands are also a characteristic feature of this landscape. The largest is Audley End, an outstanding Jacobean manor set in 18th -century Capability Brown designed landscape park. The parkland is covered by a Conservation Area, is designated as a Scheduled Monument and as a Grade I Registered Park and Garden. Landscape parks at Shortgrove Hall and Bridge Ends Garden (part of Saffron Walden Conservation Area) are also designated as Registered Parks and Gardens. The parkland at Chesterford Park is still evident, although it is not designated and now in use as the Chesterford Research Park.

LCT A: River Valleys

5.20 The landscape has considerable time-depth, with Scheduled Monuments showing occupation in the prehistoric era (Ring Hill camp at Littlebury), Roman era (a fort, town and burial sites at Great Chesterford), and multiple medieval moated sites.

5.21 The M11, the railway line and the B1383 run north–south along the western slopes of the Cam River Valley. In contrast, the eastern slopes contain a number of small lanes which connect the farmsteads.

5.22 A network of footpaths crosses the area, including Icknield Way, an ancient trackway, and the promoted routes Saffron Trail and Harcamlow Way. The river is well used by canoeists as far as Audley End.

Views and perceptual influences

5.23 This is an open and broad rolling landscape, with panoramic views across the valley. Valley sides descend quite steeply from rolling arable fields to the river and its tributaries, and dramatic views are possible from the ridges often framed by distant patches of woodland and scattered copses. In places the skyline is more denuded, with no wooded horizons.

5.24 The higher ground affords views of the towns and villages. Saffron Walden and its distinctive church spire of St Mary the Virgin (Grade I listed) are visible in long views across the LCA, due to its position on the higher slopes.

5.25 The river corridor is fringed by trees which delineate its shape within the patchwork of pasture and plantation woodlands that line the valley floor. The lower slopes of the wooded river valley floor offer intimate views.

5.26 The intimate scale of villages and towns visually contrasts with the surrounding large-scale modern agriculture. New built residential development has altered the north-western edges of Newport, Great Chesterford, and the northern and eastern edge of Saffron Walden. The poorly integrated urban

LCT A: River Valleys

fringes of Saffron Walden and Newport, and hedgerow loss are detracting features across the landscape.

5.27 A largely tranquil landscape, which is impacted locally by traffic noise on the M11, B1383, B184 and railway line, and the larger settlements. There is a good experience of dark night skies away from the settlements and major roads, particularly in the north-east.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.28 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- The patchwork pattern of pasture, well-vegetated riverbanks and lakes, and woodland copses which sits within the open arable landscape.
- Ancient and semi-natural woodland, unimproved grasslands or fen, and river and lakeside habitats scattered across the farmed landscape.
- Parkland landscapes with mature in-field trees provide time-depth and diversity in the land pattern.
- The historic integrity of the landscape resulting from a traditional settlement pattern of villages and presence of Scheduled Monuments and numerous listed buildings.
- Recreational value of promoted public rights of way and other activities along the river.
- The open character of the valley slopes with wide cross valley views which contrast with intimate views on the wooded river valley floor.

Figure 5.6: The River Cam outside Great Chesterford



Figure 5.7: Modern residential edge of Newport



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, further decrease in hedgerows and tree cover.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Potential loss of riverside marshland and pastures due to agricultural encroachment.
- Potential for pollution of the River Cam from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley side and farmland plateau areas.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Recently expanded settlement edges at Great Chesterford, Saffron Walden and Newport are exposed, and not well-integrated into the landscape.
- Pressure for increased development on the edges of Newport and Saffron Walden, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Pressure from increased traffic on narrow lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Disruption from increased tourism particularly at Audley End.
- Further development of the Chesterford Research Park impacting the rural character of the landscape.
- The erection of new farm buildings, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
- Loss of veteran and mature trees within designed landscapes due to increased storms.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Cam River Valley LCA is to enhance the rural character of the farmed area with its historic villages and important heritage assets. Seek to conserve inter-valley and cross-valley views and strengthen landscape patterns by integrating urban fringe elements, conserving semi-natural habitats and restoring hedgerows.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodland, unimproved grasslands or fen, open water, river and lakeside habitats.
- Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows and restore fragmented hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and road upgrades.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks and Gardens) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, including within Great Chesterford, Littlebury, Audley End, Wendens Ambo and Newport Conservation Areas.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Conserve cross-valley views, especially from the lower slopes of the valley towards the wooded valley floor.

Manage

- Manage ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques, reducing the impacts of pests and diseases, pollutants, over-grazing and development.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Manage peak flows of traffic in tourist season, particularly near Audley End.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Manage and establish arable field margins.

Plan

- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by a programme to create new hedgerows, grasslands and wetlands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian woodland and other wetland habitats along the River Cam and its tributaries to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character and nature recovery networks.
- Plan tree planting and expansion or new woodland creation where appropriate to landscape character. Use climate-hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance connections between existing ancient woodlands to increase habitat connectivity and enhance landscape character.
- Plan to integrate existing urban fringe areas into the landscape, especially the recent residential developments at the edges of Great Chesterford, Saffron Walden and Newport.
- Plan for future development on settlement edges, particularly at Saffron Walden and Newport. Any new development should incorporate green and

LCT A: River Valleys

blue infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale, respecting the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional vernacular.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Encourage the re-use of redundant agricultural farm buildings, especially red brick or black timber framed and boarded barns.
- Consider the introduction of reduced lighting on the B1383 and B184 roads to reduce impacts on dark skies and the rural character of the landscape.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist further urbanisation particularly in the more remote unsettled landscape to the northeast.
- Consider the visual impact of new farm buildings on the valley slopes and encourage the planting of tree groups around visually intrusive buildings.

LCA A2: Stort River Valley

Location and summary

5.29 This character area consists of gently sloping valley landscape drained by the River Stort. The area is rural in character and dominated by arable farmland. Settlement and transportation links are concentrated in the south, where the proximity of Bishops Stortford to the west of the district boundary, and Stansted Airport to the east exert an influence on the landscape.

5.30 Located in the west of the district, the area is defined by the extent of the River Stort valley as it cuts through the chalk uplands to the west and clayland plateau to the east. It extends from Clavering in the north to Little Hallingbury in the south. Stansted Mountfitchet is excluded from the assessment, as a larger urban area.

Figure 5.8: Location of A2 Stort River Valley

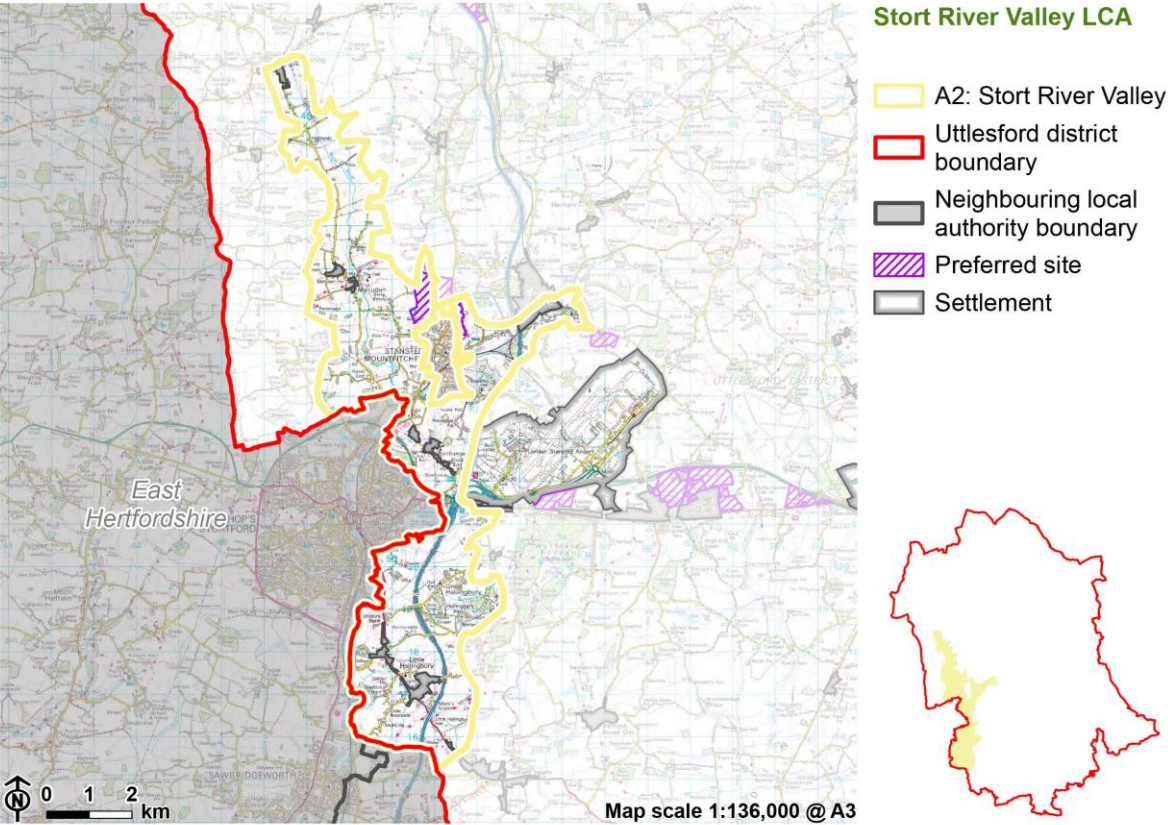


Figure 5.9: Typical view of the LCA: Rolling arable fields with mature hedgerow trees



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- A shallow river valley drained by the upper course of the River Stort.
- The landform is gently rolling with occasional steep river valley slopes.
- The mixed underlying geology gives rise to fertile loamy and clayey soils.

Land use and field patterns

- A landscape dominated by intensive arable agriculture. Some mixed farming is located on lower slopes and the valley floor with horse grazing close to settlements.

LCT A: River Valleys

- A small- to medium-scale regular field pattern. Fields are well-enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees, tree belts, and woodland blocks.

Trees and woodland cover

- Scattered woodland cover with small mixed woodland copses, tree belts and woodland hangers. Woodlands are often associated with historic parklands, with a cluster of ancient woodlands near Birchanger.
- The riverbanks are well-vegetated with shrubs and trees, creating an intimate character.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Deciduous woodland, unimproved grassland and wetland habitats along the Stort, often designated as Local Wildlife Sites, provide variety within the intensively farmed landscape.
- Little Hallingbury Marsh (SSSI) along the Stort is important for local biodiversity.

Historic landscape character

- The historic field pattern is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, linear greens and former common fields. Estate parklands are also scattered across the area.
- Historic villages, many designated as Conservation Areas, scattered farmsteads, moated sites and halls reflect the River Stort's historic importance as a site for settlement and industry.
- Locally distinctive building styles and materials including colour-washed plaster, thatched roofs, and some mellow red brick create a strong local vernacular.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- A well-settled landscape, with settlement concentrated in the south around Stansted Mountfitchet and Birchanger. On the valley sides to the north, the settlement pattern is more dispersed, with small villages and hamlets, often along linear greens.

LCT A: River Valleys

- The valley provides an important transportation route. The railway, M11, and busy trunk roads cross the south. These contrast with small, often sunken lanes with species-rich verges in the north.
- A good network of footpaths includes the promoted route of Harcamlow Way, Three Forests Way and Flitch Way.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Continuous views are afforded down the valley from higher ground. Elsewhere the landscape is more enclosed by woodland and hedgerows.
- The river is often hidden by vegetation within the landscape, with views only possible from properties on its banks, at bridging points or fords.
- The north is more tranquil and rural, due to its distance from the M11, Stansted Airport and the larger settlements in the south and adjacent areas. Electricity pylons cross the landscape north of Manuden.

Landscape character description

Natural influence

5.31 Gently rolling, semi-enclosed farmland in a shallow river valley that ascends from around 50 metres AOD on the valley floor rising to its highest point at 100 metres AOD north of Stansted Mountfitchet.

5.32 The River Stort flows south through the landscape to Bishop's Stortford (within Hertfordshire) and then along the western district boundary. It is only navigable as far as Bishop's Stortford, while in the north, above Manuden, it flows only during periods of heavy rain. Several brooks flow into the south of the valley, including the Little Hallingbury Brook, the Great Hallingbury Brook and the Stansted Brook.

LCT A: River Valleys

5.33 The character area has a mixed underlying geology and is located on the transition from Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation in the north to the London Clay Formation and Thanet Formation and Lambeth Groups. It is overlain with a mosaic of Alluvium, and glacial Head and Glaciofluvial deposits.

5.34 The resulting soil is loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater, and freely draining sandy Breckland soils. These soils are generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) and Grade 3 (good) agricultural land.

5.35 Due to fertile soils, land use is dominated by arable agriculture in regular medium-sized fields. There is some mixed farming in smaller-scale fields on the lower slopes, valley floor and near settlements, with some fields used for horse grazing. Fields are defined by hedgerows, tree belts and woodlands. Many hedgerows are of considerable age, although some are fragmented and reinforced by post and rail fencing.

5.36 Woodland cover is scattered across the landscape in mostly deciduous blocks, copses and tree belts, often associated with historic parks such as Hallingbury and Little Hallingbury Parks and Stansted Park. A significant proportion are designated as LWS and woodlands around Birchanger are ancient in origin. They vary in size, with Birchanger Wood extending to 200 hectares.

5.37 A variety of grassland, and wetland habitats, often designated as LWS, line the River Stort and the brooks in the valley. The unimproved wet grassland and fen habitats at Little Hallingbury Marsh along the Stort are nationally designated as SSSI.

Cultural influence

5.38 Evidence of historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields interspersed with linear greens and several former common fields.

LCT A: River Valleys

5.39 This area is characterised by scattered farmsteads, medieval moated sites, and small villages and hamlets set along linear greens or small lanes that demonstrate the river's historic importance as a site for settlement and industry.

5.40 The historic villages of Great Hallingbury, Hazel End, Manuden, Bentfield Green and Clavering feature clusters of listed buildings and are designated as Conservation Areas. The settlement pattern varies. Nucleated villages include Manuden, and Clavering, while Hazel End, Little Hallingbury and Great Hallingbury are linear. Stansted Mountfitchet, which is excluded from the LCA, has expanded to the south into the river valley.

5.41 Historic parkland landscapes are found at Elsenham Hall, Stansted Park and the Hallingburys. The parklands contain estate woodlands, veteran trees, and parkland fencing.

5.42 Vernacular buildings are primarily cream or white colour-washed plaster with thatched roofs, although mellow red brick predominates in some villages like Manuden. Historic hillforts, moats and ringworks provide evidence of past occupation of the river valley and include Scheduled Monuments at Wallbury Camp, Glebe House and Stansted Castle.

5.43 In the north, winding lanes and minor roads, many of ancient origin, provide access to the scattered farmsteads. Many of these lanes are sunken, with flower-rich verges of varying widths, sometimes tree-lined with old oaks, and often quite peaceful. Many are designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values. By contrast the busy M11, A120, A1060, B1256, and B1383 cut across the southern part of this area.

5.44 An accessible landscape with a good network of footpaths, including the promoted route, Harcamlow Way and Three Forests Way which cross the area. A small part of the former railway line, which connected Bishop's Stortford and Braintree, is now in recreational use as the Flich Way. The Flich Way is also designated as an LNR. There is limited access to the river itself, except for the towing path near Hallingbury Marina in the south.

Views and perceptual influences

5.45 In the rolling valley landscape the density of the hedgerows, copses and tree belts/woodland hangers results in a semi-enclosed landscape, with vegetation framing views. From high ground there are open and continuous views along the slopes and across the river valley in the north. Views of the river valley are channelled by trees or development in the centre and south Airport. The settlement edge of Stansted Mountfitchet is visible across the farmlands from the north.

5.46 The narrow and heavily wooded river valley floor in the south has an enclosed and intimate character. There are local views along the river floor of wet meadows and tree-lined riverbanks at Gaston Green.

5.47 Church spires appear as occasional landmarks above wooded skylines. The church at Manuden is visible across the floodplain pasture from the Harcamlow Way. The hillfort of Wallbury Camp is also a landmark feature in the landscape.

5.48 The character of the landscape varies between the relatively tranquil and more rural north, with larger settlements and transport links concentrated in the south around Stansted Mountfitchet and the Hallingburys.

5.49 Stansted Airport is a major influence on the character of the eastern part of this area. The buildings and tower can be seen from the eastern river valley slopes. The sound of aircraft is almost constant. The M11 / A120 junction and service station south of Birchanger, Stansted Airport and urban fringe development including sewage works on the edge of Bishop's Stortford create a more suburban character.

5.50 Noise from the M11, A120, A1060, B1256 and the B1383 (all in the south of the area) disrupt rural tranquillity. Away from these trunk roads and the Stansted flight path, tranquillity is moderate and there is a greater experience of dark skies to the north of the area.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.51 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Ancient and semi-natural woodland, grassland and wetland habitats scattered across the farmed landscape.
- The intimate character of the valley floor, with small linear fields of arable farmland, fringed by wet pasture and unimproved wet grassland.
- The settlement pattern of historic villages, often located around greens, farmsteads, moats and halls that reflect the historic importance of the River Stort.
- Twisting, sometimes tree-lined, lanes, often of ancient origin.
- Recreational values of promoted public rights of way providing access within the landscape.
- The semi-enclosed character of the valley due to hedgerows, tree belts and woodlands that frame views across and out of the area.

Figure 5.10: River Stort is often unobtrusive in the landscape



Figure 5.11: Parkland character at Hallingbury Park



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network, riverside wetlands and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Potential for pollution of the river, marshland and ditches from fertilizer and pesticide run-off from the surrounding valley sides and farmland plateau.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, including Stansted Mountfitchet and Bishop's Stortford, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character.
- Pressure for increased traffic on narrow and minor lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Visual intrusion of road traffic in the floodplain landscape, particularly where the M11 and the A1060 cross the area.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
- Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
- Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
- Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
- Loss of mature trees within parkland landscapes due to increased storms.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Stort River Valley LCA is to enhance the rural character of the farmed landscape with its historic villages. Seek to conserve inter-valley and cross-valley views and strengthen landscape patterns by integrating urban fringe elements, conserving semi-natural habitats and restoring hedgerows and tree cover.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodland, hedgerows, grasslands and wetland habitats.
- Conserve and restore historic hedgerow pattern and restore gaps in hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highway works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Ensure that important heritage assets (including Wallbury Hill Camp and Stansted Castle) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, including those within Great Hallingbury, Hazel End, Manuden, Bentfield Green and Clavering Conservation Areas.
- Conserve the intimate character of the floodplain by appropriate planting of bankside trees.

Manage

- Manage ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Strengthen and enhance marginal riverside habitats such as marshland and pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage pesticide and fertilizer run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provides informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the M11 and the A1060 cross the area, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by a programme to create new hedgerows, grasslands and wetlands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Plan to extend riparian woodland and other wetland habitats along the River Stort and the brooks to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character and nature recovery networks.
- Plan tree planting and expansion or new woodland creation where appropriate to landscape character. Use climate-hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance connections between existing ancient woodlands to increase habitat connectivity and enhance landscape character.
- Plan for future development on settlement edges, particularly Stansted Mountfitchet and Bishop's Stortford. Any new development should incorporate green and blue infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on the valley sides is small-scale, respecting the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional vernacular.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape are mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist further urbanisation, particularly in the less settled landscape in the north. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

LCA A3: Pant River Valley

Location and summary

5.52 This character area is a very narrow undulating and open landscape drained by the River Pant. A highly rural landscape, dominated by arable farmland. Settlement is concentrated in Great Sampford and Little Sampford.

5.53 Located in the east of the district, the area is defined by the extent of the River Pant valley as it cuts through the clayland plateau. The administrative boundary with Braintree district forms the south-eastern boundary, although the landscape character continues across the border.

Figure 5.12: Location of A3 Pant River Valley

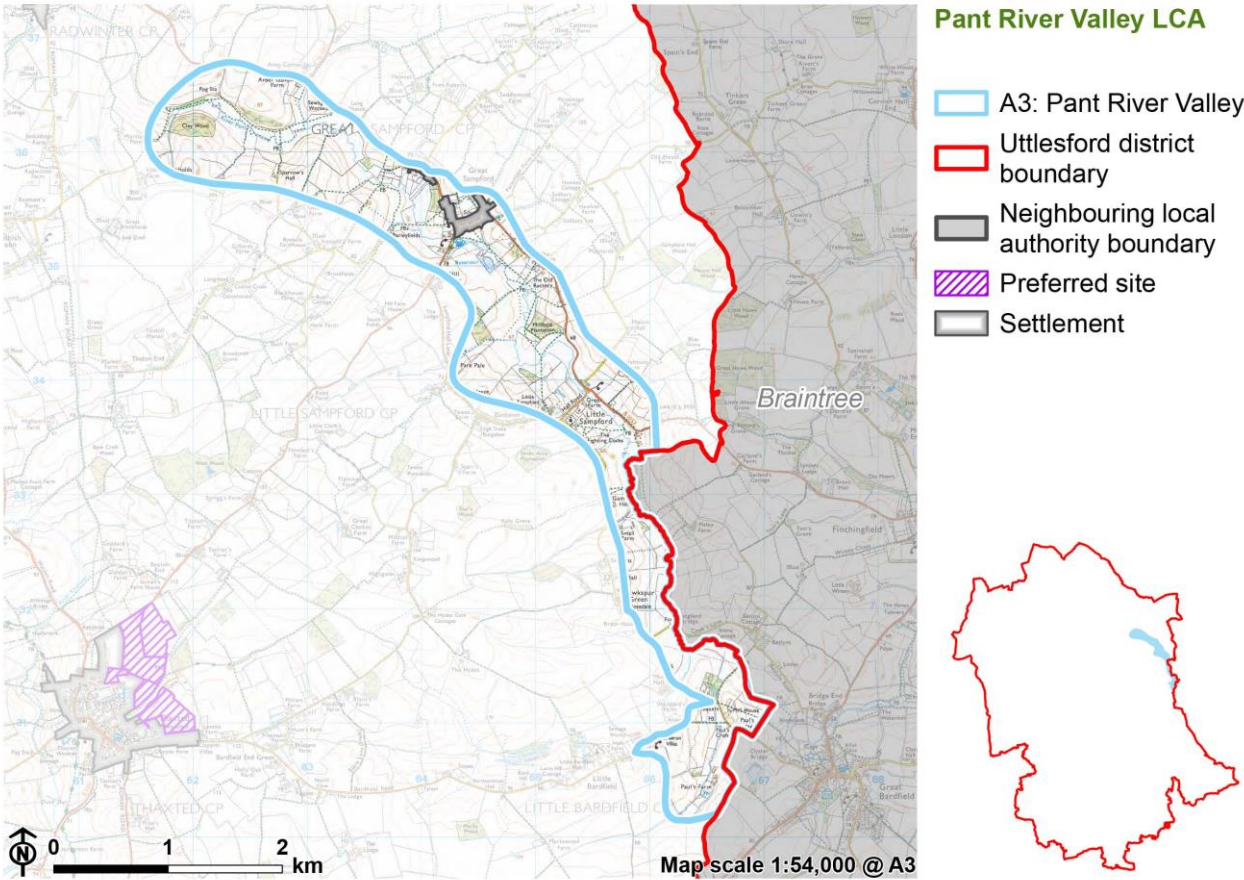


Figure 5.13: Typical view of the LCA: view across the shallow Pant valley with woodlands providing a wooded horizon



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- A shallow, narrow river valley drained by the River Pant, with undulating valley sides.
- The mixed underlying geology gives rise to fertile lime-rich soils.

Land use and field patterns

- A landscape dominated by intensive arable agriculture with pasture fields along the valley floor.
- A medium- to large-scale regular field pattern, resulting from modern amalgamation. Field boundaries are varied, and include low hedges, occasional hedgerow trees and post and wire fencing.

Trees and woodland cover

- An open landscape, where tree cover is limited to riparian vegetation along the river channels, and small woodland copses.

LCT A: River Valleys

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Small copses of deciduous woodland provide some variety within the intensively farmed landscape. The ancient woodland at Clay Wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.

Historic landscape character

- The historic field pattern of pre-18th century irregular fields is still evident, although there has been considerable modern amalgamation.
- Great Sampford has a cluster of listed buildings, reflected in its designation as a Conservation Area. Historic farmsteads and farm buildings (often listed) are scattered across the landscape.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Settlement is concentrated on the valley sides at Great Sampford and Little Sampford. Small farmsteads are located on higher ground, along the B1053.
- Road access is limited, especially in the north. A network of public footpaths crosses the valley, connecting to the surrounding farmland plateau.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Open views across the gently meandering valley contrast with enclosed views along the valley floor.
- A very rural area, with strong sense of tranquillity and a good experience of dark night skies.
- Pylon routes in the south are intrusive features in an otherwise rural landscape.

Landscape character description

Natural influence

5.54 A shallow river valley with an undulating landform. Valley slopes rise from the valley floor at around 60 metres AOD to the highest point at 100 metres AOD near Clay Wood. The river flows south-east from Clay Wood, winding through the villages of Great Sampford and Little Sampford towards Great Bardfield (within Braintree District).

5.55 The character area has a mixed underlying geology and marks the transition between Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation in the north, and clays of the Thanet Formation and Lambeth Group in the south. It is overlain by Alluvium and glaciofluvial deposits along the river course, and glacial till on the valley slopes. The resulting soils are freely draining lime-rich soils. These soils are generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) and Grade 3 (good) agricultural land.

5.56 Due to the fertile soils, the valley sides are mostly in arable cultivation. The field pattern is medium- to large-scale, and regular in shape, bounded by hedges and occasional hedgerow trees. There has been some fragmentation of hedgerows, and in places these have been reinforced by post and rail or post and wire fencing. Pasture is found along the river corridor, with cattle present, creating a bucolic character.

5.57 The farmed landscape is open with limited woodland cover. This is concentrated along the River Pant, with small blocks of priority habitat deciduous woodlands on the valley sides. Ancient woodland is recorded at Clay Wood, the largest woodland block in the area, which is designated as LWS.

LCT A: River Valleys

Cultural influences

5.58 The field pattern is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older. There was some post-1950s field loss, with an amalgamation of small fields in order to provide larger units, however, the overall grain of the landscape remains largely unchanged.

5.59 Small historic settlements are located along the valley sides of the River Pant. Great Sampford is the larger of the two villages, located on the eastern slope. Great Sampford and Little Sampford feature clusters of listed buildings and the former has is designated Conservation Area.

5.60 Outside of the main settlements, isolated farmsteads and halls are dispersed over the rolling farmland. Locally distinctive building styles and material including timber framed building with colour-washed walls and thatched roofs creates a strong local vernacular. Brick and flint walls are also common.

5.61 The B1053 provides roughly north-south access along the eastern valley slopes. A handful of smaller narrow roads provide access to the south of the area, many designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values.

5.62 A network of footpaths crosses the area providing recreational access to the landscape and the riverside.

Views and perceptual influences

5.63 This is an undulating shallow valley landscape, with open views across the valley from the valley sides. Woodland in the surrounding plateau landscapes provides a wooded horizon to many views. Hedge banks or grass banks line the roads, providing some open views.

LCT A: River Valleys

5.64 The River Pant valley narrows at Little Sampford, and the river is fringed mainly by marginal plants and in-channel plants, and riparian vegetation. This results in enclosed views on the valley floor. The narrow river corridor is not obvious in the wider landscape.

5.65 Limited access by road, and distance from large settlements results in a strongly rural landscape. Traffic noise on the B1053 and B1051 locally impacts on an otherwise tranquil landscape. There is a good experience of dark night skies.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.66 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Small-scale semi-natural and ancient woodland scattered across the farmed landscape.
- Sense of historic integrity resulting from a dispersed settlement pattern of traditional villages.
- Open views across the narrow valley, and views to the undulating valley sides from adjacent landscapes.
- The wooded skyline in views from the valley slopes.
- A tranquil, rural landscape with a high degree of tranquillity and dark night skies.

Figure 5.14: Small-scale pasture fields adjacent to the river



Figure 5.15: Historic village at Great Sampford



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of field boundaries, hedgerows and tree cover.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Pollution of the River Pant from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on minor roads impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Potential pressure for new residential development at Great Sampford and Little Sampford.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on higher ground, both within and adjacent to this LCA, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The river valley landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Pant River Valley LCA is to enhance the rural, tranquil character of the farmed landscape with its historic villages and narrow lanes. Seek to conserve cross-valley views and strengthen the landscape pattern by conserving semi-natural habitats, including riverside wetlands and hedgerows.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve ancient and semi-natural woodland, grasslands and wetland habitats.
- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highway works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, including within the Great Sampford Conservation Area.
- Conserve cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with any new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Encourage regeneration of woodlands; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Pant, including pasture and off-stream wetlands.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and expansion or new woodland creation where appropriate to landscape character. Use climate-hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance connections between existing woodlands to increase habitat connectivity and enhance landscape character.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale, respecting the historic settlement pattern of Great and Little Sampford, and traditional vernacular.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Consider the introduction of reduced lighting on the B1051 and B1053 roads to reduce impacts on the rural character of the landscape.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist further urbanisation, particularly in the unsettled landscape to the north. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

LCA A4: Upper Chelmer River Valley

Location and summary

5.67 This character area consists of the narrow valley of the River Chelmer and its tributaries, including the Stebbing Brook. The rural landscape is dominated by arable farmland. Settlement and infrastructure are concentrated in the south, centred around Great Dunmow, which is excluded from the assessment as a larger urban area.

5.68 Located in the south of the district, the LCA is defined by the extent of the Upper Chelmer river valley as it cuts through the surrounding clayland plateau. The river valley continues into Chelmsford district to the south.

Figure 5.16: Location of A4 Upper Chelmer River Valley

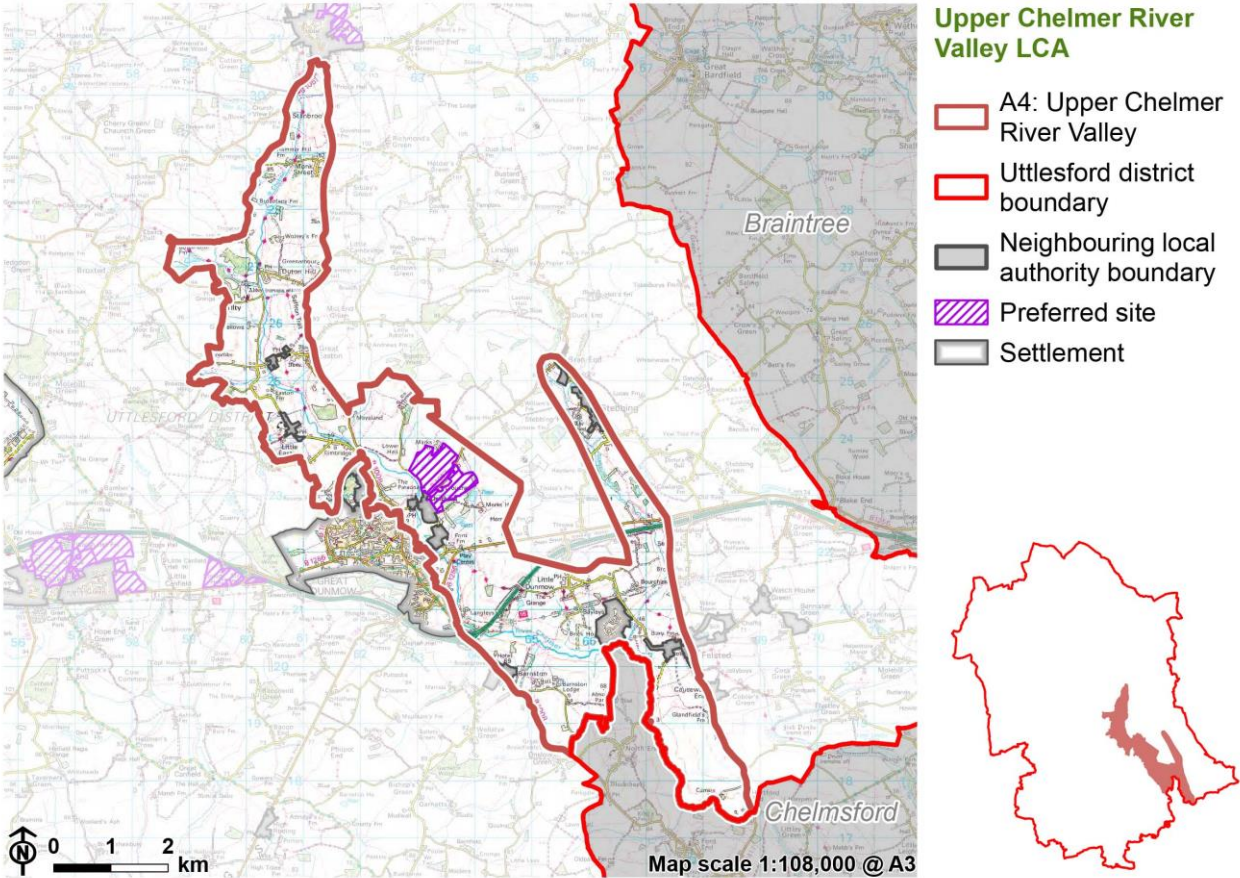


Figure 5.17: Typical view of the LCA: Gently undulating arable fields with small woodlands



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- A narrow valley, drained by the meandering upper course of the River Chelmer with a side valley formed by its tributary the Stebbing Brook.
- The landform is gently undulating, with gently sloping river valley slopes.
- The underlying boulder clay bedrock overlain with glacial till gives rise to fertile loamy soils.

Land use and field patterns

- A landscape dominated by arable farmland on the valley sides, with rough pasture and wet meadows on the narrow floodplain, and pasture on settlement edges.
- A large-scale, regular field pattern. Fields are enclosed by thick low hedgerows, sometimes fragmented, with hedgerow trees.

LCT A: River Valleys

Trees and woodland cover

- Limited woodland cover, with wet woodlands and riverside trees lining the valley floor, with smaller areas of woodland on the valley sides, some of ancient origin.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Small areas of deciduous woodland, grassland and wetland provide variety within the valley landscape, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- Historic field patterns include enclosed meadow pastures on the river valley floodplain, and pre-18th century irregular fields on the valley slopes.
- Moated sites, motte castles and halls with parklands, and historic farmsteads are found across the landscape. Second World War pillboxes are distinctive features.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Settlement is concentrated at Great Dunmow (outside the LCA) and Little Dunmow, with small historic linear settlements located high on the valley sides.
- Busy roads, including the A120, extend from Great Dunmow. Most roads run along the top of the valley sides, with a few narrow lanes crossing the river to connect the settlements.
- A good network of footpaths including the promoted routes Saffron Trail and Harcamlow Way.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Open views from the valley sides, framed by small woodlands, contrast with enclosed and framed views along the valley floor. Church towers and spires form local landmarks.
- The landscape has a rural character, with good level of tranquillity in the north, away from Great Dunmow and the A120.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Aeroplanes taking off from Stansted Airport are a frequent feature in views.
- The water courses are generally hidden from view by vegetation, and are not obvious within the landscape.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.69 The narrow valley of the River Chelmer and its tributaries, including a side valley formed by the Stebbing Brook, sits within the surrounding boulder clay plateau. The shallow valley sides have a gently undulating landform, ranging from 45 metres AOD to 100 metres AOD. The bedrock of boulder clay (London Clay Formation) is overlain by glacial till deposits and alluvium, Head, sands and gravels. The resulting soil is freely draining, slightly acidic and loamy, and is classified as Grade 2 (very good) and Grade 3 (moderate) agricultural land.

5.70 Due to the fertile soils, the valley sides are dominated by arable cultivation, in large regular-shaped fields. Along the small floodplain fields are smaller, with areas of rough pasture and wet meadow, and some smaller pasture fields to the west of the river. Areas of pasture are also found near to the smaller settlements. Fields are bounded by thick, low hedgerows and scattered hedgerow trees, although hedgerows are often fragmented.

5.71 The valley sides have an open character with only occasional small woodlands. The valley floor is more enclosed with many riverside and hedgerow trees, and a string of small wet woodlands. Many of these woodlands are recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodlands, and a few are of ancient origin. Small areas of priority habitat include floodplain grazing marsh along the river corridor, and good quality semi-improved grassland at Tilty. Many of the woodlands and unimproved grasslands are locally designated as LWS. The former railway line Flich Way is designated as LNR for its unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats.

LCT A: River Valleys

Cultural influences

5.72 Historic land use is evidenced by the extensive enclosed meadow pastures along the river valley floodplains and pre-18th century generally irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older.

5.73 The original medieval pattern of dispersed settlements and scattered farmsteads largely survives, with isolated farms, moated sites, and small hamlets strung out along linear greens. The majority of settlements are situated high on the valley sides with limited modern development and clusters of listed buildings. This is reflected in their designation as Conservation Areas, including Church End, Great Easton, Little Dunmow and Stebbing.

5.74 Great Dunmow sits immediately outside the LCA, and is an exception to the settlement pattern as it sits on the lower western slopes of the river valley. The open character of Parsonage Downs provides a rural setting to the historic settlement edge of Great Dunmow. The settlement edge of Great Dunmow has expanded in the 20th century, particularly to the south and around Church End to the east of the river, exerting an urban influence on the valley in this location. The 21st century development at Flich Green is also a modern addition to the landscape.

5.75 There is a strong local vernacular of timber-framed buildings with bright colour washed walls and thatched roofs. Pargetting, applying decorative render to buildings, is also a common feature, and is particularly associated with Essex and Suffolk. Examples of such houses include a group of 17th century timber-framed houses clustered around the Manor in Little Easton.

5.76 Time depth within the landscape is also provided by medieval motte castles at Great Easton and Stebbing, which were probably built during 'The Anarchy' civil war between 1139-44 and are visible landmarks. The river valley provides a setting to a number of small historic parklands associated with small halls and moated sites (such as Barnson Hall and Lodge, Liberty Hall, Chatham Hall). More recently, a GHQ defence line of pillboxes were built during the Second World War as a stop line against potential invasion. In Uttlesford this

LCT A: River Valleys

ran from Saffron Walden to Little Dunmow. Many of the pillboxes are still visible in the landscape, although in various states of disrepair.

5.77 The river valley is lined by roads running parallel to the valley along the top of the valley sides. There are also a few small narrow lanes that cross the river before joining the road on the opposite valley side. Many of these lanes are designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values. These contrast with the busy dual carriageway of the A120 which cuts through the south of the area.

5.78 A comprehensive network of public rights of way and narrow lanes winds through the landscape, providing recreational access. Promoted trails include the Saffron Trail, Harcamlow Way and Flich Way Country Park, a former railway line. There is only limited access to the River Chelmer and Stebbing Brook, although a footpath follows the course of the Chelmer in the south.

Views and perceptual influences

5.79 The valley floor has an enclosed character with restricted views often framed by the many riverside and hedgerow trees, wet woodlands. In contrast, the undulating valley sides have a more open character, with views both across the valley and down to the valley floodplain. Woodlands both within the LCA and beyond form a wooded horizon in views from the area.

5.80 The area provides a rural setting to the small villages, and the adjacent market towns of Thaxted and Great Dunmow. Local church towers and spires form landmarks within views into and across the valley slopes.

5.81 A rural landscape with an overall good sense of tranquillity and experience of dark night skies, especially in the northern upper reaches of the Chelmer and Stebbing Brook. There is more evidence of human activities in the south, due to the suburban influence of Great Dunmow, modern settlement at Flich Green, the busy A120 and proximity to Stansted Airport. Views of aeroplanes taking off

LCT A: River Valleys

from the airport are a frequent feature in views, although there is limited audible intrusion.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.82 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Dense riverside trees and small wet woodlands on the valley floor and small woodlands on the sloping valley sides.
- Pattern of arable fields on the valley sides and rough pasture and wet meadows on the valley floor, bounded by mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Surviving medieval settlement pattern of dispersed linear villages , isolated farms, moated sites and halls with historic parklands.
- Distinctive local vernacular of timber-framed buildings, with bright colour-washed walls with pargetting, and thatched roofs.
- Small, local winding roads provide crossing points over the river.
- Open and framed cross-valley views, often with a wooded horizon, contrast with the enclosed character along the river corridor.

Figure 5.18: River Chelmer crossed by a narrow road at Follymill



Figure 5.19: Parkland character around Barnston Hall



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, including hedgerows, hedgerow trees, woodlands and wetlands along the River Chelmer and Stebbing Brook.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further expansion of intensive agricultural practices.
- Potential for pollution of the River Chelmer from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley side and adjacent farmland plateau.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of village settlements onto the higher valley slopes which may be detrimental to landscape character and conspicuous on the skyline.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, especially east of Great Dunmow, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
- Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
- Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
- Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.
- An increase in storm damage could affect veteran and mature trees, particularly within designed landscapes.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Upper Chelmer River Valley LCA is to conserve and enhance the rural character of the farmed area with its historic villages. Seek to conserve inter-valley and cross-valley views and enhance the wetland, woodland and grassland habitats through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands, copses and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, including within Church End, Great Easton, Little Dunmow and Stebbing Conservation Areas.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the moats and halls) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape in the north, away from Great Dunmow and A120.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Chelmer and Stebbing Brook, including marshland, pasture and off-stream wetlands.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.

Plan

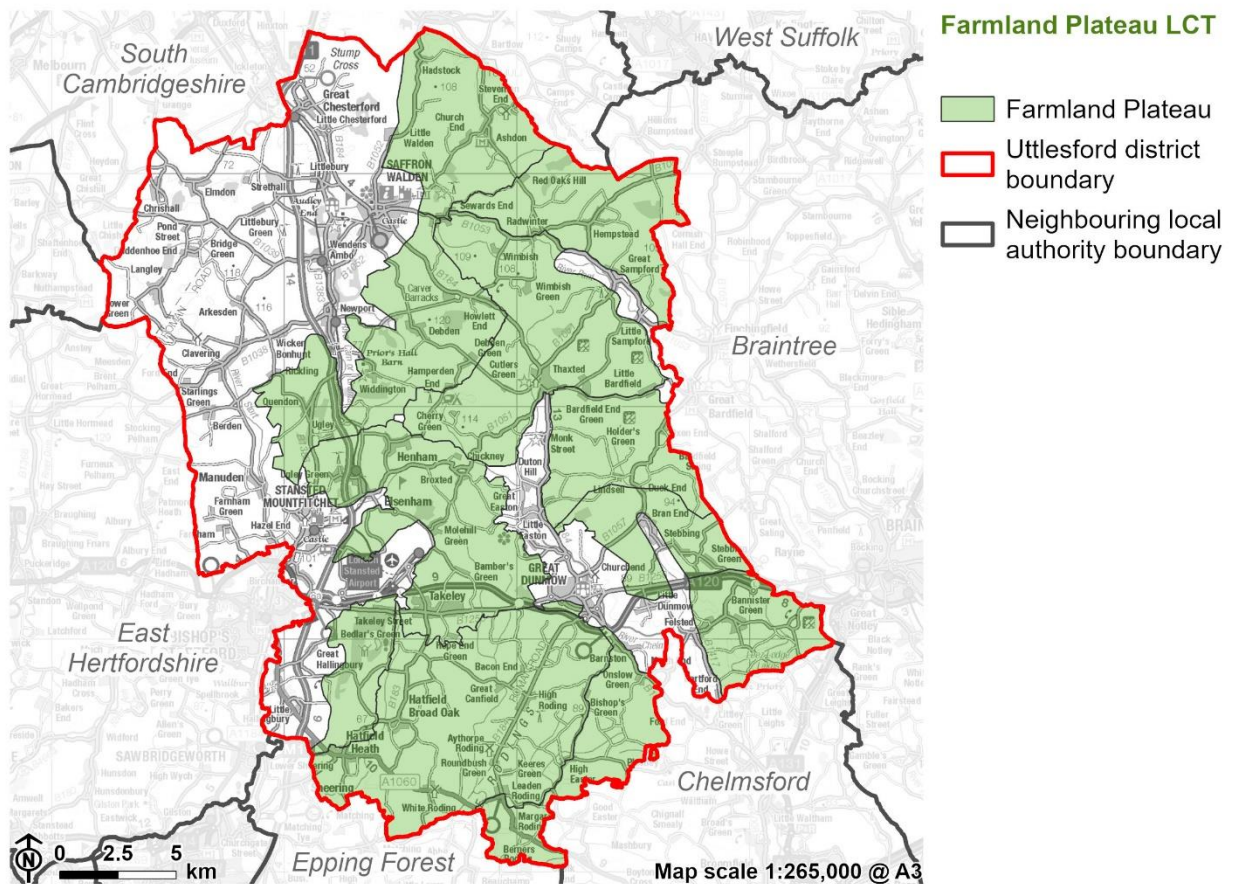
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by a programme to create new hedgerows, grasslands and wetlands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian woodland and other wetland habitats along the River Chelmer and its tributaries to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character and nature recovery networks.

LCT A: River Valleys

- Plan tree planting and expansion or new woodland creation where appropriate to landscape character. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale and respects the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional vernacular. Ensure that development is well integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimise visual impact.
- Plan for future development on settlement edges, particularly Great Dunmow. Any new development should incorporate green and blue infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Consider the introduction of reduced lighting on the A120 to reduce impacts on the dark night skies of the landscape.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist further urbanisation particularly in the more remote small hamlets. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

Landscape Character Type B: Farmland Plateau

Figure 5.20: Location of LCT B Farmland Plateaus



5.83 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type (LCT) are:

- Elevated gently rolling boulder clay/chalky till plateau landscape, incised by river valleys.
- Medium- to large-scale enclosed predominantly arable fields.
- Well wooded in places, with several areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland.
- Network of winding lanes and minor roads.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Long distance views across valleys, with generally wooded horizons.

5.84 The following Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are located within the Farmland Plateau LCT:

- B1 Ashdon Farmland Plateau
- B2 Hempstead Farmland Plateau
- B3 Debden Farmland Plateau
- B4 Thaxted Farmland Plateau
- B5 Broxton Farmland Plateau
- B6 Lindsell Farmland Plateau
- B7 Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau
- B8 Stebbing Green Farmland Plateau
- B9 Roding Farmland Plateau
- B10 Barnston Farmland Plateau
- B11 Felsted Farmland Plateau

LCA B1: Ashdon Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.85 This character area encompasses gently undulating farmland rising to an open plateau which is dissected by small streams in wooded valleys. The River Bourn flows through the east of the character area. It is a landscape of large-scale arable farming.

5.86 The LCA is located in the north of the district, and the boundaries are defined by the Cam River Valley (LCA A1) to the west and south-west. The administrative boundary shared with South Cambridgeshire defines the boundaries to the north and east, although the landscape character continues across the district boundary.

Figure 5.21: Location of B1 Ashdon Farmland Plateau

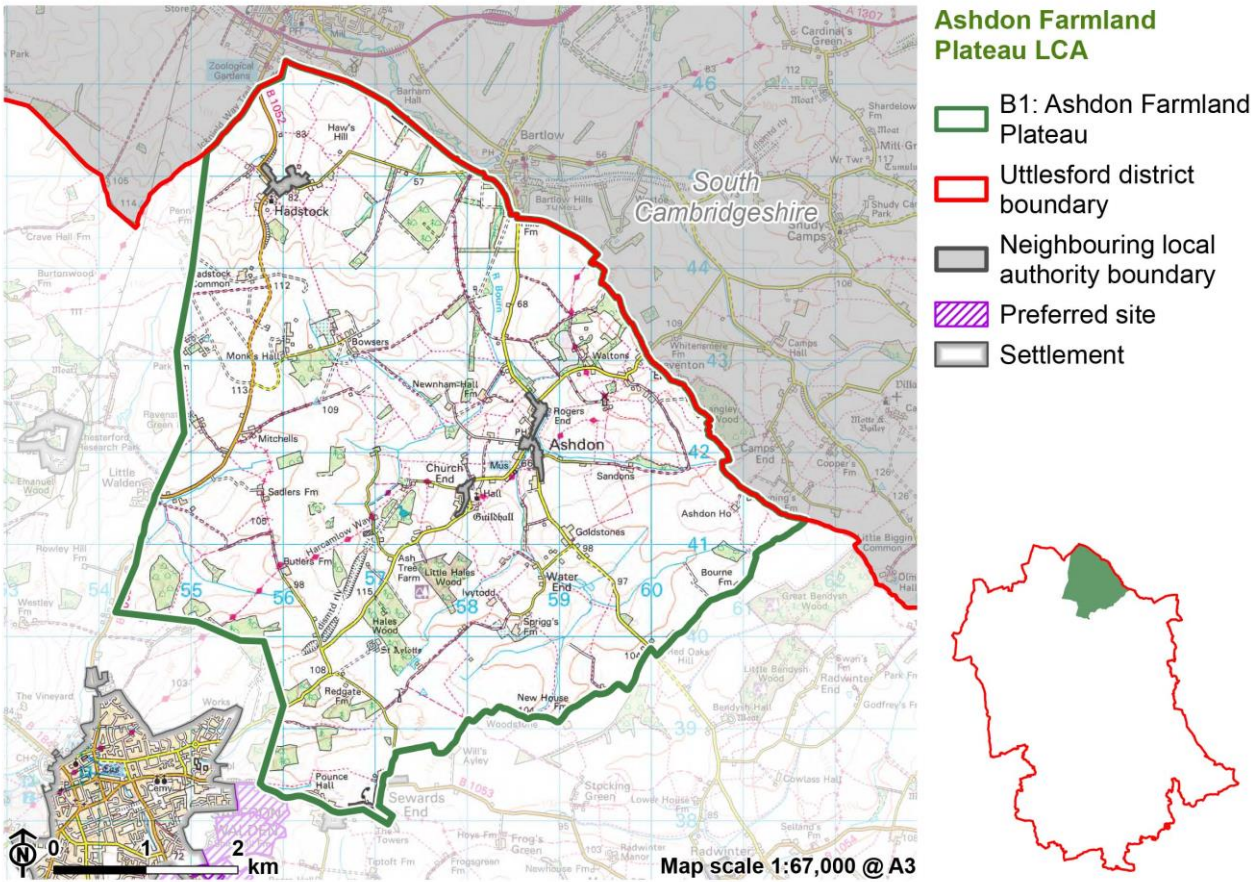


Figure 5.22: Typical view of the LCA: Arable fields, small lanes and tree cover at lower elevations



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently undulating open plateau with broad, flat ridges on the high ground.
- The plateau is dissected by small stream valleys. The River Bourn flows through the east.
- Chalk and clay bedrock is overlain by glacial till to produce very fertile soils.

Land use and field patterns

- Widespread, intensive arable agriculture within large-scale irregular fields which follow topography. Occasional sheep grazing in smaller-scale fields.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Field boundary hedges have been lost or degraded due to intensive agriculture.

Trees and woodland cover

- Tree cover is mainly deciduous, with lush wooded areas concentrated in the valleys as well as remnant areas of ancient woodland.
- Many strong hedgerows and verges are well maintained.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- An intensively managed agricultural landscape with scattered deciduous and mixed deciduous and conifer woodlands, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- Historic field pattern of pre-18th century irregular fields. Common fields of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type are also found.
- Dispersed settlement pattern comprising church/hall complexes and isolated farm and hamlets with a wealth of historic buildings.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Few settlements, with scattered farmsteads, hamlets and two larger villages. Some recent residential development between Church End and Ashdon.
- Roads and lanes are rarely straight, and often bounded by grass margins and verges, particularly at higher elevations. Road access is fairly limited through centre of the LCA.
- A network of PRowWs, particularly around settlement areas, as well as sections of the Harcamlow Way and the ancient Icknield Way.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Wide, often panoramic views to open skylines on the upland plateau contrast with the enclosed character of the wooded valley bottoms.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Wooded horizons and framed views formed by a combination of scattered woodland blocks and hedgerows.
- Views to wind turbines at Hildersham in Cambridgeshire.
- A strong sense of rural tranquillity away from busy local roads.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.87 This undulating landform rises to a broad, open plateau dissected by small streams and valleys between 50 metres AOD and 120 metres AOD. The underlying geology is comprised of chalk, mudstone and flint from the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation, which is overlain by extensive sheets of the Lowestoft Formation chalky till with sands and gravels, silts and clays. The resulting soil is lime-rich, loamy and clayey and is generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land. Alluvium and river terrace deposits are associated with the River Bourn which flows through the east of the character area from south of Church End towards Bartlow.

5.88 The upland landscape is dominated by large-scale intensive arable agriculture. The clay soils of this area have been worked for centuries – the field pattern is irregular, and the field scale varies from medium to large. Hedgerows and verges are often well maintained, although there has been past loss of hedgerows due to field amalgamation and some degraded hedges on field boundaries. Sheep grazing features in some of the smaller-scale fields.

5.89 A relatively well wooded area, with enclosed, wooded areas predominantly located in the valley bottoms, and small patches of ancient woodland. Tree cover is mainly deciduous, with blocks of trees and hedgerows at these lower elevations framing views. These wooded areas provide variety across the farmland.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.90 Despite the dominance of intensive farmland, the character area also features small areas of nature conservation value. Priority habitats include deciduous woodland, traditional orchard, and grasslands. Nunn Wood, Hales and Shadwell Woods, and Langley Wood area all designated SSSIs comprising a variety of ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats. Harrison Sayer Reserve, Ashdon Waltons Park and Burnt House Meadow are all semi-natural grassland habitats which are designated LWS.

Cultural influences

5.91 Evidence of historic land use within the character area is dominated by a mixture of pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and former common fields, of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type (that is rare in the rest of Essex). These were usually enclosed in the 18th century by piecemeal agreement.

5.92 Historically settlement was very dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farms or small hamlets strung out along the roads or roadside greens. This area is characterised by the absence of towns – settlement is concentrated in the villages of Ashdon and Hadstock, access to which is via the only two main roads in the area. Both settlements are historic and set along village greens, with many listed buildings. Ashdon has a particularly fine historic timber-framed Guildhall, and both villages have notable ancient churches.

5.93 There is a rich heritage of vernacular buildings visible in many shades of colour-washed plaster, or of mellow red brick or flintwork. Black weatherboard or red brick barns are also a feature of the farmsteads in the area.

5.94 Other settlement is either in the form of small hamlets or scattered farmsteads; access to these is via winding lanes and tracks. Modern residential development is under construction between Church End and Ashdon.

5.95 A complex footpath network criss-crosses the landscape, and includes the ancient Icknield Way and promoted Harcamlow Way. Rights of way are more

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

numerous around settlement areas such as Ashdon, Church End and Hadstock. The character area features many historic lanes with unimproved verges, some of which are protected, such as Radwinter Road and Redgates Lane. Willis Ayley Lane and New House Lane are also protected and demarcate part of the character area's southern boundary.

Views and perceptual influences

5.96 This is a rolling landscape with lush, wooded valleys and less wooded higher ground. It is characterised by open skies with hedgerows and scattered blocks of woodland knitting together to form wooded horizons. Wide, panoramic views are afforded from the relatively flat, high plateau, including to Saffron Walden and to Linton; which contrast with the enclosed nature of wooded areas in valley bottoms. Views to wind turbines at Hildersham in Cambridge are available from higher elevations in the north. Views are often funnelled by minor roads and winding or sunken lanes.

5.97 Scattered farmsteads and historic buildings are the built features most commonly in views. Telegraph poles are the landmarks on the horizons here, with the occasional church or water tower visible in the distance.

5.98 Overall, this is an ancient landscape with subtle qualities and a good variety to the countryside. The changing texture of this landscape is visible in the contrasts of its verges, fields, trees and hedges, as well as in the diversity of materials and colour of its buildings. The winding country roads, lack of settlement, wealth of historic buildings, topography-sensitive field patterns, and enclosed areas of woodland accrue to an area with a strong sense of place and tranquillity, particularly away from the busier roads.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.99 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Enclosed, wooded areas within the valley bottom and strong hedgerows along field boundaries.
- Important wildlife habitats including ancient woodland and semi-natural grasslands.
- Open nature of the skyline on the ridge tops and panoramic views to and from Saffron Walden and Linton.
- Strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a wealth of historic buildings and a historic settlement pattern comprising dispersed hamlets, which are connected by winding lanes.
- Overall sense of tranquillity and rurality.

Figure 5.23: Church End, Ashdon set along a small linear green



Figure 5.24: Arable fields bound by hedgerows and mature trees



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the River Bourn from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure along the winding lanes, which may result in perceived coalescence between hamlets and villages.
- Development pressure on the edge of Saffron Walden to the south-west, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for new development within Cambridgeshire to the north which would be visually intrusive to views within this character area.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
- Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
- Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Ashdon Farmland Plateau LCA is to enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed, sparsely settled area with its winding lanes. Seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the farmsteads and ancient churches) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Hales Wood, Nunn Wood and Shadwell Wood; promote natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Bourn, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland such as Ashdon Meadow.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic along the rural roads, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, to augment the wooded valleys and in small blocks. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian woodlands and other wetland habitats along the River Bourn, to form green corridors to contribute to green and blue infrastructure, landscape character and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale and respects the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional vernacular. Ensure that development is well integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimise visual impact.
- Plan to incorporate green and infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B2: Hempstead Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.100 This character area comprises rolling claylands transected by small streams and their associated valleys. A farmed landscape of medium-scale arable fields interspersed with woodland copses and settlement in the valleys.

5.101 The area is located in the north-east of the district, and its boundaries are defined by the change in landscape character marked by the Pant River Valley (LCA A3) to the south. The landscape character continues across the administrative boundary with Braintree district to the east and north.

Figure 5.25: Location of B2 Hempstead Farmland Plateau

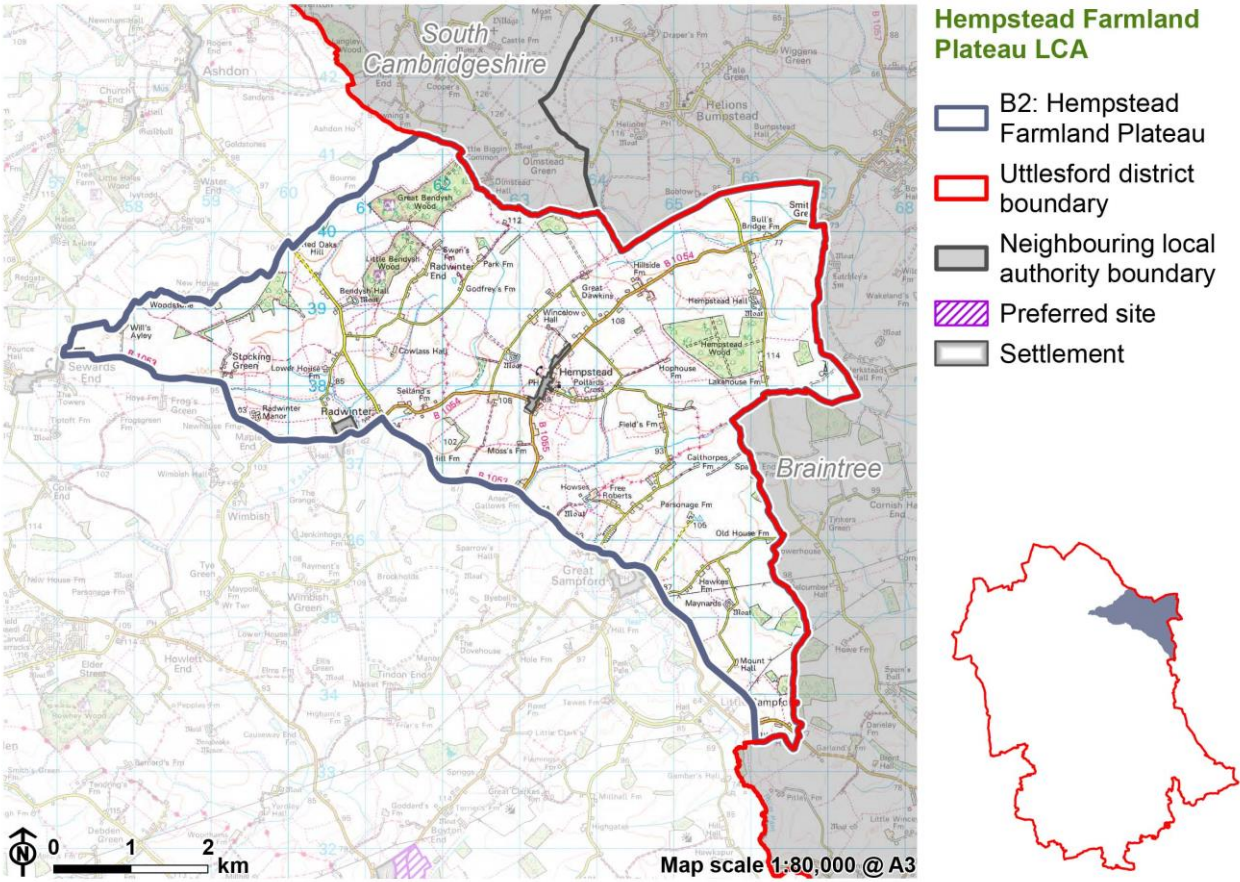


Figure 5.26: Typical view of the LCA: Medium-scale arable agriculture with wooded horizon.



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Rolling hills surrounding gently sloping stream valleys which become steeper around Hempstead and flatter in the north.
- Chalk bedrock is overlain by glacial till, resulting in fertile soils.

Land use and field patterns

- Medium-scale arable fields which become smaller closer to settlements. Small areas of horse pasture in proximity to farmsteads.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Field boundaries often delineated by low, well-maintained hedges or tree belts. Reestablishment of hedgerows is evident in the east.

Trees and woodland cover

- Mixed and deciduous woodland blocks are scattered across the area, often irregular in shape.
- Woodlands are often located close to roads and buildings, and small copses occasionally punctuate the fields.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Semi-natural habitats include deciduous woodlands, often ancient in origin, traditional orchards and semi-improved grasslands in the valleys, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- Historic field pattern of pre-18th century irregular fields, some returning to pre-enclosure size through post 1950s boundary loss.
- Historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and scattered farmsteads.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Small linear settlements are located in the valleys and characterised by colourful vernacular buildings.
- Some large farm sheds near to the isolated farmsteads.
- Network of quiet, comparatively straight, rural lanes and public rights of way, some more enclosed by trees and others more open at higher elevations.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Tree belts combine with woodlands to create a sense of enclosure and wooded horizons.
- Electricity pylons are a distinctive part of views in the south.

- Overall strong sense of tranquillity and sense of place.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.102 Rolling hills and valleys and their associated small streams rise from 80 metres AOD to 120 metres AOD. The topography is steepest around Hempstead and becomes flatter in the north of the character area. The underlying geology is comprised of the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation's bedrock of chalk, mudstone and flint which is overlain Lowestoft Formation diamicton – chalky till, sands and gravels, silts and clays. The resulting soil is lime-rich, loamy and clayey and is generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land. Unnamed tributaries to the River Pant are associated with small areas of alluvial deposits north of Radwinter.

5.103 This area is dominated by widespread, intensive, arable agriculture. The farmland is defined by medium-scale fields, the boundaries of which are generally delineated by low, well-maintained hedges or tree belts. Lengths of hedgerow are being re-established along field boundaries in the east where they had previously been lost. The scale of the fields become smaller in proximity to settlements. There are also some areas of pasture now in use for horses, bounded by post and rail fencing, scattered throughout the area.

5.104 There are greater levels of woodland cover in the north and east of the character area, consisting of large blocks. Woodland is less prevalent in the south and west, where it takes the form of smaller scattered blocks. The woodland is either deciduous or mixed with coniferous trees, irregular in shape, and often proximate to roads and buildings. The woodlands occasionally punctuate fields. Many are classified as LWS. The largest blocks of woodland survive on the higher ground, and are ancient in origin, although many have been replanted including Great Bendysh Wood, Little Bendysh Wood and Hempstead Wood. Traditional

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

orchards are often found near farmsteads. In the valley bottom there are extensive tracts of enclosed meadow and areas of scrub.

Cultural influences

5.105 Evidence of historic land use within the character area is dominated by a mixture of pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and former common fields, usually enclosed in the 18th century by piecemeal agreement. Post-1950s boundary loss in these fields has meant some are being restored to their original dimensions. The historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages focussed on greens and commons, and scattered farmsteads also survives.

5.106 Several small, often linear settlements are located in the valleys such as Hempstead and Stocking Green. Radwinter is a relatively large settlement which is has more nucleated configuration and features a primary school at its centre. There is typically more tree cover in and around settlement areas and the adjacent fields often feature more intact hedgerows – these areas therefore have a greater sense of enclosure. Isolated farmsteads feature across the tops of the rolling hills and feature large farm sheds of corrugated iron or black weatherboarding.

5.107 Variety and interest are provided by the presence of a number of local vernacular buildings with timber frames, colour wash and red tiled roofs. These are often found in the small villages and hamlets or as solitary farmsteads at higher elevations. Listed buildings are scattered throughout the character area and clustered in proximity to Hempstead.

5.108 The road network comprises a number of minor rural lanes, many of which are ancient in origin. Many are designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values, such as Howe Lane, Radwinter Road and Wincelow Hall Road. The roads are straighter than in other character areas. Road boundaries vary, with some enclosed by trees and others more open with wide views, particularly at higher elevations.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.109 A substantial network of PRowS criss-crosses the countryside, particularly in the north and centre. The B1053 is the character area's main arterial road connecting Steeple Bumpstead (within Braintree district) to Radwinter in the west, crossing through Hempstead.

Views and perceptual influences

5.110 This is an undulating landscape with open views afforded at higher elevations and more enclosed views within the valleys and their associated settlements. Tree belts combine with woodland in places to create a greater sense of enclosure and a tree-lined horizon.

5.111 The key landmarks are the churches with towers or spires which feature in views across the valleys. Farmsteads also provide landmarks on the top of the rolling hills. Large electricity pylons are a dominant feature of the skyline in views south.

5.112 There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area, with a network of quiet rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape. The area is generally very peaceful with a greater experience of openness at the higher elevations. There is a good experience of dark night skies across the area.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.113 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Small copses of woodland and low, well-maintained hedges or tree belts.
- Important wildlife habitats including areas of deciduous and ancient woodland, traditional orchard, semi-improved grassland and wetland.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Historic integrity resulting from a historic scattered settlement pattern.
- The open skyline along the rolling hills which offers panoramic views to wooded horizons.
- Overall sense of tranquillity due to small settlements and quiet rural lanes.

Figure 5.27: Electricity pylons visible in long views across arable farmland.



Figure 5.28: Hedgerow regeneration alongside arable fields.



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the River Pant and tributaries from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on the B1055 and B1054 impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Hempstead Farmland Plateau LCA is to enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed, sparsely settled area with its winding lanes. Seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the local vernacular buildings and farmsteads) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, particularly within Hempstead.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Great Bendysh Wood, Little Bendysh Wood and Hempstead Wood; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the unnamed tributaries to the River Pant, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the B1055 and B1054 cross the area, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, including large blocks in the north and east, and smaller blocks in the south and west. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian vegetation and other wetland habitats along the unnamed tributaries to the River Pant, to form green corridors to contribute to green and blue infrastructure, landscape character and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale and respects the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

vernacular. Ensure that development is well integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimise visual impact.

- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B3: Debden Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.114 This character area consists of rolling plateau farmland, with considerable woodland coverage. It lies at the headwaters of the River Cam and is incised by the river valleys of the Cam and Debden Water. The villages of Rickling Green, Widdington and Debden form a string of settlements, situated across the rounded plateau.

5.115 Located in centre of the district, the character area is partially bisected by the Cam River Valley (LCA A1), which also defines the northern boundary. The western boundary is defined by the Stort River Valley (LCA A2).

Figure 5.29: Location of B3 Debden Farmland Plateau

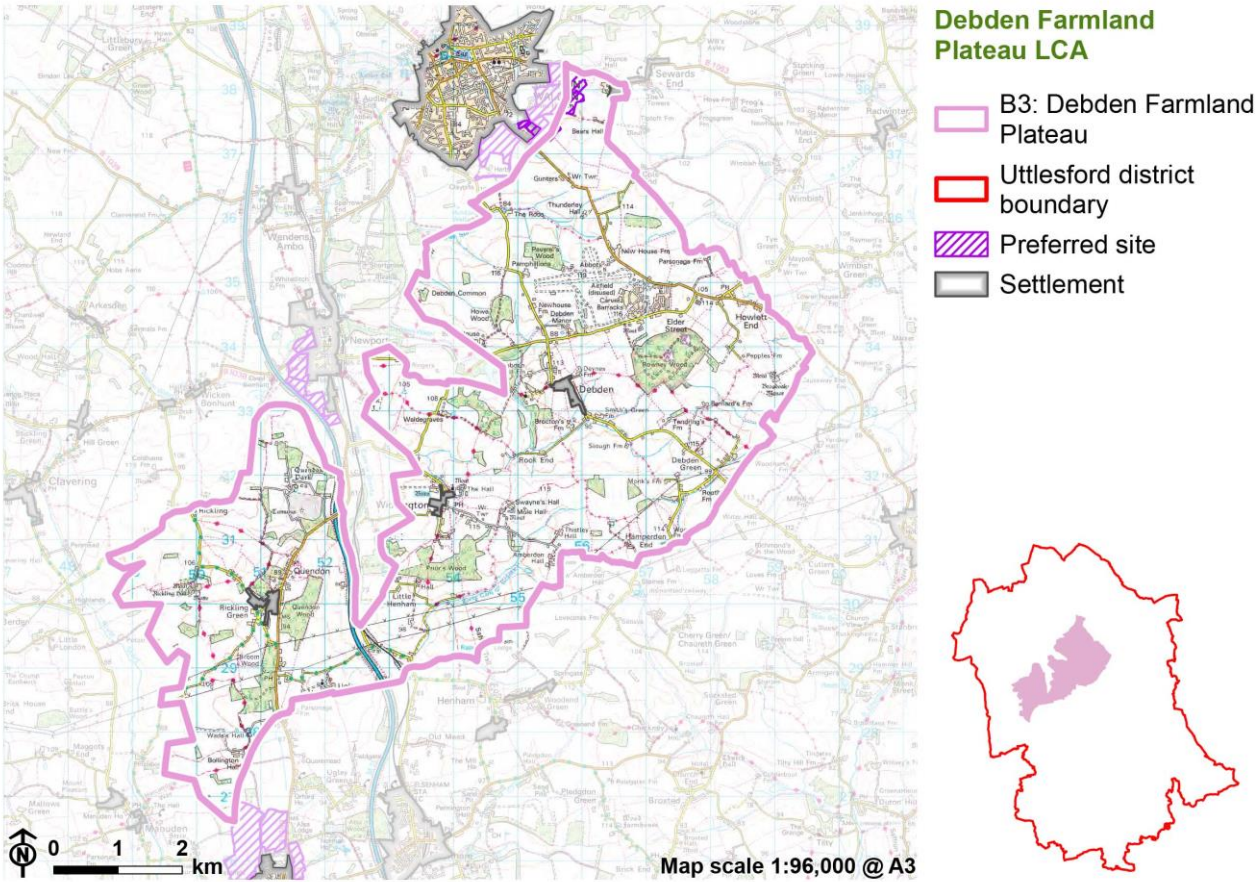


Figure 5.30: Typical view of the LCA: Arable agriculture across gently rolling farmland with large electricity pylons.



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently rolling plateau incised by the river valleys of the Cam, Debden Water, and Chelmer.
- The chalky boulder clay geology results in loamy soils which are well suited to arable farming.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Land use and field patterns

- Medium- to large-scale field pattern supports intensive arable farming. Smaller areas of pasture are found near settlements.
- Irregular field boundaries are often lined by hedgerows which have gaps and feature remnant trees, where they have not been removed entirely.

Trees and woodland cover

- Large blocks of dense woodlands, frequently near settlements or on hilltops and ridgelines, create structure within the landscape.
- Tall trees and overgrown hedgerows line roads and lanes, although agricultural intensification has partially eroded this network.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Deciduous woodland, often of ancient origin, grassland and wetland provide variety within the intensively farmed landscape, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- The historic field pattern is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, although there has been some modern amalgamation.
- Small linear villages with their clusters of listed buildings are designated as Conservation Areas, and with historic parklands at Quendon, Henham and Amberden and Debden, provide time-depth in the landscape.
- Rich cultural heritage of vernacular architecture, often with colour-washed plaster, timber-frames or red brick.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Dispersed settlements, many centred along linear greens, are mostly situated on the plateau. Isolated farmsteads are dispersed along rural lanes.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Carver Barracks at Debden Airfield forms a large open space in the centre of the plateau.
- Sunken, tree-lined lanes twist through the countryside, in contrast to busy roads along the plateau ridges. The M11 passes north-south along the River Cam.
- A network of footpaths including the promoted routes Harcamlow Way and Saffron Trail cross the landscape.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Expansive views on the higher, more exposed plateau, although sometimes interrupted by woodland.
- Electricity pylons are a common feature on the horizon.
- Tranquil away from the M11 in the south and a strong sense of enclosure along the railway line.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.116 This farmed landscape rises from 70 metres AOD within the shallow valleys to 170 metres AOD on the gently rolling plateau. The plateau in the north-east broadens, becoming relatively flat in proximity to the Carver Barracks and Crowney Wood. The landform slopes gently down to the River Cam, which meanders through the centre of the area (from LCA A1 to the north), and its tributary Debden Water which forms a winding finger in the east. The River Chelmer crosses the east of the landscape.

5.117 Located in the southern reaches of the London Clay Formation bedrock of chalky boulder clay and overlain with glacial till, the resulting soil is loamy, with local chalky textures and generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.118 The fertile soils have resulted in a landscape that is intensively farmed, with extensive areas of arable agriculture creating a more open landscape. Pasture fields are found around Ugley, with grazing cattle. The medium- to large-scale field pattern is irregular, with smaller fields close to settlement edges. Field boundaries are typically defined by hedgerows which have gaps and occasional remnant hedgerow trees. In other places the hedgerows appear overgrown and dense.

5.119 The character area is well wooded with dense blocks of priority habitat deciduous woodland scattered throughout, forming visual interest within the arable landscape. Larger remnant blocks of ancient woodland form strong visual features across the gentle slopes, appearing over ridgelines and along smaller waterways.. The prominent woodlands of Rowney Wood, Quendon Woods and Prior's Woods are recorded as ancient woodland and locally designated as LWS.

5.120 In proximity to these areas of woodland, there are smaller areas of scrub and grassland. Some are designated as LWS. Important assemblages of wildflowers and grassland, typical of the once common chalk habitats, can be seen along rural lanes and roadside verges.

Cultural influences

5.121 Historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, although there has been some boundary loss and modern amalgamation. Medieval manor sites are evidence of the long standing agricultural history in the area. Directly north of Debden Manor, the Carver Barracks occupy the former RAF Debden, which was established in 1937 and in use throughout World War II.

5.122 A rural landscape, there are few areas of concentrated settlement. Settlement is typically either clustered at lower elevations and enclosed by the surrounding tree cover or in the form of scattered, isolated farmsteads. Historically settlement was dispersed along rural lanes, with scattered small hamlets. The larger villages of Widdington and Rickling Green have nucleated cores centred around greens, while Quendon, just north of Rickling Green has a historically linear settlement pattern. These historic villages are designated as Conservation Areas.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.123 Within the villages and hamlets are clusters of listed buildings, most commonly Grade II listed cottages. Numerous isolated farmsteads and historic manors, some with moats, are dotted across the landscape. Multiple moated sites are scattered across the landscape and are designated Scheduled Monuments, including Prior's Hall and Widdington Hall moated sites.

5.124 Vernacular buildings within the character area are numerous, typically colour-washed plaster or timbered, thatched roofs, or with flintwork and red brick. Large barns and farm sheds, typically corrugated iron, also feature as part of the farmsteads. New development occasionally follows vernacular fashion, with half-timbered buildings and red brick common building materials. New developments near Elder Street have little commonality with the local vernacular style.

5.125 Small historic parklands are found across the area, including the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Quendon Park, a formal 17th century garden, set within a deer park. Parkland character can also be seen south of Widdington around Henham Hall and Amberden Hall, and at Debden Park.

5.126 The road network is largely rural, with winding lanes connecting the dispersed hamlets and farmsteads. Several of these are partially sunken, and host species-rich grass assemblages in the verges. The M11 cuts through the centre of the landscape, roughly aligning along the path of the River Cam valley. The B1383 is a busy road which branches off the M11 in the west, linking to Stansted Mountfitchet to the south.

5.127 Many footpaths including the promoted route, Harcamlow Way and Saffron Trail, provide a comprehensive network across the area.

Views and perceptual influences

5.128 This is a relatively open and exposed landscape, with large expanses of rolling arable fields and few areas of development. Longer distance views are available from the roads as they drop down into shallow valleys in the landscape where they typically become more enclosed by trees and views are funnelled down

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

their winding course. Views are occasionally interrupted by blocks of woodland or hedgerows, frequently seen along the skyline and along the roads, sometimes knitting together with remnant hedgerow trees to create a wooded horizon.

5.129 Electricity pylons cross east-west through the area and are detracting features in the otherwise rural landscape. Telegraph poles and water towers are occasionally visible over undulating landform, as is the communication tower at Debden Airfield in the east of the area.

5.130 The M11 (in the centre of the area) exerts some auditory influence over the landscape, and traffic noise can be heard from a distance. The B1383 in the west also has some localised impacts on tranquillity, and forms a busy corridor between Newport to the north and Stansted Mountfitchet to the south. Away from these corridors, tranquillity is moderate, and grows stronger in the east. There is good experience of dark skies across the character area, except in proximity to Newport in the north and Debden Airfield in the east.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.131 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- The well-wooded character of the landscape, with dense blocks of woodland, many of ancient origin, and scattered trees within field boundaries.
- Woodland, grassland and wetland habitats scattered across the farmed landscape, including those associated with the Cam, Chelmer and Debden Water.
- Twisting, sometimes tree-lined, lanes, often of ancient origin.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- A sense of historic integrity resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern of traditional villages, often located around greens and several moated halls and parklands.
- The open character of higher areas of the plateau allowing long views across the landscape.

Figure 5.31: Vernacular architecture of thatched roofs and plaster



Figure 5.32: Settlement located around village greens



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the River Cam, River Chelmer and Debdon Water from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of Saffron Walden to the north-west, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Debden Farmland Plateau LCA is to enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed area with its small historic villages linked by winding lanes. Seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the parklands and moated sites) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms set on the higher ground and around village greens.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Rowney Wood, Quendon Woods and Prior's Woods; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Cam, River Chelmer and Debden Water, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the M11 crosses the area, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, in dense blocks of woodland. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian vegetation and other wetland habitats along the River Cam, River Chelmer and Debden Water, to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale and respects the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

vernacular. Ensure that development is well integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimise visual impact.

- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B4: Thaxted Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.132 This character area consists of a rolling farmland plateau incised by the River Pant in the north-east and River Chelmer through the centre. The medieval village of Thaxted forms the largest settlement within the character area, situated along the southern edge.

5.133 The area is located in the north-east of the district, and its boundaries are defined by the change in character to the Pant River Valley (LCA A3) to the east and Upper Chelmer River Valley (A4) to the south.

Figure 5.33: Location of B4 Thaxted Farmland Plateau

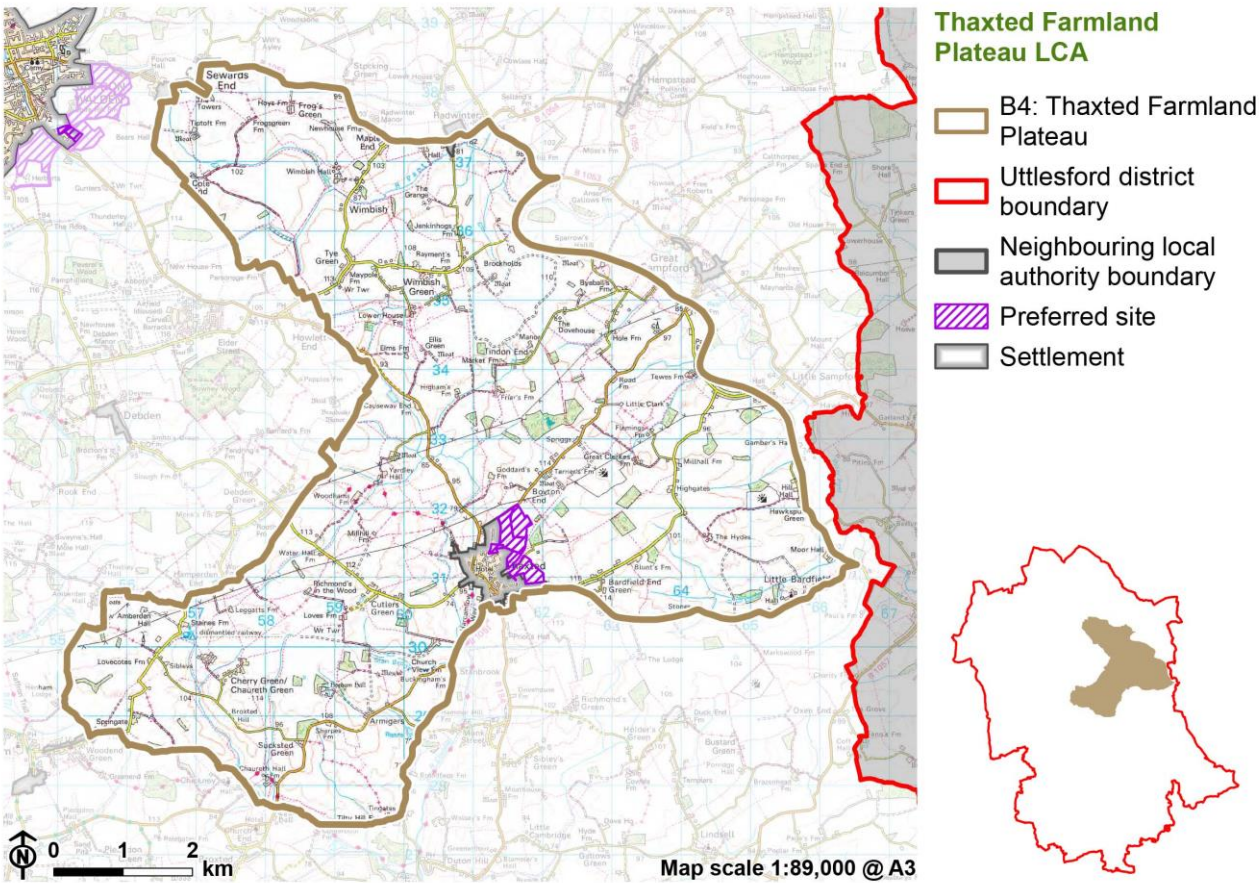


Figure 5.34: Typical view of the LCA: large open arable fields with woodland pockets and electricity pylons



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently rolling plateau incised by the River Chelmer in the centre and south, and the River Pant in the north-east.
- Bedrock transitioning from chalk in the north to clay in the south is overlain with glacial till. This produces fertile soils.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Land use and field patterns

- Intensive arable farmland dominates the plateau. The hedgerow network is somewhat fragmented, although with instances of overgrown hedgerows.
- Field patterns are typically irregular and a mix of medium and large-scale, with some modern amalgamation.

Trees and woodland cover

- Small scattered clumps of deciduous woodland form focal features along field boundaries, interrupting the expanse of arable fields.
- Hedgerow trees are dotted along field boundaries and roadways.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- West Wood is the largest area of woodland in the character area, forming an important nature reserve and SSSI.
- Occasionally mature stretches of hedgerow along rural lanes have remained intact, and are designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- The historic field pattern is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields.
- The medieval market town of Thaxted retains much of its historic core, with a strong vernacular character.
- Numerous historic buildings, including farmsteads and windmills are dotted across the landscape.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Small settlements are dispersed across the plateau, strung along minor, winding roads. Thaxted in the south is the focus for settlement.
- Roads pass roughly north-south through the area, and a sparse network of rural lanes connect the scattered settlements.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- The footpath network is somewhat disjointed. The Harcamlow Way follows along the River Chelmer in the south, connecting through Thaxted.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views are wide-reaching along the higher elevations of the plateau to the wooded horizon.
- Electricity pylons are a prominent feature in views across the valley.
- Flight paths from Stansted Airport impact the overall tranquillity.
- The spire of Thaxted church and windmill are prominent landmarks in views from the surrounding countryside.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.134 A wide and rolling plateau comprised of gentle slopes and a generally flat plateau top. The topography gently undulates between 75 metres AOD along shallow river valleys, rising to 120 metres AOD on the plateau. The River Chelmer forms a riparian corridor in the centre of the character area, near Thaxted. The River Pant and its tributaries pass through the north-east.

5.135 The area is at the geologic transition between the White Chalk subgroup of chalky soils in the north and the Thames Group of silty clays in the south. The area is overlain with glacial till, and areas of gravel and sand along the river valley in the east. The resulting soil is fertile and classified Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land. As a result the landscape is characterised by intensive arable agriculture, particularly across the higher elevations. Fields are typically irregular, and a mix of medium to large-scale, bound by fragmented hedgerows and dotted with hedgerow trees. Sand extraction is a visible land use south-west of Thaxted.

5.136 Small and scattered clumps of woodland form a distant framework across the landscape. Woodlands are more frequent in proximity to settlements. With a variety

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

of woodland habitats, a number of these are of ancient origin, and also designated LWS. West Wood, north of Thaxted, forms the largest block of ancient woodland within the character area, and is designated as a SSSI for its ecological value. Intact hedgerows and grassland verges along ancient lanes also form an important part of the ecological network. Many of these, particularly in proximity to settlement, have protected lane status with occasional LWS designation.

Cultural influences

5.137 Historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields and some older, occasionally interspersed with common fields. However, there has been some boundary loss due to modern amalgamation.

5.138 Situated away from major roads and lacking connections to the railway line, the historic settlement pattern of this character area remains mostly intact. Dispersed hamlets and isolated farmsteads are strung along ancient lanes and centred around linear greens. The medieval market town of Thaxted is the largest settlement in the character area, and has retained its vernacular architecture, including characteristic Essex pargetting, and its abundance of historic buildings. Its Conservation Area centres on Newbiggen Street, with many listed terrace houses, and the Grade I listed Thaxted Guildhall and Church of St John the Baptist. A Roman road runs through the centre of the town (now Monk Street) and continues north through the landscape past Saffron Walden.

5.139 The vernacular style across the character area is most notable within Thaxted, with light colour washed plaster on the terrace houses and thatched and peg-tile roofing. Historic farmsteads and manors are dispersed throughout the character area and are sometimes moated, although these only occur north of Thaxted, as at Great Brockholds farm.

5.140 Modern development has not greatly altered the character of the area. New builds are present at Swards End and on the north-eastern edges of Thaxted. The new developments echo the local vernacular with red brick and half-timbered construction, and are relatively well-integrated into the local landscape. Outside of

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Thaxted, modern development has been limited to individual dwellings set along the rural road network.

5.141 The road network contains numerous ancient and winding lanes, which feed into the larger B-roads connecting north-south. Some of the rural lanes are partially sunken from centuries of use, connecting between historic hamlets and farmsteads. Many of these are also important ecologically, with species-rich verges built up over the years.

Views and perceptual influences

5.142 Views are expansive from the more exposed plateau tops. In distant views, pockets of woodland along ridgelines form a wooded horizon or prominent landscape feature on the valley slopes. Within the river valleys and nearer settlements, woodland and rising slopes interrupt distant views, and result in a more enclosed character.

5.143 The spire of Thaxted church and the windmill are prominent features within the medieval town and immediate context, adding to the historic setting. Telegraph poles and water towers are occasionally visible within the undulating landscape. Electricity pylons cross east-west through the south of the area near Thaxted and are visually dominant in the landscape. A large solar farm lies to the east of Thaxted. However these are the only prominent modern elements in an otherwise rural and undeveloped landscape.

5.144 Tranquillity is high throughout the character area, with traffic noise and congestion in proximity to Thaxted and in the west near Henham. Aircraft noise from flightpaths around Stansted Airport has some impact on the overall tranquillity. The experience of dark skies is good throughout, with some light pollution in proximity to Thaxted.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.145 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Small clumps of ancient and semi-natural woodland, including West Wood, mature hedgerows and scattered trees within field boundaries.
- Twisting, sometimes tree-lined, lanes, often of ancient origin.
- A sense of historic integrity resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern of hamlets located around greens, farmsteads, and several mills.
- The medieval relatively intact village of Thaxted and its wealth of historic buildings and features, which are landmarks in views from the wider countryside.
- The open character of higher areas of the plateau allowing long views across the landscape to wooded horizons.

Figure 5.35: Arable field bounded by mature trees



Figure 5.36: Pale colour washed buildings in Thaxted



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Pollution of the River Pant and River Chelmer from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, especially Thaxted, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to further demand for solar farms and demand for wind turbines either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.

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- Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Thaxted Farmland Plateau LCA is to enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed area with its small historic villages linked by winding lanes. Protect the relatively undeveloped and tranquil character of the area. Seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands such as West Wood.
- Conserve historic lanes with hedgerow trees and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape outside of Thaxted.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the farmsteads and windmills) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of hamlets and farms along ancient lanes and linear greens.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, especially within the Thaxted Conservation Area.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at West Wood; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Pant and River Chelmer, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species, and introducing more hedgerow trees.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the B1051 and B184 cross the area, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, in scattered clumps across the area. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian vegetation and other wetland habitats along the River Pant and River Chelmer, to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Plan for future development on settlement edges, particularly at Thaxted. Any new development should incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.
- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B5: Broxted Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.146 This character area consists of gently undulating plateau farmland, and is bisected by the River Roding.

5.147 Located in the centre of the district, it is defined by its position between the upper Stort and upper Chelmer River Valleys (LCAs A2 and A4). It stretches from Henham and Ugley Greens eastwards to Molehill Green and the rural fringe to the west of Great Dunmow. Great Dunmow and Stansted Airport to the south-west are both excluded from LCA, as large urban areas. The southern limits of the LCA reach Puttock's End, below Takeley.

Figure 5.37: Location of B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau

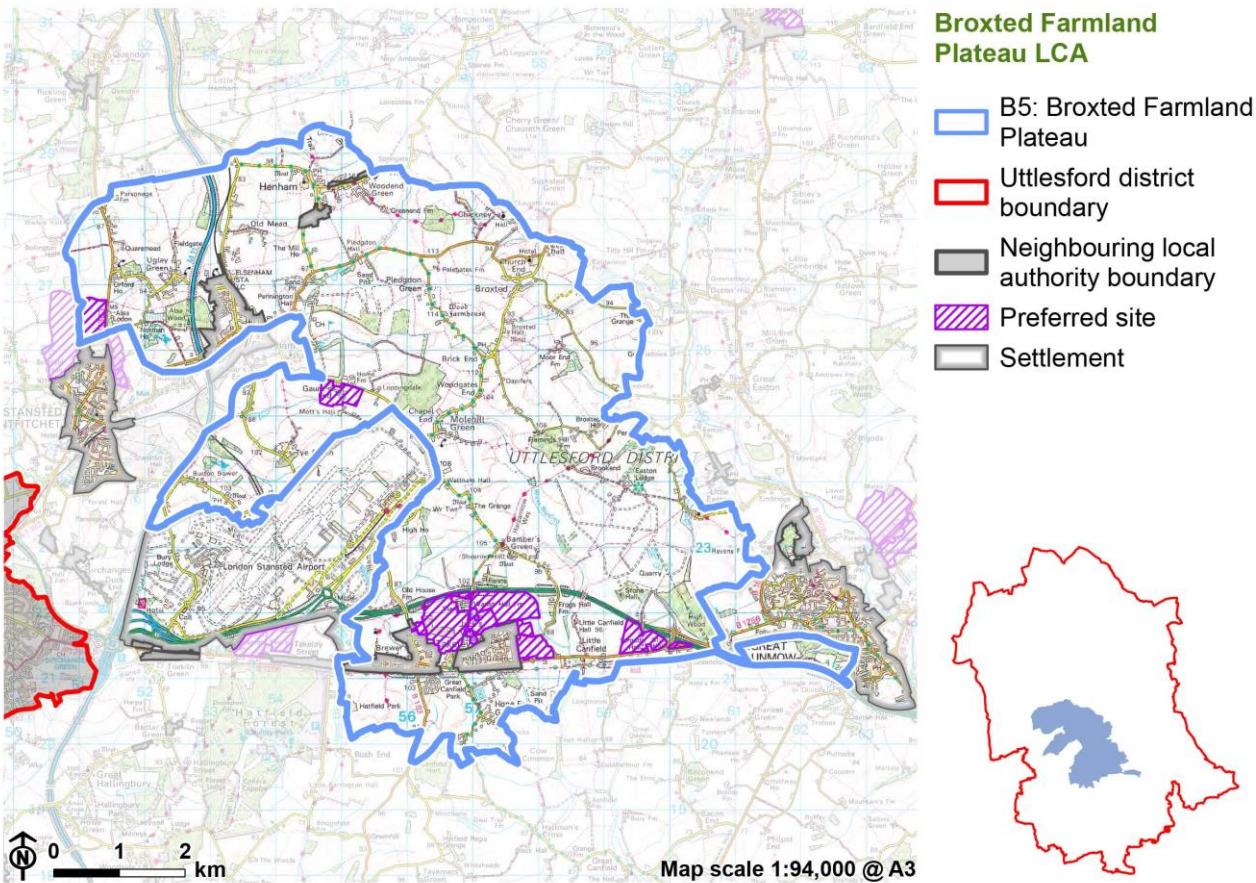


Figure 5.38: Typical view of the LCA: large open arable fields with wooded horizons



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently undulating plateau which sits between the Rivers Stort and Chelmer.
- The River Roding and its tributaries form shallow valleys within the plateau.
- Bedrock of chalky boulder clay overlain with glacial till resulting in fertile soils.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is dominated by Intensive arable farmland, with small areas of pasture on the edges of settlements.
- A large-scale regular field pattern, resulting from modern amalgamation. Fields are enclosed by ditches or tracks with intermittent hedgerows.

Trees and woodland cover

- Occasional large blocks of woodland, often of ancient origin, break up the arable farmland, however the limited hedgerows result in less tree-cover.
- The edges of Stansted Airport are heavily treed.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Deciduous woodland, grassland and wetland provide variety within the intensively farmed agricultural landscape, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- Historic field pattern consists of pre-18th century irregular fields. Settlements are set along linear greens.
- Scattered farmsteads, halls and moated sites provide time-depth across the area.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- A well-settled landscape, including the relatively large villages at Elsenham and Takeley and small linear settlements . Modern development has extended along the roads.
- Narrow, twisting lanes bounded by grass verges contrast with the dual carriageway A120 in the south.
- A network of footpaths including the promoted routes Harcamlow Way and Saffron Trail, and the Flich Way former railway line.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Strong sense of openness and long views across the arable farmland from open lanes, particularly where the plateau broadens and flattens.
- Woodland blocks within the area and outside provide a wooded horizon to most views.
- A more rural and tranquil character in the north, with more human influences in the south. Aeroplanes taking off from Stansted Airport are audibly and visibility intrusive.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.148 This gently undulating farmland lies on a plateau between 75 metres and 110 metres AOD. The River Roding winds its way southwards from Molehill Green in the centre of the area. Located on the southern reaches of the London Clay Formation, the bedrock of chalky boulder clay is overlain with glacial till. The resulting soil is loamy, with local chalky textures and generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land. Hall's Quarry provides excellent examples of exposures of glacial gravels, silts and till deposits, and is designated as a geological SSSI.

5.149 Due to the fertile soils, the landscape is dominated by large farms and intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The resulting landscape is open, with few trees except in blocks or near settlements. Hedgerows are intermittent and fragmented, and the large-scale regular field pattern is delineated mainly by ditches or grass tracks, occasionally with trees or scrub. Where hedgerows are still intact, they are of considerable age. Smaller fields of rough grassland and pasture for horses can be seen near settlements, bounded by post-and-rail fencing.

5.150 Woodland cover appears in large blocks of mixed deciduous types throughout the character area, dispersed amongst otherwise expansive areas of farmland. It is often seen as a distant framework on the horizon or appears to link into a

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

continuous backdrop. A significant proportion of these woodlands are ancient in origin and designated as LWS, while Elsenham and High Wood are nationally designated as SSSI. Deciduous woodlands also line the River Roding and Pincey Brook.

5.151 Amongst the intensive farmland are small patchworks of semi-natural habitats, including grassland, scrub, woodland and wetland, often designated as LWS. The Flich Way (LNR and LWS), a former railway line now in use as a public right of way, forms a linear corridor of semi-natural habitats.

Cultural influences

5.152 Evidence of historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, interspersed with linear greens and several former common fields.

5.153 This character area is well settled in the north and south, with smaller, dispersed villages, hamlets and farmsteads in the centre. Historic settlement is largely dispersed over the plateau and along the lanes. The historic settlement pattern comprises church/hall complexes, isolated farms, many moated sites and small hamlets, often along linear greens. Little Easton and Henham are designated as Conservation Areas and feature clusters of listed buildings. The ancient market town of Great Dunmow, to the east of this character area, is the largest settlement in the vicinity, and has recently expanded to the west.

5.154 Settlement pattern is now varied; small villages and hamlets are linear, such as Barber's Green and Broxted. 20th and 21st century expansion has created polyfocal linear settlements, such as Henham. New residential development at Elsenham, Henham and Takeley is more suburban, although there are some links to local building materials and vernacular style. The original linear form of Takeley has now been altered by modern expansion to the south-west north of the Flich Way, and in the north, bringing the northern edge of the settlement closer to the A120.

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5.155 Vernacular buildings are pale colour-washed plaster, many with pargetting, and thatched roofs. Farm buildings are sometimes red brick with black-stained weatherboarding. Many historic moats and halls are spread over this area including Scheduled Monuments at the Grange, Henham and Warish Hall.

5.156 Easton Lodge is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. It consists of a 20th century formal gardens set in a Tudor park, further formalised in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although much of the woodland was cleared in the Second World War, when the army requisitioned the manor house, 20th century planting has recreated some of the parkland character.

5.157 Winding lanes and minor roads, many of ancient origin, provide access to the scattered farmsteads. Many of these lanes are sunken, with flower-rich verges of varying widths, and often open on the highest land of the plateau. In contrast the A120 and the B1256 Stortford Road (a Roman Road) in the south and the M11 in the west are large and busy roads.

5.158 There is good public access across the area, with many footpaths including the promoted route the Harcamlow Way providing access.

Views and perceptual influences

5.159 This is an open and exposed landscape, enhanced by limited tree cover, with little to interrupt long views over the surrounding undulating landscape.

5.160 Churches set on hills are visible in long views and provide local landmarks. From several locations in the north and east of the character area, panoramic views are available across the Chelmer Valley slopes and to Great Dunmow.

5.161 Water towers, telegraph poles and telecommunications masts are occasionally visible on the horizon and are detracting visual features on the skyline. Electricity pylons are visible outside the area in the north.

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5.162 Stansted Airport is a major influence on the character of the south-west of this area. Though screened by trees and shrubs, its buildings and tower can be seen in long views from many locations within the character area. The access roads and perimeter roads and associated commercial premises have introduced a more urban feel to the local landscape. The sound and view of aircraft is almost constant .

5.163 Recent residential development at Elsenham and in the south at Takeley and Smiths Green is open to the wider landscape, and therefore has a slightly sub-urbanising influence. The historic linear settlement patterns in these villages have also now been lost.

5.164 Traffic noise from the A120 and the B1256 in the south and a section of the M11 which crosses the north-west disrupt rural tranquillity. Away from these trunk roads and the Stansted flight path, tranquillity is moderate and there is a greater experience of dark skies to the north of the area.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.165 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Large blocks of ancient and semi-natural woodland.
- Woodland and grassland which break up the farmed landscape, and wetland habitats along the River Roding .
- Twisting, lanes, often of ancient origin, with open species-rich grass verges.
- A sense of historic integrity in the north resulting from a historic dispersed settlement pattern of traditional hamlets, often located around greens .
- The open character of higher areas of the plateau, allowing long views across the landscape.

Figure 5.39: Settlement edge of Broxted with tree-lined lanes



Figure 5.40: Modern edge of Takeley, with replanted hedgerows



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.

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- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the River Roding and its tributaries from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Recent residential expansion at the edges of Elsenham and Takeley creating a sub-urban character.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, especially Takeley, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- Noise and visual impact from proximity to Stansted Airport.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.

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- Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
- Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Broxted Farmland Plateau LCA is to enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed area with its small historic villages linked by winding lanes. Seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and the intermittent hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes, ditches and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highway works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the north of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the farmsteads, moated sites and halls) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed linear settlement pattern of smaller villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character.

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- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Elsenham and High Wood; promote natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Roding, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the A120 and B1051 crosses the area, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to the landscape character, in large woodland blocks. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.

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- Plan to extend riparian vegetation and other wetland habitats along the River Roding, to form green corridors, contribute to landscape character and green and blue infrastructure, and contribute to nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Plan to integrate existing urban fringe areas into the landscape, especially the new residential developments at Takeley.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale and respects the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional vernacular. Ensure that development is well integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimise visual impact.
- Plan for future development on settlement edges, particularly at Takeley. Any new development should incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.
- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B6: Lindsell Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.166 This character area consists of undulating plateau farmland . The landform is dissected by Pods Brook and Stebbing Brook, and sits above three river valleys. Encompassing the small settlements of Lindsell and Little Bardfield, this is a very rural landscape.

5.167 Located in the east of the district, it is defined by the administrative boundary with Braintree to the east, Upper Chelmer River Valley (LCA A4) to the west and Pant River Valley (LCA A3) to the north-east . The B184 Dunmow Road forms the western boundary and Bardfield Road forms the northern boundary. The southern boundary lies along the plateau edge above Stebbing, and continues north into LCA B8.

Figure 5.41: Location of B6 Lindsell Farmland Plateau

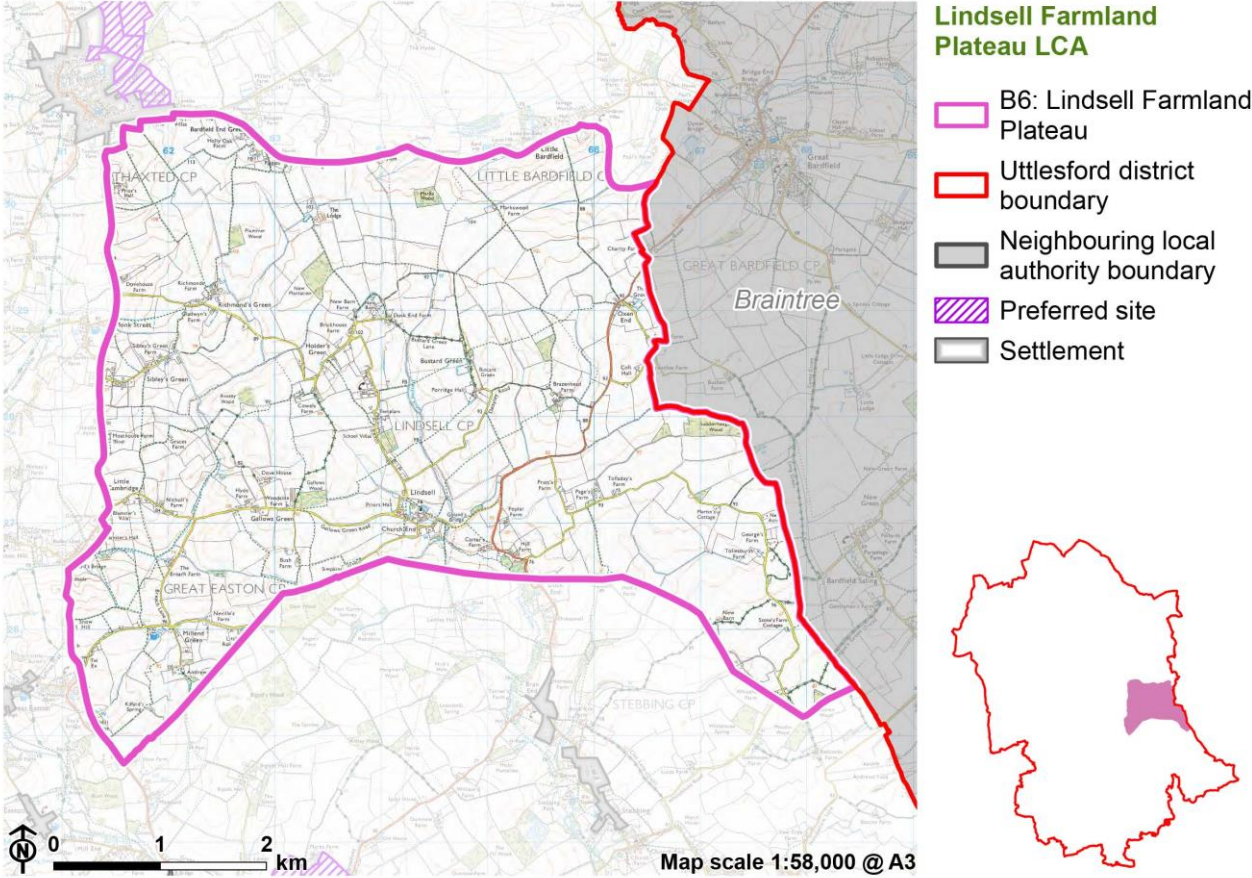


Figure 5.42: Typical view of the LCA: large open arable fields with open views to wooded horizon



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently undulating and expansive plateau which sits above the river valleys of the Chelmer and Pant.
- Small watercourses the Stebbing Brook and Daisyley Brook cut through the plateau in shallow valleys.
- Silty clay bedrock overlain with glacial till produces very fertile soils.

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Land use and field patterns

- A landscape dominated by intensive arable farmland, dotted with smaller areas of deciduous woodland.
- Regular medium- to large-scale fields, are bound by shelterbelts and hedgerows with gaps.

Trees and woodland cover

- Thickly planted shelterbelts, with a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees, and occasional blocks of deciduous woodland, create a consistent pattern across the landscape.
- Mature hedgerow and in-field trees are a feature of the landscape, with Scots Pine typical along lanes.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Semi-natural habitats are limited. Scrub and woodlands are scattered across the landscape, some designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- Evidence of historic land use is dominated by a pre-18th century irregular field pattern.
- A strong vernacular architecture of light-coloured plaster with thatched roofs, and half-timber buildings.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Limited settlement with no major villages. A linear settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads.
- Narrow lanes and tracks provide the main access routes, with larger roads bounding the area. Lanes are often lined by species-rich hedgerows.
- A fragmented network of footpaths connects the small villages and open countryside.

Views and perceptual qualities

- An open landscape, with views sometimes framed or interrupted by woodland. Longer distance views across the Chelmer valley to the west occasionally available.
- Woodlands and trees both within and outside the area form dark wooded horizons to views.
- A tranquil rural area, with limited intrusion of road noise and a good experience of dark night skies.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.168 The gently rolling plateau lies between 75 metres AOD along Stebbing Brook in the south and rises to 110 metres AOD near Thaxted in the north. Stebbing Brook and Daisley Brook dissect the landscape, forming a shallow valley around Lindsell. Located in the Thames Group London Clay Formation, the bedrock is overlain with glacial till. The resulting soil is silty clay and fertile, and generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.

5.169 Due to the fertile soils, intensive arable agriculture is the dominant land use. A regular pattern of medium- to large-scale fields are bound by shelterbelts and hawthorn hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Hedgerows are frequently fragmented, although occasionally appear overgrown and dense. A smaller-scale field pattern is located in proximity to farmsteads and settlements. The fields are used for grassland and pasture, often for horse grazing and bound by post and rail fencing. Tree cover is mostly present along field boundaries and roads. Tall species-rich hedgerows are found along many lanes; with some hornbeam coppice visible.

5.170 Small blocks of woodland are scattered throughout, creating layers and structure in the landscape and breaking up the expansive rolling, arable fields. Shelterbelts are also a frequent feature across the landscape, containing a mix of

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

deciduous and coniferous trees. There are some remnant areas of ancient woodland, the largest at Lubberhedges Wood. The ancient woodlands are all designated as LWS.

5.171 Small areas of scrub and grassland are located along stretches of rural lanes and within roadside verges. The largest area of good quality semi-improved grassland is at Bustard Green common, designated as LWS due to the assemblages of species-rich wildflowers and grassland, which are typical of the once common chalk grasslands .

Cultural influences

5.172 Evidence of historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, smaller in the south and growing larger in the north. Occasional common fields are interspersed, and were later enclosed in piecemeal agreements. Historically the settlement pattern comprised dispersed or polyfocal settlement, strung out along a network of linear and triangular greens, the latter located at road junctions.

5.173 The landscape is characterised by limited settlement, with no villages of any size. The settlement pattern is linear, or dispersed, and comprises hamlets and isolated farmsteads strung along the rural lanes . Large farms with many outbuildings vary in condition from utilitarian to carefully restored historic structures. Many of the farms and barns are listed buildings.

5.174 The village of Lindsell is the largest settlement in the character area, situated in the south at the beginning of the Stebbing Brook valley. Within Lindsell, the Grade II* listed church is a prominent feature, although not visible in the wider context due to surrounding woodland.

5.175 Vernacular buildings within the character area are typically colour-washed plaster or timbered, thatched roofs, or with flintwork and red brick. New development is mainly in the form of farm buildings, which have a varied appearance and some are more modern in form. Modern residential developments

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are rare but appear out of character along country lanes, as seen to the north of Lindsell.

5.176 The area is crossed by a network of rural lanes, and there are no major roads. Many of the lanes are sunken, with flower-rich verges of varying widths, sometimes tree-lined, and often enclosed and peaceful. The B1057 bisects the landscape, connecting the larger villages of Great Bardfield in the north (in Braintree District) and Stebbing in the south (within LCA A4).

5.177 A limited number of footpaths and tracks connect the smaller hamlets, providing access into the open countryside.

Views and perceptual influences

5.178 This is an open landscape with views across the rolling arable fields enhanced by the absence of built development . The landscape offers changing interest, with views that progress from open to closed to open again, depending on the location. Longer views are available from the higher plateau tops, with shelterbelts and woodlands providing structure and a dark wooded horizon. Roadside vegetation and shelterbelts interrupt longer views from rural lanes and near settlements.

5.179 The picturesque market town of Thaxted is visible from areas of higher elevation in the north, including its landmark church spire . Attractive views across the Chelmer valley slopes can be gained from the western edges of the area. Within the character area telegraph poles and water towers are occasionally visible in the otherwise rural landscape. A solar farm north-east of Holder's Green is a modern influence within the landscape, especially from local rights of way. However, it has a minimal visual influence on the wider landscape as it is screened by hedgerows and the rolling plateau topography.

5.180 The experience of dark skies is relatively good throughout the character area, with Thaxted being the largest source of light pollution in the north. Likewise, there

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is a strong sense of tranquillity across the landscape, due to the lack of major roads or settlements.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.181 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Woodland blocks, some of ancient origin, linear shelterbelts, mature trees along field boundaries, within fields and along the rural lanes.
- Woodland and grassland habitats, including roadside verges, scattered across the farmed landscape.
- Twisting, sometimes tree-lined or hedged lanes, often of ancient origin.
- A sense of historic integrity resulting from a relatively unchanged dispersed settlement pattern of small hamlets strung along rural lanes with wealth of historic buildings.
- The rural and unsettled character of the landscape, with a strong experience of tranquillity and dark skies.
- The open character of the landscape with views to wooded horizons which provide a sense of place and enclosure.

Figure 5.43: Mature hedgerow trees line arable fields



Figure 5.44: Partially enclosed narrow rural lanes



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.

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- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the Stebbing Brook and Daisyley Brook from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of Lindsell, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for further solar farms and wind turbines either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.

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- Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Lindsell Farmland Plateau LCA is to enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed area with its small historic villages linked by narrow lanes. Protect the relatively undeveloped and tranquil character of the area. Seek to integrate any new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (especially the farmhouses and associated barns) are appropriately managed as features of the agricultural landscape, to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed linear settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

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Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Marks Wood and Avesy Wood; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the Daisley Brook and Stebbing Brook, including marshland, pasture, and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species, including hawthorn .
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland around Bustard Green common.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic on the rural lanes, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, in woodland blocks and shelterbelts. Use climate hardy species, avoiding further conifer planting along roads and within shelterbelts, and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows, including hedgerow trees, and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.

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- Plan to extend riparian woodland and other wetland habitats along the watercourses, to form green corridors, and contribute to green and blue infrastructure, landscape character and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for any modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

LCA B7: Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.182 This character area consists of gently undulating plateau farmland. Hatfield Forest, an important area of ancient woodland, is a distinguishing characteristic of this landscape.

5.183 The LCA is located in the south-west of the district. The boundaries of the character area are defined by the Stort River Valley (LCA A2) to the west and Pincey Brook to the east. It stretches to Hatfield Heath and the administrative boundary with Hertfordshire in the south-west.

Figure 5.45: Location of B7 Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau

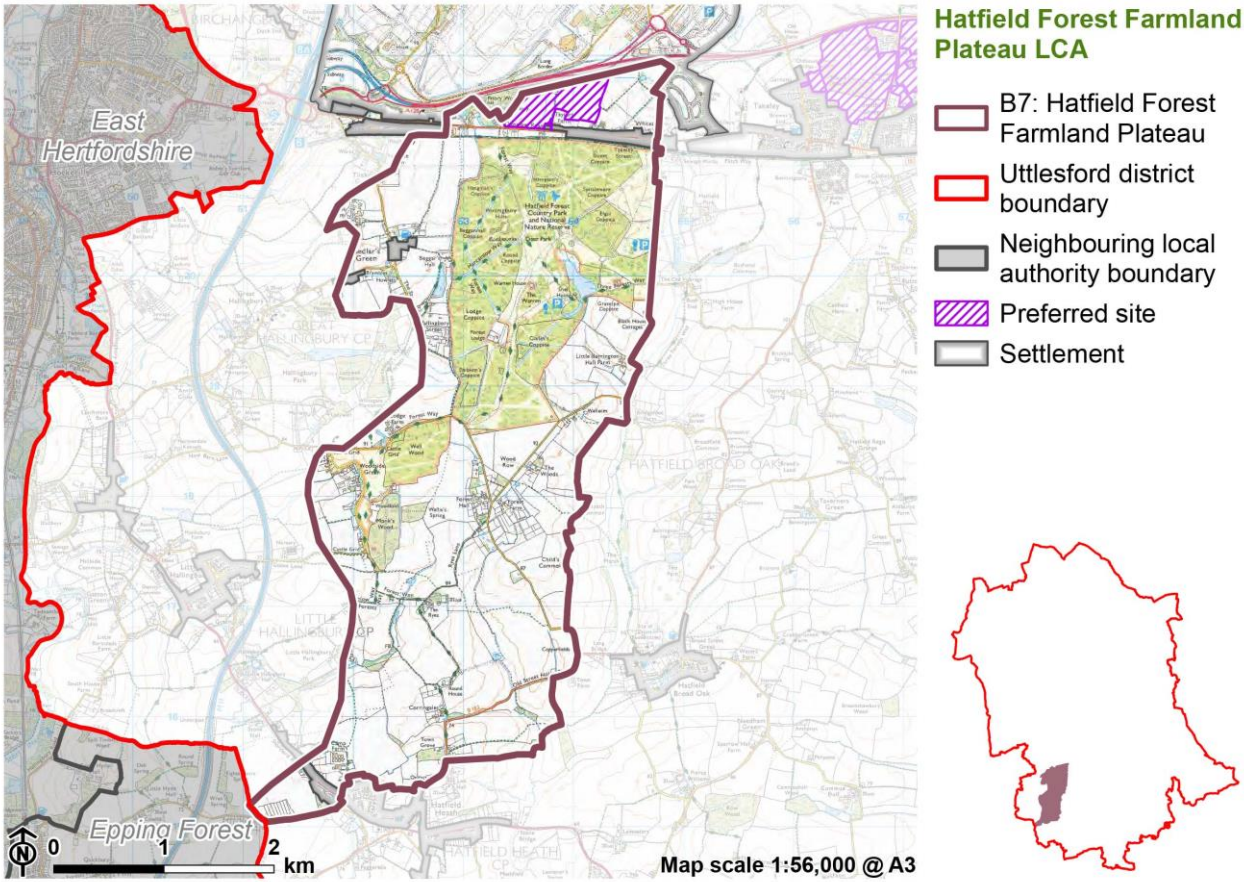


Figure 5.46: Typical view of the LCA: Hatfield Forest forms a backdrop to large open arable fields bordered by hedgerows



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently undulating plateau of glacial till, situated between Pincey Brook to the south and east and the Stort River valley to the west.
- Chalky boulder clay bedrock overlain with glacial till produces fertile soils.

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Land use and field patterns

- Hatfield Forest occupies the north of the plateau, and forms a dominant feature in the landscape. An irregular field pattern of wood pasture nestles in the clearings with regular assarts on its fringes.
- Outside of the forest, intensively farmed arable fields are dominant, with a regular field pattern, in which hedgerows have been reduced or replaced by ditches.

Trees and woodland cover

- Hatfield Forest, a nationally important ancient woodland, makes up a significant percentage of the district's woodland cover.
- Elsewhere, occasional small woodlands create structure within the arable fields.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Hatfield Forest is designated as an SSSI and NNR for its variety of woodland, wood pasture and grassland habitats.
- Pockets of priority habitat deciduous woodland are found on the edge of settlements to the south.

Historic landscape character

- Hatfield Forest is one of the finest remaining examples of medieval forest in the country.
- To the south, field patterns are typically post-enclosure.
- Historic farmsteads and cottages are scattered across the character area.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Dispersed hamlets are strung along straight, ancient lanes. Settlements are often set along wooded village greens in Hatfield Forest.

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- Strong recreation within Hatfield Forest, which has Open Access, and along the promoted routes the Harcamlow Way and Three Forests Way.

Views and perceptual qualities

- An enclosed character within the forest, with a more open character to the south.
- Hatfield Forest provides a strong wooded horizon in views from much of this area.
- Despite proximity to Stansted Airport, there is a tranquil, enclosed character within the forest.
- Outside the forest, proximity to Stansted Airport disrupts tranquillity.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.184 The plateau sits between Pincey Brook to the east and the River Stort valley to the west, gently sloping from approximately 95 metres AOD to 75 metres AOD along the valley slopes. Located in the London Clay Formation bedrock of chalky boulder clay, and overlain with glacial till, the resulting soil is fertile and loamy, with local chalky textures and classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.

5.185 Due to the fertile soils, intensive arable agriculture is the dominant land use outside of Hatfield Forest. Irregular medium- to large-scale fields are typically bound by intermittent hedgerows and ditches, or occasionally grassy tracks. Near areas of settlement, fields become smaller, and are interspersed with pockets of woodland.

5.186 Hatfield Forest occupies a large portion of the plateau in the northern part of the area. This ancient woodland is managed by the National Trust. It is designated as an SSI and NNR for the variety of habitats it supports, including areas of grassland, coppiced woodland, wood pasture, marsh and heath. As one of the

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largest areas within Essex that has not been ploughed, the habitats are considered to be in excellent condition. The wide variety of habitats support a range of invertebrates and other wildlife.

5.187 Outside of Hatfield Forest, woodland cover is mostly contained within small pockets of priority habitat deciduous woodland, which frame views north towards the forest. These are typically situated around farmsteads, such as near Forest Farm. Hedgerows are intermittent and have gaps, with few hedgerow trees.

Cultural influences

5.188 Historic land use is mainly evidenced by the archaeological remains and remnants of centuries of land management within the medieval Hatfield Forest. The Iron Age Portingbury Hills hillfort predates the creation of Hatfield Forest in 1100 by Henry I as a Royal Hunting Forest. The forest contains wood pasture, coppice woods, pollards and timber trees. The earthworks from a warren in Collins Coppice is the other Scheduled Monument in the forest, dating from the 12th century. The warren was used for breeding and management of rabbits or hares for meat or skins. An 18th century warrener's cottage indicates the ongoing use of the warren.

5.189 The forest remained in royal ownership until the early 18th century when a wealthy family bought the Hallingbury estate, which included Hatfield Forest. The forest was then used as an extension to the family's gardens. The large lake within the forest was created by damming the Shermore Brook, to a design by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Within the forest, fields are irregular, with more regular fields on its fringes, where farmland historically encroached on the forest, as assarts. Dispersed farmsteads nestle in woodland clearings that contain wood pasture and grazing cattle.

5.190 In the south, regular fields are a mix of medium to large-scale, with boundaries defined by ditches and hedgerows which have gaps. The open fields are typical of a post-enclosure field pattern, with modern amalgamation.

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5.191 Settlement is historic and largely dispersed, appearing in small clusters at Bedlar's Green, and along a large common at Woodside Green. Many of the houses and farmhouses are listed. Linear development along Takeley Street in the north is an exception to this settlement pattern, although many of the houses are listed. Vernacular buildings within the character area are typically colour-washed plaster or timbered, thatched roofs, or with flintwork and red brick.

5.192 Major roads are confined to the fringes of the character area, including the A1060 and B138 to the south. In the centre and north, a sparse network of rural lanes crosses the arable landscape, and along the periphery of Hatfield Forest. These lanes are often sunken and of varying widths, frequently lined by dense vegetation.

5.193 The footpath network in this character area is dense, with multiple paths connecting the dispersed settlements through Hatfield Forest. Hatfield Forest is managed by the National Trust and is a strong recreational draw. It is also Open Access Land. The promoted Harcamlow Way and Three Forests Way also pass north-south through the forest. The former railway line, the Flitch Way, is another recreational route through the landscape.

Views and perceptual influences

5.194 The arable landscape in the south is relatively open, with northerly views framed by small pockets of woodland, and backdropped by Hatfield Forest. Within Hatfield Forest, there is an intimate and enclosed character, and long distance views are more limited. Near settlements, roadside vegetation and pockets of smaller woodland also limit views.

5.195 There are no large-scale structures or developments which impact on the rural character of views. In views from the more open landscape to the south, there are occasional views towards Hatfield Broad Oak and its church spire. Telegraph poles are evident throughout the landscape, however do not overly detract from the otherwise rural landscape.

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5.196 Tranquillity is moderate throughout, with impacts from larger settlements and major roadways outside the character area, including the M11. Within Hatfield Forest there is a strong experience of both dark skies and tranquillity, although this lessens in the north. The A120 and Stansted Airport produce significant light pollution which spills into the character area from the north. Flights taking off from Stansted Airport are a common intrusion within the landscape, although the noise is muffled within Hatfield Forest.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.197 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Nationally important Hatfield Forest, an important survival of a medieval forest with wood pasture.
- A sense of historic integrity resulting from relatively unchanged woodland management of Hatfield Forest.
- Dispersed settlement pattern of historic farmsteads, wooded village greens and twisting, often sunken rural lanes.
- Enclosed and intimate character within Hatfield Forest, which contrasts with the more open character of the southern arable fields.

Figure 5.47: Lake designed by Capability Brown, in Hatfield Forest



Figure 5.48: Settlement along a common at Woodside Green



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.

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- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Recreational pressures at Hatfield Forest.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements outside of the area, especially Hatfield Heath, and Takeley, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- Noise and air pollution from close proximity to Stansted Airport.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau LCA is to conserve and enhance the ancient and ecologically important Hatfield Forest. Protect the relatively undeveloped and tranquil character of the area. In the south seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including within Hatfield Forest, and farmhouses and cottages outside) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and

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nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.

- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape, along PRoW and within Hatfield Forest. Manage the numbers of visitors arriving by car to Hatfield Forest.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the B183 crosses the area, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, which is sympathetic to Hatfield Forest. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B8: Stebbing Green Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.198 This character area consists of rolling flat-topped plateau farmland bisected by Stebbing Brook, which forms a narrow valley through the centre and south of the area. Medium- to large-scale arable fields are interspersed with pasture and grassland.

5.199 A small character area located in the south-east of the district, defined by the Upper Chelmer River Valley in the west (LCA A4), and bisected by the Stebbing Brook valley (also within LCA A4). The administrative boundary with Braintree forms the eastern boundary, although the character continues across the district boundary. The A120 forms the southern boundary and the farmland plateau landscape character continues to the north in LCA B6.

Figure 5.49: Location of B8 Stebbing Green Farmland Plateau

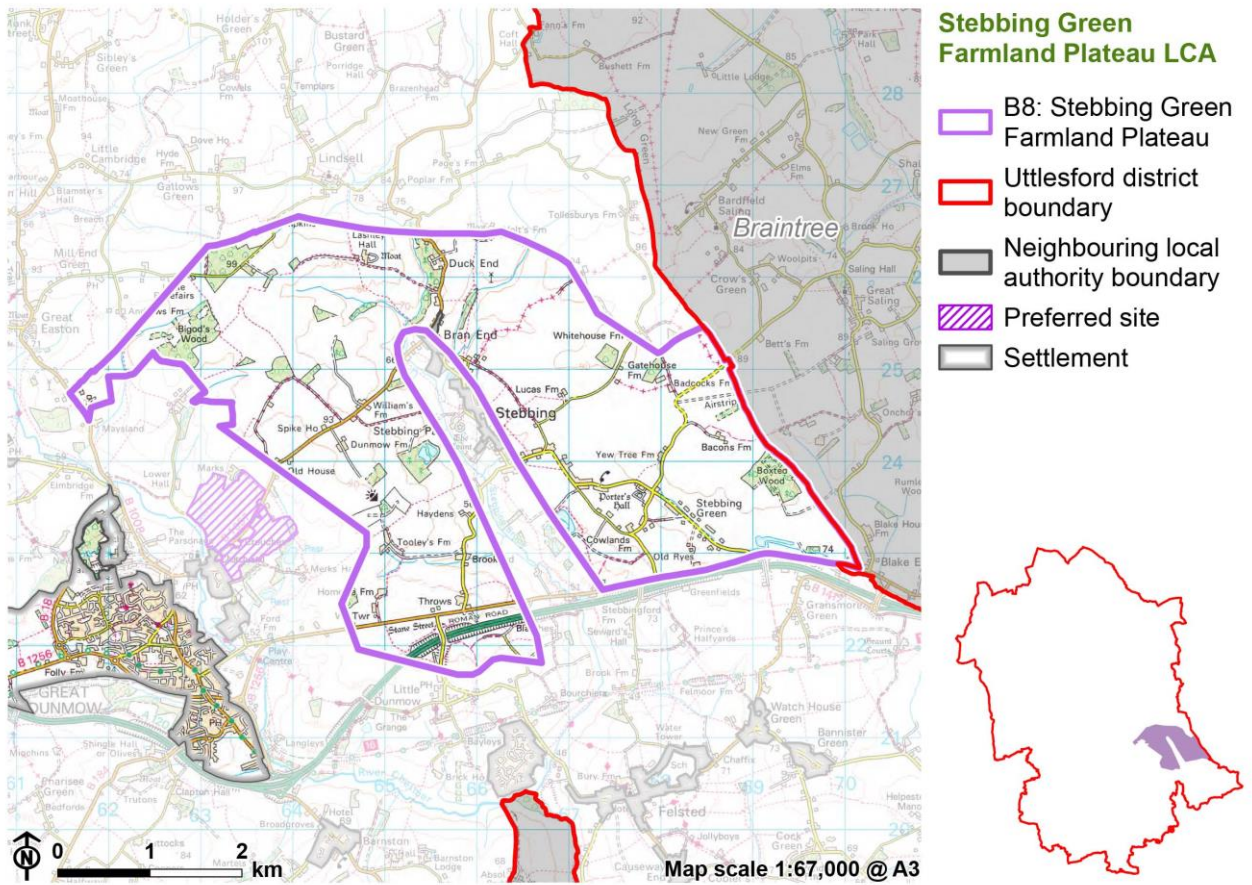


Figure 5.50: Typical view of the LCA: intensive agriculture with views to woodland blocks creating wooded horizon



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Wide flat topped plateau underlain by glacial till and silty clay.
- The Stebbing Brook, River Ter and tributaries cross the area in shallow valleys.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Land use and field patterns

- Intensive agriculture land use dominates, with an irregular pattern of medium- to large-scale fields, typically bound by sinuous fragmented hedgerows or ditches. Hedgerow trees are a frequent feature.

Trees and woodland cover

- Many small woodlands and copses of conifer and deciduous trees, some of ancient origin, are scattered throughout the landscape.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Areas of scrub, meadow and woodland are found across the area, particularly within the upper valley slopes. Many are designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- Evidence of historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, likely of medieval or older origin.
- A strong vernacular architecture of light-wash plaster, thatched roofs, and timber frames.
- Occasional historic manors and isolated farmsteads, some moated.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Very limited settlement, with scattered pattern of small hamlets arranged linearly along the rural roads and lanes, with some isolated historic farmsteads.
- The B1057 passes through the centre of the character area, connected to rural lanes to the south. The A120 lies to the south.
- Footpaths and tracks connect the small settlements and open countryside, with a particular concentration in the north.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Contrast in views between larger-scale, expansive higher ground and small-scale, intimate wooded tributary valleys.
- Longer distant views across the open plateau and fields, framed by a wooded horizon. Within the tributary valleys views are channelled and directed by topography.
- Good tranquillity in the north with a good experience of dark skies away from the A120.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.200 A plateau landscape, the flat-topped rolling hills undulate between 65 metres AOD in proximity to Stebbing Brook and 100 metres AOD near Bigod's Wood in the north. Stebbing Brook (LCA A4) dissects the landscape in the south, and the landform slopes sharply down to meet the narrow sided Upper Chelmer river valley (LCA A4). Multiple small tributaries create more small-scale undulations in the landform in the west. The shallow valley of the River Ter is located just east of Stebbing Brook.

5.201 Located in the Thames Group London Clay Formation, the soil is mostly silty clay with some gravel, and is overlain with glacial till. The resulting soil is fertile, and is generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land. Small areas of Grade 3 agricultural land are present along the valley slopes of tributaries to the Stebbing Brook in the north.

5.202 Situated within an area of fertile soils, the dominant land use is arable agriculture. Irregular medium- to large-scale fields are common, with some smaller pasture fields along the valley slopes. Fields are typically bound by ditches or hedgerows, some overgrown. Large, often overgrown, hedgerow trees are a

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frequent feature, and due to fragmentation, sometimes are the only markers of former hedgerows.

5.203 Numerous small areas of wooded parklands are present across the landscape, creating wooded horizons where small pockets of woodland, both within and outside of the character area, combine with hedgerow trees. Many areas of woodland are ancient in origin with some being designated LWS. Bigod's Wood and Dow Wood form larger blocks of ancient woodland along the northern edge of the character area. Near the waterways and within the valley bottoms areas of priority habitat grassland and meadow are present, including at Bran End Meadows, and at Stebbing Green. These are often designated as LWS.

Cultural influences

5.204 Evidence of historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, likely of medieval or older origin. Occasional common fields were interspersed, before becoming enclosed by agreement.

5.205 There is very little settlement within the character area. Settlement is concentrated within the hamlets of Brans End, Stebbing Green and Blake's End and located along linear greens.

5.206 Listed cottages, isolated farmsteads, halls and moated sites (Scheduled Monuments) are scattered across the landscape, although there are no Conservation Areas. The common vernacular across the farmland plateau is typically of plaster or timber frame, with thatched roofs, flintwork or red brick.

5.207 Andrew's Field is an airstrip in the north-east, located on an open hilltop north of Stebbing Green. Despite a modern large-scale hangar and small numerous aircraft, the airstrip comprises a grass runway and is not overly obvious within the surrounding landscape.

5.208 There are no major roads through the character area, although the A120 passes along the southern edge. Rural lanes wind through the landscape, providing

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good east-west access to the numerous isolated farmsteads and hamlets. The B1057 cuts through the landscape from the north-east, passing through Stebbing and connecting to Great Dunmow in the south-west.

5.209 The public right of way network is strong and provides good east-west connectivity through the landscape, connecting the small farmsteads.

Views and perceptual influences

5.210 Across the hilltops, views are extensive and occasionally panoramic, with woodland within the area and beyond creating a wooded horizon. These contrast with views from the lower valley slopes which are more contained and channelled by both vegetation and topography. Dark bands of woodland provide contrast and structure across the lighter arable fields. Roadside vegetation and shelterbelts interrupt longer views from rural lanes and near settlements.

5.211 Andrew's Field airstrip is visible in easterly views across the plateau. The circular tower of Barfield Saling Church located in the neighbouring district, is visible in views north. Telegraph poles form common features, set within the arable fields.

5.212 The experience of dark skies and sense of tranquillity is good across the landscape, particularly in the north, away from Great Dunmow and Little Dunmow and closer to the A120 and Great Dunmow in the south.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.213 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

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- Woodland blocks and linear woodland features along watercourses, some of ancient origin .
- Woodland, grassland and wetland habitats scattered across the farmed landscape.
- Twisting, sometimes tree-lined, lanes, often of ancient origin.
- A sense of historic integrity resulting from a relatively unchanged settlement pattern of small hamlets, isolated farms, and moated sites strung along rural lanes.
- The visually prominent and open character of higher areas of the plateau, which allow long views to a wooded horizon across the landscape.

Figure 5.51: Dispersed historic farmsteads surrounded by trees



Figure 5.52: Narrow lanes provide open views to the wooded horizon



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the Stebbing Brook from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure for increased settlement in this rural landscape, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.

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- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Stebbing Green Farmland Plateau LCA is to enhance the rural character of this intensively farmed area with its small historic villages linked by winding lanes. Protect the relatively undeveloped and tranquil character of the area. Seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands.

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Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highway works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the moated sites and farmhouses) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Bigod's Wood and Dow Wood; promote natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the tributary valleys of Stebbing Brook and River Ter, including marshland, pasture and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows and isolate hedgerow trees, using native species.

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- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly from the A120 and B1057, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, in scattered blocks. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian woodland and other wetland habitats along the tributary valleys of Stebbing Brook and River Ter, to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

LCA B9: Roding Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.214 This character area consists of a raised farmland plateau. It is dissected by Pincey Brook in the west and the River Roding in the centre.

5.215 The area is located in the south-west of the district and its boundaries defined by the administrative boundary with the London Borough of Epping Forest to the south and the more wooded character of Hatfield Forest (LCA B7) to the west. The more settled farmland plateau of LCA B5 Broxted lies to the north.

Figure 5.53: Location of B9 Roding Farmland Plateau

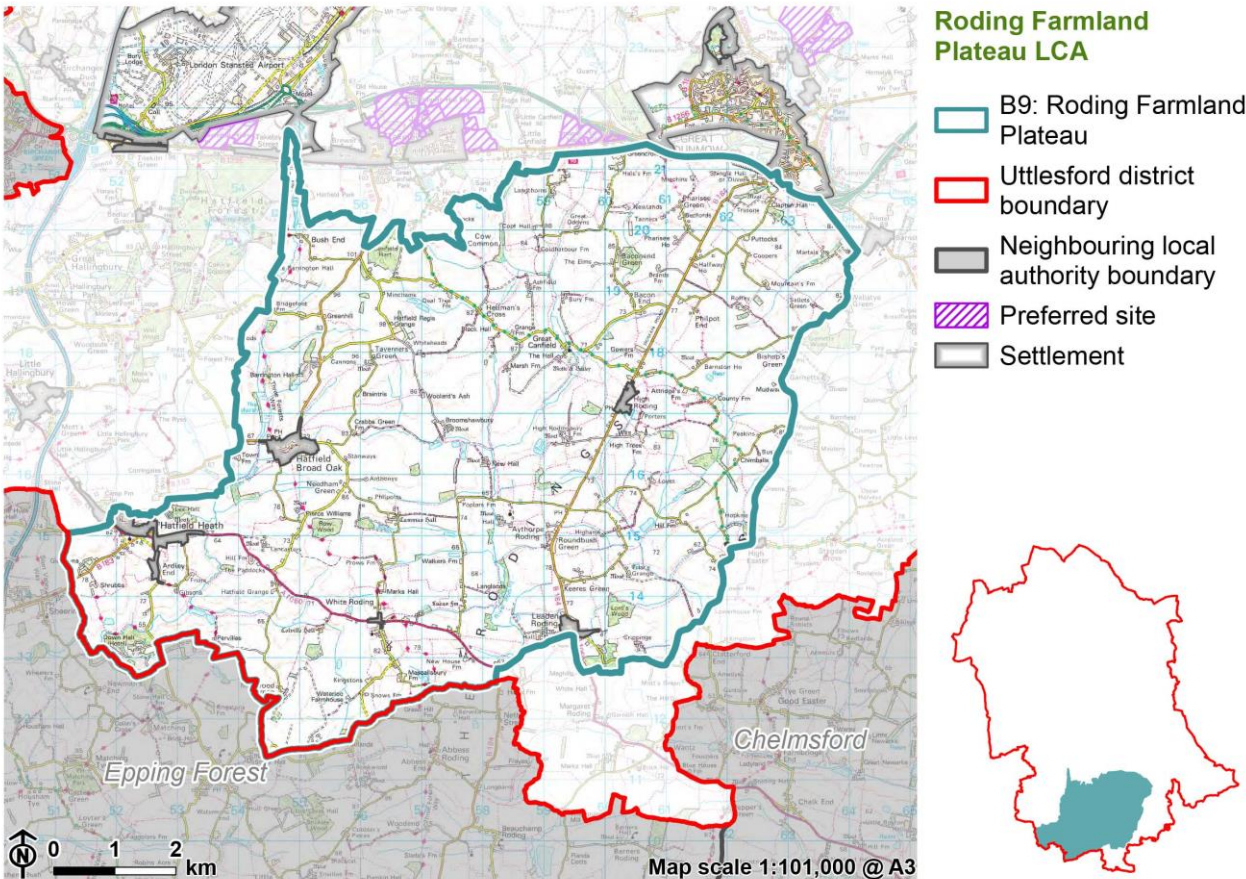


Figure 5.54: Typical view of the LCA: Large-scale arable fields with PRow and mature trees on the horizon



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Open farmland plateau dissected by the Pincey Brook in the west and the River Roding in the centre.
- A bedrock of chalky boulder clay and glacial till gives rise to fertile soils.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Land use and field patterns

- Intensive agriculture land use dominates land use. A semi-irregular field pattern of medium- to large-scale fields, typically bound by fragmented hedgerows.

Trees and woodland cover

- Many irregular woodland blocks of a variety of sizes are scattered across the landscape, many of which are ancient woodland.
- River corridors are lined by trees and riparian vegetation and mature trees line the lanes and hedgerows.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Frequent deciduous woodland, traditional orchard, semi-improved grassland, and floodplain grazing marsh provide variety within the intensively farmed agricultural landscape, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- Historic field patterns are evidenced by pre-18th century irregular fields, with historic orchards scattered throughout.
- Many historic features in the landscape including mills and ancient churches at Hatfield Heath, Bush End, the Roding villages and a motte and bailey mound at Great Canfield.
- Village greens are a feature of the landscape.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- A regularly dispersed settlement pattern of small nucleated and linear villages, scattered hamlets, with farmsteads scattered over the plateau.
- Small winding lanes provide access through the area.
- A good network of PRoWs and sections of the National Cycle Network.

Views and perceptual qualities

- An open landscape with wide open views, which contrast with the more enclosed, wooded character within some villages.
- Woodland blocks and mature hedgerow trees combine to form a wooded skyline.
- A highly rural landscape, with a feeling of remoteness in places.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.216 This gently undulating farmland lies on the plateau between 60 metres AOD and 95 metres AOD. Located in the southern reaches of the London Clay Formation, the bedrock is chalky boulder clay, overlain with Lowestoft Formation glacial till (characterised by its chalk and flint content). The resulting soil is loamy, with local chalky textures. It is generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.

5.217 Alluvium and Head deposits are associated with the course of Pincey Brook and the River Roding. Pincey Brook flows roughly parallel to the character area's western boundary to Ardley End where it turns west toward Old Harlow. The River Roding flows roughly down the centre of the character area, passing through Great Canfield.

5.218 This character area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. Fields are typically delineated by hedgerows which are often fragmented but feature mature trees. The field pattern is generally larger and more regular on the higher plateau, but becomes smaller, and more irregular near older settlements. Pasture for horses typically occurs near settlements, coinciding with the location of riding schools. Pumpkin growing features in some of the smaller-scale fields close to farmsteads.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.219 Woodland blocks, of a variety of sizes, are dispersed throughout the farmland, creating scattered, irregular areas of tree cover. A significant portion of these woodlands are ancient in origin and designated as Local Wildlife Sites including Canfield Thrift, High Rodingbury Wood, and Bromshawbury Wood. Along the lanes, mature trees are often visible in the hedgerows and verges – poplars are a common feature in windbreaks.

5.220 Despite the dominance of intensive farmland, the character area also features small areas of nature conservation value. These include priority habitats marshland in the river valleys, heathland and grassland, many of which are designated as LWS including Fitzjohn Marsh, Bury Spring, and Hatfield Heath.

Cultural influences

5.221 Historic field pattern is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and possibly older. At a finer grain there is also evidence of pre-18th century co-axial sinuous fields within the individual farms.

5.222 Settlement is largely dispersed and small-scale, making the area feel more remote than it actually is, given the proximity of Stansted Airport to the north. Small settlements are located along roadsides and greens. The large common at Hatfield Heath is a key characteristic of the village. Historic buildings are dispersed throughout the character area and include church/hall complexes, isolated farmsteads, a large number of moated sites. New Barrington Hall is an important large medieval park. Hatfield Broad Oak, Great Canfields, and High Easter are designated Conservation Areas and host to many listed buildings.

5.223 This area includes much of an ancient Saxon territory known as the hrodingas, which stretched from High Roding in the north down to Beauchamp Roding in the south. The Rodings are in an area with a long history of settlement and this cultural history is still visible in the many moated farms, halls, ancient churches, windmills and the motte & bailey castle mound at Great Canfield (now a Scheduled Monument). The former steam mill at Hatfield Heath is thought to date back to the 16th or 17th century and is an important local architectural feature.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.224 Vernacular building style is colour-washed plaster with thatched or peg tile roofs, but mellow red brick dominates in some places, such as at Hatfield Broad Oak. Agricultural buildings appear in large clusters and a in variety of materials ranging from corrugated metal to black-stained weatherboarding.

5.225 The overall grain of the landscape is very irregular, with numerous small twisting roads and lanes linking the settlement and the many small tributary valleys. Roads ring the area but internally winding lanes and tracks give access to most farmsteads. Many are designated Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values.

5.226 A comprehensive network of Public Rights of Way criss-crosses this countryside, including the Three Forests Way promoted route.

Views and perceptual influences

5.227 This is an open, exposed landscape, with a sense of spaciousness enhanced by the absence of built development. Deciduous woodland blocks knit together with hedgerows to form a relatively wooded skyline. There is little to interrupt long views over the surrounding undulating landscape, particularly in views from across the high plateau land surrounding High Roding, such as those to Great Dunmow. By contrast, views nearer settlements are channelled and more enclosed, particularly along the smaller lanes which are often lined by mature trees.

5.228 Long distance sightlines are available across the high plateau. The churches at High Roding and High Easter feature in open views from the high plateau and serve as local landmarks, as does the windmill at White Roding. A former steam mill at Hatfield Heath is a prominent feature in views from Stortford Road.

5.229 Noise from the B184 in the east, the B183 in the west, and A1060 in the south is distributed across their immediate contexts. Away from these arterial routes, the experience of this character area is of a moderately tranquil, rural landscape. The transition of the colours of arable farmland from smooth green in the spring, yellow in summer to the coarse stubble following harvest, framed by

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

deciduous woodland and hedgerows, results in a highly seasonal experience of the landscape.

5.230 Flightpaths from Stansted Airport and resultant noise pollution have an occasional influence on the north-west portion of this character area. Though screened by trees and shrubs, the airport's buildings and tower can be seen in long views from the elevated plateau land in the north-east. Aircraft are a frequent feature across the open skyline.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.231 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Mature trees within hedgerows and woodland blocks.
- Historic integrity afforded by the many visible historic features including moated farms, halls, churches, some mills and the motte and bailey castle mound at Great Canfield.
- Clustered pattern of the historic settlements at Hatfield Heath, Hatfield Broad Oak and the Canfields, as well as the large common at Hatfield Heath.
- Several important wildlife habitats within the area including areas of ancient woodland, grassland, wetland and heathland habitats.
- The open character of higher areas of the plateau allowing long views across the landscape.
- Open, exposed landscape with a high perception of rurality.

Figure 5.55: Small lane partially screened by hedgerows and mature trees



Figure 5.56: Pumpkin growing partially enclosed by mature trees



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of Pincey Brook and the River Roding from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.

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- Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
- Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Roding Farmland Plateau LCA is to conserve the tranquil, historic, and rural character of the area, strengthen the woodland, hedgerow and habitat networks, and to restore riverside habitats along Pincey Brook and the River Roding.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the mills, churches and moated sites) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, especially in the Hatfield Broad Oak, Great Canfields, and High Easter Conservation Areas.

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- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Canfield Thrift, High Rodingbury Wood, and Bromshawbury Wood; promote natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the Pincey Brook, the River Roding and tributaries, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the A1060 and B184 cross the area, including through roadside tree planting.

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Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, such as irregular, scattered woodlands. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian vegetation and other wetland habitats along the Pincey Brook and the River Roding, to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Ensure any future residential expansion is small-scale and respects the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional vernacular. Ensure that development is well integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimise visual impact.
- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B10: Barnston Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.232 This character area consists of gently undulating farmland on boulder clay plateau and is dissected by several small streams and their valleys. It is a rural area, with limited settlement.

5.233 The area is located in the south of the district and its southern and eastern boundaries are defined by the administrative boundary with Chelmsford district, while the north-east is defined by change in character to the Upper Chelmer River Valley (LCA A4).

Figure 5.57: Location of B10 Barnston Farmland Plateau

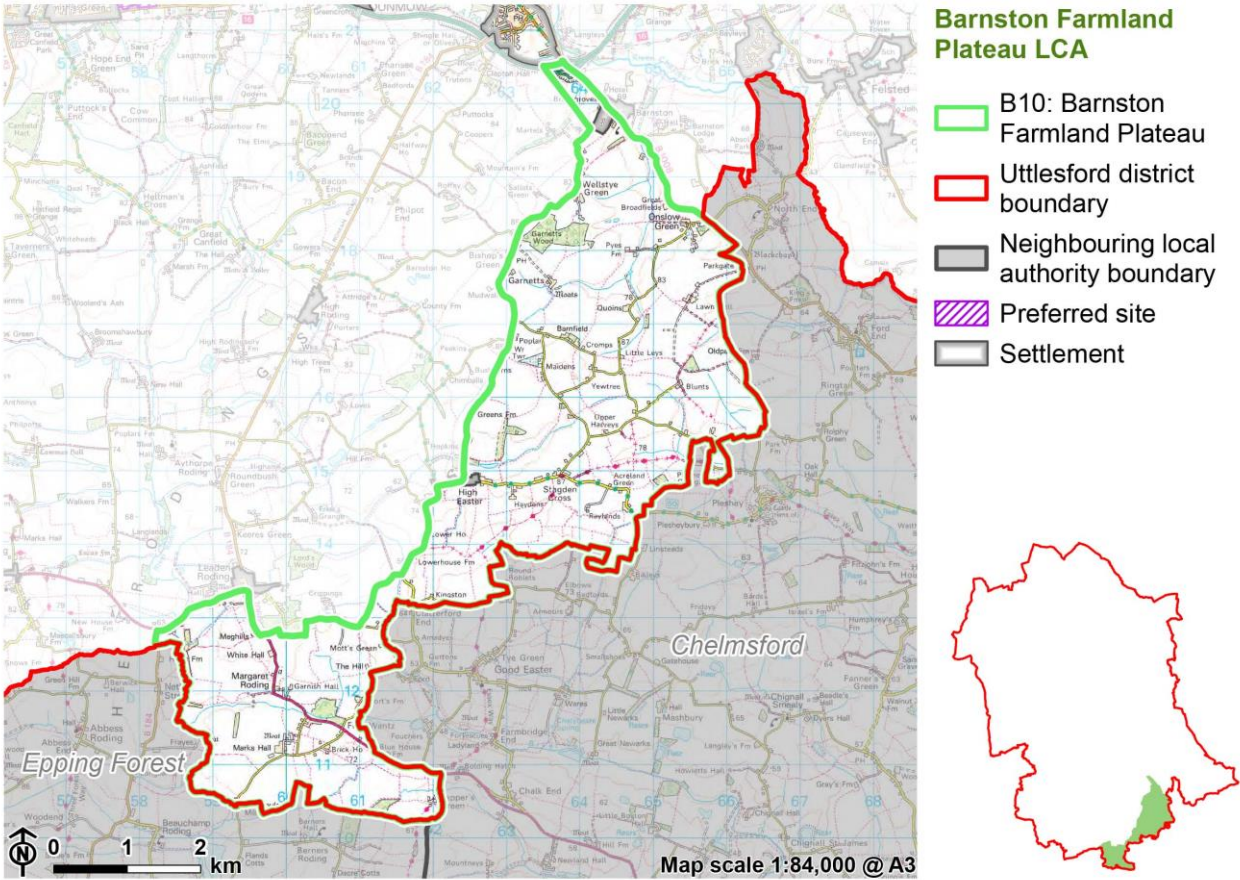


Figure 5.58: Typical view of the LCA: Open arable fields with intermittent trees and woodland blocks



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently undulating extensive plateau dissected by several small streams and brooks within very shallow valleys.
- A bedrock of chalky boulder clay and glacial till gives rise to fertile soils.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Land use and field patterns

- Intensive arable agricultural dominates the landscape, in irregular medium sized fields.
- Smaller fields and paddocks are located around hamlets or farmsteads, with medium-scale pastoral fields associated with the shallow stream valleys.
- Fields are bounded by hedgerows with some mature hedgerow trees.

Trees and woodland cover

- Woodland cover is limited, with small deciduous blocks and copses providing structure in the landscape, particularly in the south west. These are mostly of ancient origin.
- Trees line the small watercourses and generally screen settlements and isolated dwellings from the surrounding open farmland.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Pockets of ancient and semi-natural woodland as well as traditional orchards provide variety within the intensively farmed agricultural landscape, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites.
- Ponds, some former sand and gravel pits, are scattered across the landscape.

Historic landscape character

- The historic field pattern of small irregular fields of ancient origin with pockets of sinuous co-axial fields, has largely been lost through consolidation in the 20th century.
- The historic dispersed settlement pattern survives, often originally focused on greens with scattered farmsteads.
- Historic small roads and green lanes link the settlements, many of which have survived.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens. Some modern development at the edge of High Easter.
- A network of narrow winding lanes and PRowWs with a section of the National Cycle Network through Higher Easter.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Open views over the arable farmland at higher elevations, with more enclosure in the valleys in the south.
- Key visual landmarks include the church spires at High Easter and the water tower north-west of Greenstreet.
- Aircraft noise is common throughout the character area.
- Strong sense of a working landscape in large hay bales, tractors operating and smell of fertiliser.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.234 This extensive area of gently undulating farmland lies on a plateau between 55 metres AOD and 90 metres AOD. Located in the southern reaches of the London Clay Formation's bedrock of sedimentary clay, silt and sand, it is overlain with Lowestoft Formation chalky till, together with outwash sands, gravels, silts and clays. The resulting loamy soil is lime-rich and free draining though the centre of the character area and more clayey with impeded drainage in the north and south. It is generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land.

5.235 The plateau is dissected by several small watercourses including the River Can and its tributaries, unnamed tributaries of the River Roding, Parsonage Brook, and Barnston Brook. These areas are associated with valley landforms and a geological make-up of superficial head deposits (gravel, sand and clay).

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.236 Due to fertile soils the character area is characterised by widespread, intensive arable agriculture. Irregular, medium-sized arable fields bound by hedgerows and ditches dominate the farmland. The condition of the hedgerows varies across the area with some being thick and continuous, some being fragmented, and others comprising mature hedgerow trees.

5.237 Clusters of smaller pasture fields are located around the hamlets and farmsteads, and are generally used to graze horses. These consist of improved grassland and are bounded by wooden or white tape fencing. Other medium-scale pastoral fields are located in the lower elevations, in the floodplains of the watercourses. Ponds are scattered throughout the area, some of which are the result of filling disused sand and gravel pits with water.

5.238 Small deciduous copses and small woods are scattered across the arable farmland. When combined with hedgerow trees and tall hedgerows, these form more intimate landscapes. A number of these woodlands are ancient in origin and designated as LWS including Crows Wood, Beech Wood and Margaret Roding Wood. These areas are mostly found in the south-west, across the lower lying land surrounding the River Can and the unnamed tributaries of the River Roding. At higher elevations in the north of the character area there are fewer trees and woodland cover.

5.239 Despite the prevalence of intensive farmland, there are small areas of nature conservation value in addition to deciduous woodland. Priority habitats include such as traditional orchards, unimproved grassland, and scrub and wetland habitats, many of which are designated as LWS.

Cultural influences

5.240 Historic field pattern within the character area was dominated by small irregular fields of ancient origin with pockets of sinuous co-axial fields. These have largely been amalgamated and consolidated into medium-scale fields. The historic, dispersed settlement pattern, often originally focussed on greens and with scattered farmsteads, survives.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.241 Settlement is dispersed throughout the character area and typically formed of hamlets and small villages with largest settlements at Barnston, High Easter and Margaret Roding. These all contain listed buildings; High Easter is covered by a Conservation Area. There are also a number of historic moated sites (although these are not designated).

5.242 Local vernacular buildings are dispersed across the area concentrated in the hamlets and small villages; these buildings are generally colour washed with tiled or thatched roofs. Black weatherboarding and brick also feature amongst the settlements and farmsteads and some larger-scale farms have large, corrugated iron sheds. More modern, brick housing can be seen at the edge of High Easter.

5.243 There is a comprehensive network of narrow winding lanes throughout the character area, many of which are bordered by grassy ditches – in the north, many are designated Protected Lanes. The A1060 passes through Margaret Roding and the Essex Way passes through the middle of the character area, as does a section of National Cycle Network.

5.244 There are many public rights of way which criss-cross the landscape; a greater concentration is found in the centre and south.

Views and perceptual influences

5.245 This is a relatively open landscape, with little to interrupt long views over the surrounding undulating farmland, particularly in views from across the high plateau land in the north. By contrast, views nearer settlements at lower elevations in the south are typically more enclosed by tree cover and channelled by the surrounding topography. Trees generally screen settlements and isolated dwellings from the surrounding open farmland.

5.246 Church spires at High Easter and the water tower north-west of Greenstreet feature in the relatively open views and serve as local landmarks.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.247 There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area with several quiet, rural lanes winding through the landscape, settlements and dwellings generally screened by tree cover and open views at higher elevations. There are very few detractors in the landscape however the flightpath from Stansted Airport and resultant noise pollution has an occasional influence in the north, where aircraft feature across the open skyline.

5.248 The landscape has a strong character as a working agricultural landscape with noise from tractors, large storage barns of hay, the smell of fertiliser and open views across widespread farmland.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.249 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Sinuous hedgerows and ditches, small deciduous woodland and copses that provide structure to the open landscape.
- Historic integrity, resulting from numerous listed buildings in a dispersed historic settlement pattern .
- Several important wildlife habitats including woodland, traditional orchards, unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland and riverside habitats along the numerous streams.
- Comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape and the resultant overall sense of tranquillity.
- The open character of higher areas of the plateau allowing long views across the landscape.

Figure 5.59: Footpath across farmland, hedgerows with gaps and mature trees



Figure 5.60: Large farm sheds and pasture enclosed by post and wire fencing



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the River Roding, Parsonage Brook, and Barnston Brook from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, including High Easter, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly *phytophthora* pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
- Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Barnston Farmland Plateau LCA is to conserve the tranquil, historic, and rural character of the area, strengthen the woodland, hedgerow and habitat networks, and to restore riverside habitats along the River Can and its tributaries, unnamed tributaries to the River Roding, Parsonage Brook, and Barnston Brook.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the listed buildings) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, especially within High Easter Conservation Area.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands such as at Crows Wood, Beech Wood and Margaret Roding Wood; promote natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Can, and other tributary streams, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRow) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly where the A1060 crosses the area, including through roadside tree planting.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation appropriate to landscape character, of small copses and woodland blocks. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian woodland and other wetland habitats along the River Can and small watercourses, to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character, green infrastructure and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Ensure any future residential expansion on valley sides is small-scale and respects the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages and traditional vernacular. Ensure that development is well integrated with the surrounding landscape to minimise visual impact.
- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

LCA B11: Felsted Farmland Plateau

Location and summary

5.250 This character area consists of gently undulating farmland on the boulder clay plateau. It is dissected by the River Ter in the east and south.

5.251 Located in the south-east of the district, the landscape character area extends east from Felsted and Causeway End towards Willows Green, encompassing Bannister Green which lies roughly at its centre. The southern and eastern boundaries are formed by the administrative boundaries with Chelmsford and Braintree districts.

Figure 5.61: Location of B11 Felsted Farmland Plateau

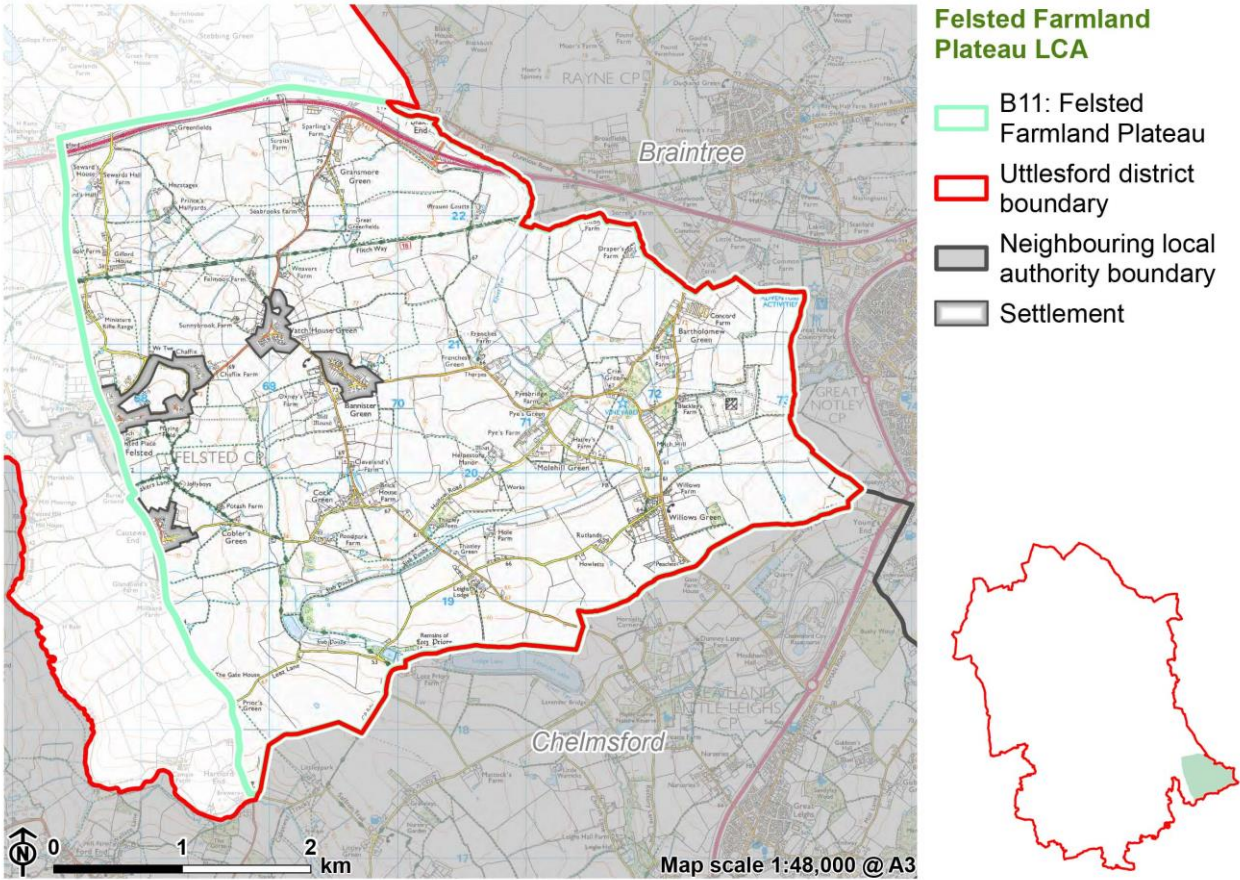


Figure 5.62: Typical view of the LCA: Isolated farmstead partially enclosed by trees



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Gently undulating farmland, dissected by the River Ter in the east and south.
- A bedrock of chalky boulder clay and glacial till gives rise to fertile soils.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

Land use and field patterns

- A landscape dominated by intensive arable farmland with a medium- to large-scale semi-irregular pattern.
- Boundaries are enclosed either by hedgerows or by grassy banks and ditches. Mature trees feature prominently within fragmented hedgerows.

Trees and woodland cover

- Scattered small woods, copses and hedgerows tree provide variation across the expansive farmland. Woodland is more prevalent at lower elevations.
- Trees and riparian vegetation line the stream corridors.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Semi natural habitats are limited. Deciduous woodland, marshland and grassland providing variety within the intensively farmed landscape.

Historic landscape character

- Historic field pattern evidenced by the occurrence of pre-18th century irregular fields.
- Historically the settlement pattern comprised dispersed or polyfocal settlement along linear and triangular greens and isolated farms set within their own lands.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- A well-populated landscape particularly in the south, with linear villages coalescing along the roads. Hamlets and farmsteads are scattered over the plateau.
- A comprehensive network of narrow winding rural lanes, lined by raised banks or hedges. The busy A120 lies in the north.
- A good network of public rights of way, including the Saffron Trail and Flich Way.

Views and perceptual qualities

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- An open expansive landscape with views across the farmland to wooded horizons, where copses and hedgerow trees knit together.
- Views from small lanes are typically enclosed by tree cover or the development, creating few opportunities for open views.
- Generally tranquil and rural landscape, away from the A120 in the north. Aeroplanes are an occasional feature across the open sky.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

5.252 This gently undulating farmland lies on a sheet of chalky till between 45 metres AOD and 80 metres AOD. The River Ter flows through the eastern and southern portions of the character area, its valleys forming topographical low points. Located in the southern reaches of chalky boulder clay from the London Clay Formation, the land is overlain by Lowestoft Formation glacial till. The resulting soil is predominantly loamy, lime-rich and clayey with impeded drainage and therefore classified as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land. Freer draining, slightly acid soils coincide with the River Ter and its floodplain alluvium and soils here are generally classified at Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land.

5.253 Arable agriculture is widespread in a patchwork of irregular, medium- to large-scale fields. Their boundaries are enclosed by thick but intermittent hedgerows or marked by grassy banks and ditches. The farmland surrounding the villages of Mole Hill Green, Bannister Green and Watch House Green is composed of smaller, irregular, predominantly pastoral grass fields. A vineyard

5.254 Small, intermittent patches of woodland are also more common at lower elevations and individual, mature trees provide variation amongst the expansive farmland. Small, scattered areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland, grassland and marshland habitat are found throughout the area, with a greater prevalence at lower elevations. Species-rich hedgerows and ditches bound the arable and

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

pastoral fields and tree/scrub-lined stream corridors feature along the banks of the River Ter and its tributaries. Flich Way is a length of disused railway which runs across the north of the character area and now provides unimproved grassland and hedgerow habitats. It is the only designated LWS in the character area.

Cultural influences

5.255 Historic land use within the character area is evidenced by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and possibly older. Fields are relatively small in the southern half of the area and become larger to the north.

5.256 Historically, the settlement comprised dispersed or polyfocal settlement strung out along an extensive network of linear and triangular greens, the latter located at road junctions. In addition, there were isolated farms set within their own lands.

5.257 The area is fairly densely populated, with the largest settlements in the south at Felsted, Bannister Green, Causeway End and Willows Green. Gransmore Green, other scattered farmsteads and clusters of houses feature in the north. In some areas, settlement has gradually expanded along the length of the roads, causing coalescence between villages and so the character area overall has a more settled feeling than the other LCAs.

5.258 The settlement pattern is based around a comprehensive network of narrow winding rural lanes. Many roads abutted by fields are also flanked by raised banks or hedges.

5.259 Interest and variety are added to the area through the presence of local vernacular buildings with colour washed walls and red tiled or thatched roofs. Listed buildings are scattered throughout the character area with a large number concentrated at Felsted, a designated Conservation Area. Leez Augustinian Priory, fishponds and Tudor mansion are Scheduled Monuments in the south, adjacent to the course of the River Ter.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

5.260 A widespread network of public rights of way criss-crosses the countryside, including a section of National Cycle Network along the Flich Way, along a disused railway line. Leez Lane is a Protected Lane, likely of Saxon origin, designated for its historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values.

5.261 Modern influences on the landscape are the busy dual carriageway the A120 in the north, electricity pylons through the centre of the area, and a solar farm south of Bartholomew Green. Larger commercial units are also found at Bartholomew Green and Grasmere Green.

Views and perceptual influences

5.262 This is an open landscape with wide, often panoramic views afforded at higher elevations. Areas of woodland knit together with hedgerows to provide landscape structure and the overall illusion of a wooden horizon. Variation in the nature of the view is determined by the woodland and tree cover which is dispersed in blocks throughout the character area. In the middle and south particularly, views from the small lanes are often enclosed by trees or houses, blinkering views.

5.263 Noise from the A120 in the north impinges on the sense of tranquillity, as does the occasional aeroplane and its associated sound. Away from the A120, the experience of this character area is of a tranquil, rural landscape with a strong sense of place in the variation of settlement, woodlands and areas of smaller-scale farmland.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

5.264 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Small, scattered woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees provide valued landscape features and a wooded horizon.
- Historic pattern of small, linear and polyfocal settlements.
- Comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and roads, with high hedges and banks.
- The open rural character of the landscape with an overall sense of tranquillity.

Figure 5.63: Open arable farmland with mature trees amongst hederows with gaps



Figure 5.64: Settlement at Bannister Green orientated around village green



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pollution of the River Ter from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Invasive species within the river and banks, including Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam altering the plant composition of the river banks.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, including Felsted, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for coalescence of the small villages through piecemeal linear expansion along the rural roads.
- Potential for new development within Braintree district to the east, which may be visually intrusive within this character area.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to further demand for solar farms, and demand for wind turbines either within or visible from the LCA.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Felsted Farmland Plateau LCA is to conserve the tranquil, historic, and rural character of the area, strengthen the woodland, hedgerow and habitat networks, protect the open views, and to restore riverside habitats along the River Ter.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve existing semi-natural habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and inappropriate road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the Leez Augustinian Priory Scheduled Monument and listed farmhouse buildings) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character. Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Encourage regeneration of woodlands; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along the River Ter, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands. Manage the spread of invasive species.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (along PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.
- Manage visual and audible intrusion of road traffic, particularly in the north along the A120, including through roadside tree planting.

Plan

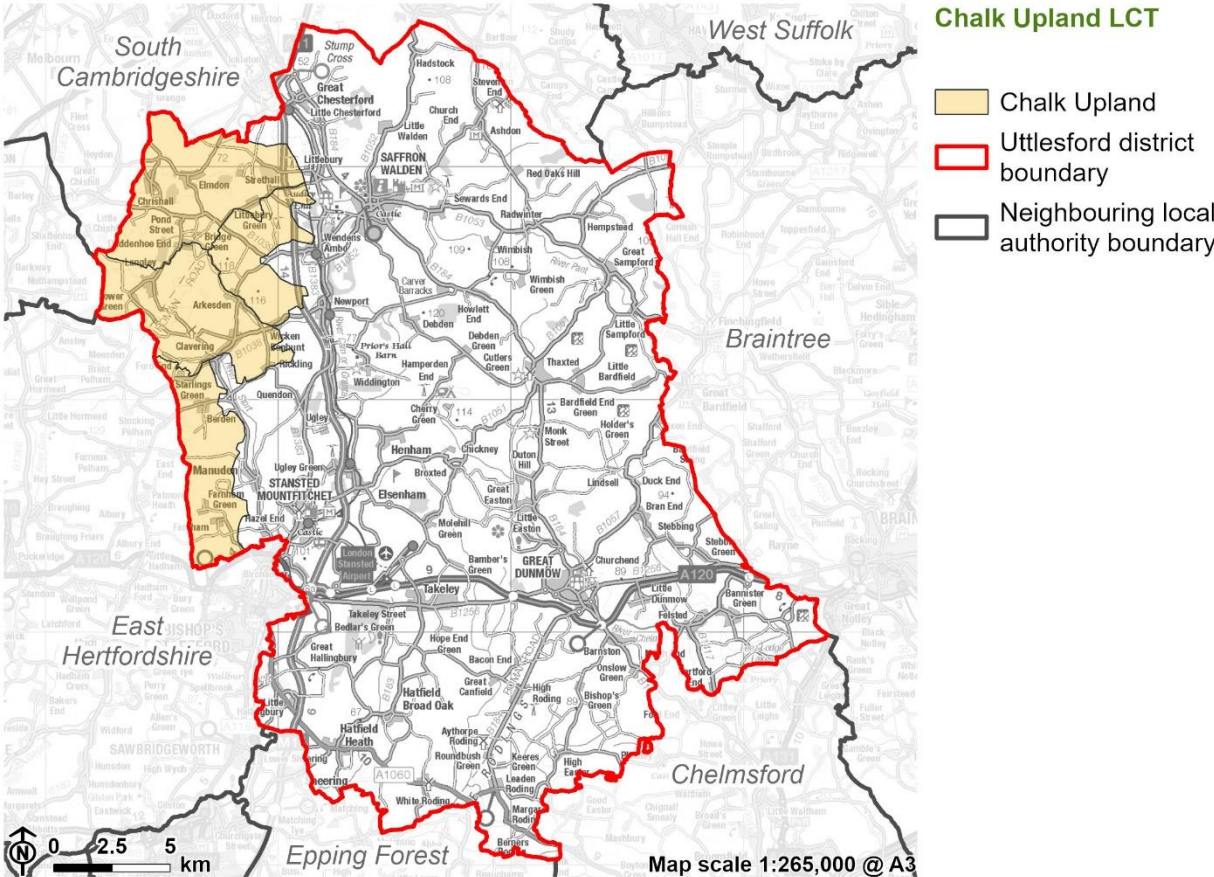
- Plan tree planting and woodland creation, appropriate to the woodland pattern of scattered woodland blocks. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to extend riparian woodland and other wetland habitats along the River Ter, to form green corridors to contribute to landscape character, green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery networks.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.

LCT B: Farmland Plateau

- Ensure that any future solar farms are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design, retaining an agricultural use to the fields where possible.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.
- Plan to incorporate green infrastructure links to contribute to nature recovery networks, enhance landscape character and provide sustainable opportunities for travel, access and recreation.

Landscape Character Type C: Chalk Uplands

Figure 5.65: Location of LCT C Chalk Uplands



5.265 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type (LCT) are:

- Strongly rolling landform of broad, round-backed ridges.
- Large scale arable farmland.
- Distinctive elevated, expansive and generally open character.
- Panoramic views from ridgetops.
- Dispersed blocks of woodland and isolated copses.

LCT C: Chalk Uplands

- Sparse settlement pattern of small linear villages alongside stream courses, and hamlets with greens.

5.266 The following Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are located within the Chalk Uplands LCT:

- C1 Elmdon Chalk Upland
- C2 Arkesden Chalk Upland
- C3 Langley Chalk Upland
- C4 Berden Chalk Upland

LCA C1: Elmdon Chalk Upland

Location and summary

5.267 This character area encompasses the rolling chalk ridge that runs across north-west Essex into Cambridgeshire. It is a transitional landscape where the rolling chalklands to the north meet the claylands of Essex to the south. It is an upland landscape of large-scale arable farming, interspersed with blocks of ancient woodland.

5.268 The area is located in the north west of the district, and stretches from the administrative boundary with South Cambridgeshire to the north and west, to Littlebury in the east and Upper Pond Street/Bridge Green in the south. The M11 juts into the east, separating the area from the Cam River Valley (LCA A1).

Figure 5.66: Location of C1 Elmdon Chalk Upland

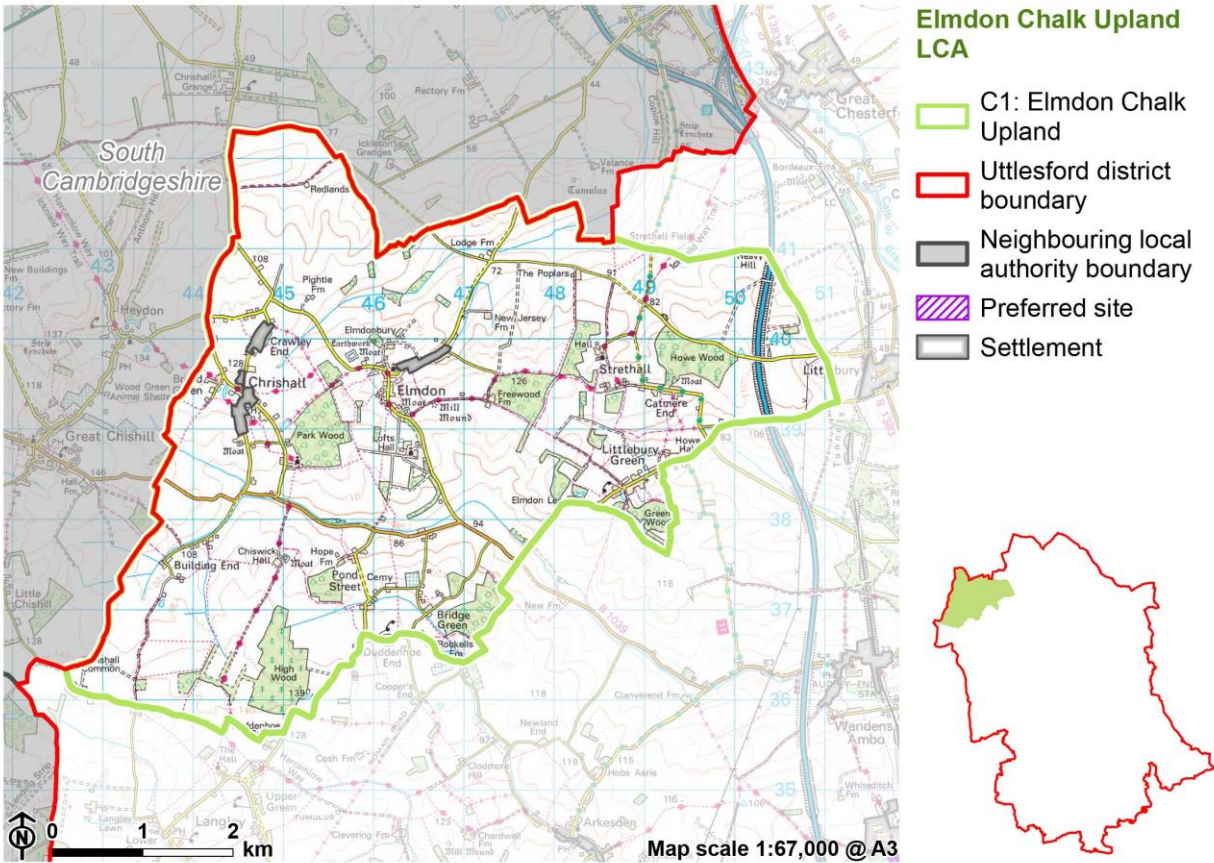


Figure 5.67: Typical view of the LCA: large open arable fields with woodland blocks providing a partially wooded horizon



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Rolling upland landscape with broad flat-topped ridges. Small tributaries of the Cam cut through the chalk.
- The chalk bedrock results in light soils which are well suited to arable farming.

Land use and field patterns

- Large-scale rectilinear field pattern supports intensive arable farming. Drainage ditches, grassy tracks and low hedgerows define field boundaries.

LCT C: Chalk Uplands

Trees and woodland cover

- Large blocks of ancient woodland sit on the hilltops and punctuate the open farmland, with some shaws on field edges.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Deciduous woodland including priority habitat and ancient woodlands designated as Local Wildlife Sites provide biodiversity interest.
- Semi-natural habitats are otherwise limited to small areas of fragmented grasslands including pasture and road verges, often designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Historic landscape character

- The medieval landscape is still evident, with the fieldscape dominated by large common-fields, with some enclosure.
- Largely intact medieval settlement pattern of nucleated villages and hamlets located in the valleys. Isolated farmhouses are located on the hill tops.
- Farms, church/hall complexes, small manors and moated sites are set alongside village greens or 'Ends'.
- Rich cultural heritage of vernacular architecture, with pale colour-washed and timber-framed houses, often with thatched roofs and brick and flint walls.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Settlement is concentrated at Elmdon and Chrishall. Elsewhere settlement is more widely dispersed.
- Road access is generally limited to winding sunken lanes while open roads cross the uplands. The M11 crosses the east in a cutting.
- Public access is more limited than other areas. The ancient trackway, the Icknield Way extends along the chalk ridge and the promoted route Harcamlow Way runs south from Chrishall.

LCT C: Chalk Uplands

Views and perceptual qualities

- Higher ground and slopes afford panoramic vistas with big skies which contrasts with enclosure along tree-lined lanes and villages.
- A feeling of openness with large-scale field patterns, few trees and little visible settlement.
- Highly rural landscape, with a good experience of tranquillity and dark night skies.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

1.1 An upland landscape, with broad ridges intersected by steep valleys to provide a rolling landform. Topography ranges from 70 metres AOD to 135 metres AOD. Located on the Lewes Nodular and New Pit Chalk Formations, with considerable overlays of glacial diamicton, while Head deposits of gravel, sand, silt and clay follow the small unnamed tributaries of the River Cam. The resulting soil is lime-rich and loamy and generally classified as Grade 2 (very good).

1.2 The landscape is dominated by large-scale and intensive arable agriculture. The resulting landscape is open, although large blocks of ancient woodland provide punctuation on the hilltops. The majority of the woodlands are priority habitat deciduous woodland, with areas of replanted conifers at High Wood and Howe Wood. The woodlands are all designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Outside of the woodlands, semi-natural habitats are limited to small areas of pasture and meadow.

1.3 Large-scale, rectilinear arable fields have a variety of field boundary treatments including drainage ditches, grassy tracks and broken hedgerows. There are also a number of shaws around field edges. Some field boundaries are now reinforced by post and wire or post and rail. Pasture fields on lower slopes

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and on the edge of villages are more irregular in shape and largely now in use for horse grazing.

Cultural influences

1.4 The medieval landscape is still evident, with the fieldscape dominated by large common-fields, of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex. Some fields were enclosed by agreement in the early post-medieval period, the remainder being enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, partially as a function of the Parliamentary enclosure act. On the higher land the landscape is more typical of Essex than Cambridgeshire with winding lanes, dispersed hamlets and greens and ancient woodlands.

1.5 Settlement is concentrated at Elmdon and Chrishall. Elmdon is a small, nucleated settlement with exemplary historic buildings, designated as a Conservation Area. Chrishall is a linear settlement, and also contains a wealth of historic listed buildings. Outside of Elmdon, there is a highly dispersed settlement pattern. Settlements are focused on churches or halls, with moats, farms and manors set along historic Greens and Ends. Many of these are designated as listed buildings or Scheduled Monuments. A strong vernacular of pale colour-washed and timber-framed houses with thatched roofs, including an unusual thatched-roof church between Pond Street and Duddenhoe End.

1.6 Winding lanes and minor roads, many of ancient origin, provide access to the scattered settlements. Many are designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values. Lanes are often sunken and tree-lined, and very tranquil. In contrast to the narrow local road system, the M11 runs in cutting through the east of this area.

1.7 The landscape is crossed by a series of ancient roads and tracks. The ancient Icknield Way crosses east to west along the upland chalk ridge and the Harcamlow Way runs from Chrishall southwards towards Langley. There is also a network of public footpaths that link villages, but overall there are fewer public

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footpaths than in other character areas, due possibly to the poor soils and historic lack of early settlement in the chalk uplands.

Views and perceptual influences

1.8 Sweeping vistas of large-scale rolling arable land are punctuated by blocks of trees on the hilltops or broken low thorn hedges along ditches or field boundaries. These open views of large skies contrast with the enclosure along tree-lined roads, and within the settlements, which often lie in the valleys.

1.9 The texture of this countryside is varied, from the smooth pale chalk slopes to the patchwork of darker woodlands and varied colourful vernacular buildings scattered across the landscape.

1.10 There are few detractors within the landscape; a sewage works outside Elmdon is well integrated with linear windbreak trees. This is a landscape well cared for, with a strong sense of place. There is a strong sense of tranquillity away from the roads.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

1.11 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Blocks of ancient and semi-natural woodland visible on hilltops, and scattered trees within field boundaries.
- Winding rural lanes with flower-rich grass verges, often of ancient origin.
- Historic integrity of the intact medieval settlement pattern of traditional villages located around greens and numerous historic buildings.

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- The open character of the skyline on the ridges, with panoramic views and strong visual connections to adjacent landscapes.
- A working agricultural landscape with strong rural qualities, and a sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Figure 5.68: Rolling arable fields with a wooded horizon



Figure 5.69: Chrishall village set round a small green



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, including Elmdon, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for new development within Cambridgeshire to the north which would be visually intrusive to views within this character area.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.

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- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- Pressure for telecommunication masts, especially along the M11 that may be visually intrusive in this open landscape.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Elmdon Chalk Uplands LCA is to conserve the open, rural, tranquil character of the landscape. Seek to reinforce hedgerow and other field boundaries, and conserve and connect areas of adjacent woodlands.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve ancient and semi-natural woodlands, shaws and hedgerows.

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- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and road upgrades.
- Ensure that important heritage assets (including the moats and halls) are appropriately managed to avoid their loss or degradation.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, including within Elmdon Conservation Area.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.

Plan

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- Plan tree planting and woodland creation where appropriate to landscape character. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance connections between existing woodlands to increase habitat connectivity and enhance landscape character.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by a programme to create new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

LCA C2: Arkesden Chalk Upland

Location and summary

5.269 This character area is formed of the chalk upland that rises west of the Cam valley slopes. It comprises large-scale arable farming and is very open. Arkesden village in the south-west is the only settlement, resulting in a very rural character.

5.270 The area is located in the north west of the district, and is bounded by Wicken Water on the south and west, and the Cam valley to the east. The Chalk Uplands continue to the north and west, in LCAs C1 and C3.

Figure 5.70: Location of C2 Arkesden Chalk Upland

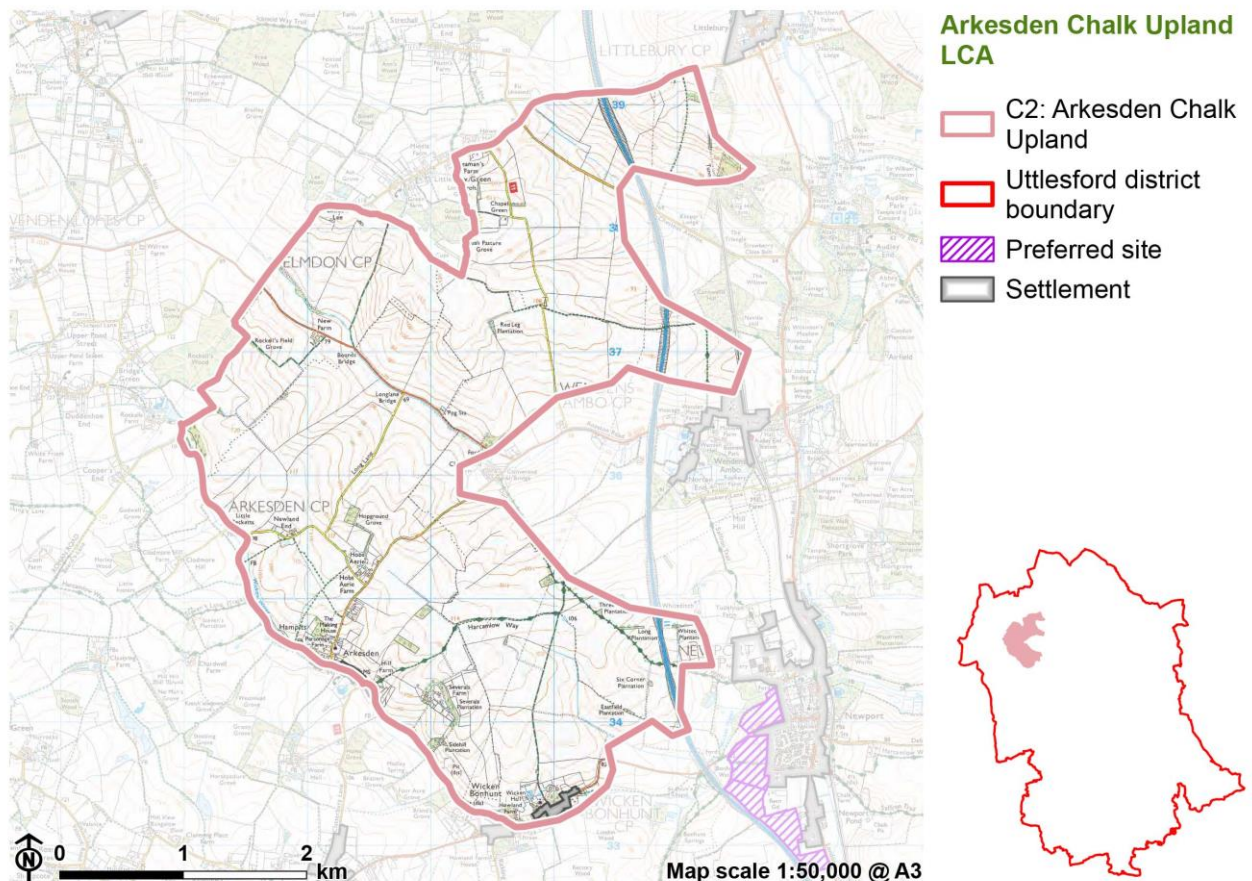


Figure 5.71: Typical view of the LCA: open rolling arable fields with limited tree cover



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Rolling upland landscape with almost flat-topped ridges in the north-east.
- The chalk bedrock results in light soils which are well suited to arable farming.
- Wicken Water runs along the west and south.

Land use and field patterns

- Dominated by intensive arable agriculture, in a large-scale regular field pattern. Small scale pasture for horse grazing is found close to settlements.
- Hedgerows are more limited and fragmented - ditches and grassy tracks provide field boundaries.

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Trees and woodland cover

- An open and exposed landscape with very few woodlands or trees. Small blocks of broadleaved woodland line Wicken Water, with small shaws near Arkesden and copses found around farmsteads.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Very limited semi-natural habitats outside of Wicken Water, although arable field margins provide some biodiversity interest.

Historic landscape character

- The medieval landscape is still evident, with the fieldscape dominated by large common-fields.
- Dispersed medieval settlement pattern of linear hamlets and villages centred on small greens.
- Rich cultural heritage of vernacular architecture, of pale colour-washed buildings with thatched roofs.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- A largely unpopulated area. Settlement is concentrated in the south along Wicken Water, at Arkesden and Wicken Bonhunt. Outside the villages, individual farmsteads are widely dispersed.
- Very straight lanes, many ancient, run up the slopes. These are often open or bound by fragmented hedgerows.
- Few public rights of way, although Harcamlow Way crosses the south of the area.

Views and perceptual qualities

- The broad ridges in the north east afford wide views. These contrast with enclosed views along Wicken Water.

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- A feeling of openness with a large scale field pattern, few trees and little visible settlement. Woodland blocks outside the area create a distant wooded horizon.
- Highly rural landscape, with good levels of tranquillity and dark night skies.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

1.12 An upland landscape, with broad ridges intersected by steep valleys to provide a rolling landform. Topography ranges from 75 metres AOD to 135 metres AOD. Located on the Lewes Nodular Formation, with considerable overlays of glacial diamicton. Head deposits of gravel, sand, silt and clay follow Wicken Water and the small unnamed tributary along the B1039. Former extraction pits at Royston Road and Arkesden are designated as Local Geological Sites for their exposures of chalk and glacial gravels.

1.13 The resulting soil is lime-rich and loamy and generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) and as a result the landscape is dominated by large-scale and intensive arable agriculture. Fields are bound by ditches or grassy tracks, resulting in a very open landscape. Smaller pasture fields on the edge of villages, and particularly along the course of Wicken Water, are more irregular in shape and largely in use for horse grazing.

1.14 Semi-natural habitats are limited to small shaws or woodland blocks, including priority habitat deciduous riparian woodland lining Wicken Water.

Cultural influences

1.15 An often unpopulated landscape, particularly in the north. Settlement is concentrated along Wicken Water, at Arkesden and Wicken Bonhunt. These are

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historic linear settlements, with a number of listed buildings. Arkesden is covered by a Conservation Area. The Grade II* listed Church of St Mary the Virgin sits dramatically on a rise over the Arkesden village green and is a local landmark. There is a strong vernacular of colour-washed plaster and thatched roofed buildings. Wicken Water is apparent within the villages, with individual small bridges across the river providing access between the houses and main road.

1.16 Outside of the villages, individual farmsteads and widely dispersed, although generally located south of the B1039. Most are historic brick buildings, some listed, although there are some modern agricultural barns and sheds which are of a larger-scale and somewhat out of place.

1.17 Straight, narrow lanes, many of ancient origin provide access to the area. Many are designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values. Lanes are often open, or lined by occasional fragmented hedgerows. The M11 runs in cutting through the east of this area.

1.18 The medieval landscape is still evident, with the fieldscape dominated by large common-fields, of the Cambridgeshire and Midland type, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex. Some fields were enclosed by agreement in the early post-medieval period, the remainder being enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, partially as a function of the Parliamentary enclosure act. On the higher land the landscape is more typical of Essex than Cambridgeshire with winding lanes, and linear hamlets with greens in a dispersed settlement pattern.

1.19 Public rights of way are few, and there are large tracts of land which have no public access. The Harcamlow Way crosses the south, connecting Arkesden to Newport.

Views and perceptual influences

1.20 Panoramic views on the higher ground in the north-east over the rolling arable fields provide a distinctive sense of place. These contrast with the more intimate landscapes on the Wicken Water valley floor, with views channelled

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through trees to the sloping countryside. The sound of water from weirs and fords along Wicken Water adds a sense of place.

1.21 Electricity pylons cross the south-east, and more distant pylons are evident in views from the north-east. Although the M11 crosses the east, there is limited road noise. Some views to the edge of Saffron Walden are possible from the higher ground. Recent housing remains in keeping with the local settlement pattern.

1.22 This landscape remains very rural, and at times remote, tucked away above the western Cam valley slopes. The texture of the landscape is varied and interesting.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

1.23 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Riparian woodland along the Wicken Water and scattered trees provides visual interest within the landscape.
- Ditches and grassy tracks on the roads and lanes create an open character.
- Very straight rural lanes of ancient origin, which afford panoramic views from higher ground.
- The open character of the landscape in the north-east with long views and big skies. Strong visual connections to adjacent landscapes create a sense of place.
- Sparsely settled character which contributes to the perception of a rural agricultural landscape.

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- Historic villages at Arkesden and Wicken Bonhunt with a traditional vernacular style located around greens provide time-depth to the landscape.
- High sense of tranquillity and remoteness from the elevation of the landscape, particularly when compared to the enclosure along Wicken Water.

Figure 5.72: Open arable fields with far-reaching views



Figure 5.73: Rolling arable fields along open narrow roads



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and riparian vegetation.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Potential for pollution of Wicken Water from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley sides and farmland plateau areas.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, including Arkesden and Wicken Bonhunt, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new, larger farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.

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- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- Pressure for telecommunication masts, especially along the M11 that may be visually intrusive in this open landscape.
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Arkesden Chalk Uplands LCA is to conserve the open, rural, tranquil character of the landscape. Seek to reinforce hedgerow and other field boundaries, and restore marginal riverside habitats along Wicken Water.

Protect and conserve

- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

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- Protect the dispersed medieval settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farms.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, including within Arkesden Conservation Area.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.

Manage

- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along Wicken Water, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.
- Encourage sensitive management and screening of existing horse grazing and related activities; seek to enhance the visual appearance of grassland managed as horse paddocks.

Plan

- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by a programme to create new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Plan tree planting and new woodland creation on hilltops and scarps to form focal points to reinforce the chalklands landscape character. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.

LCT C: Chalk Uplands

- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Utilise traditional building materials, locally sourced where possible.

LCA C3: Langley Chalk Upland

Location and summary

5.271 This character area is formed of the chalk upland that rises west of the Cam valley slopes. It comprises a rolling plateau landscape interspersed by small river valleys. Large-scale arable farming contrasts with small-scale populated valleys.

5.272 The area is located in the north west of the district and is bounded by Wicken Water to the east, and the administrative boundary with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire to the west. The Chalk Uplands continue to the north, east and south-west in LCAs C1, C2 and C4, and the River Stort valley runs to the south (LCA A2).

Figure 5.74: Location of C3 Langley Chalk Upland

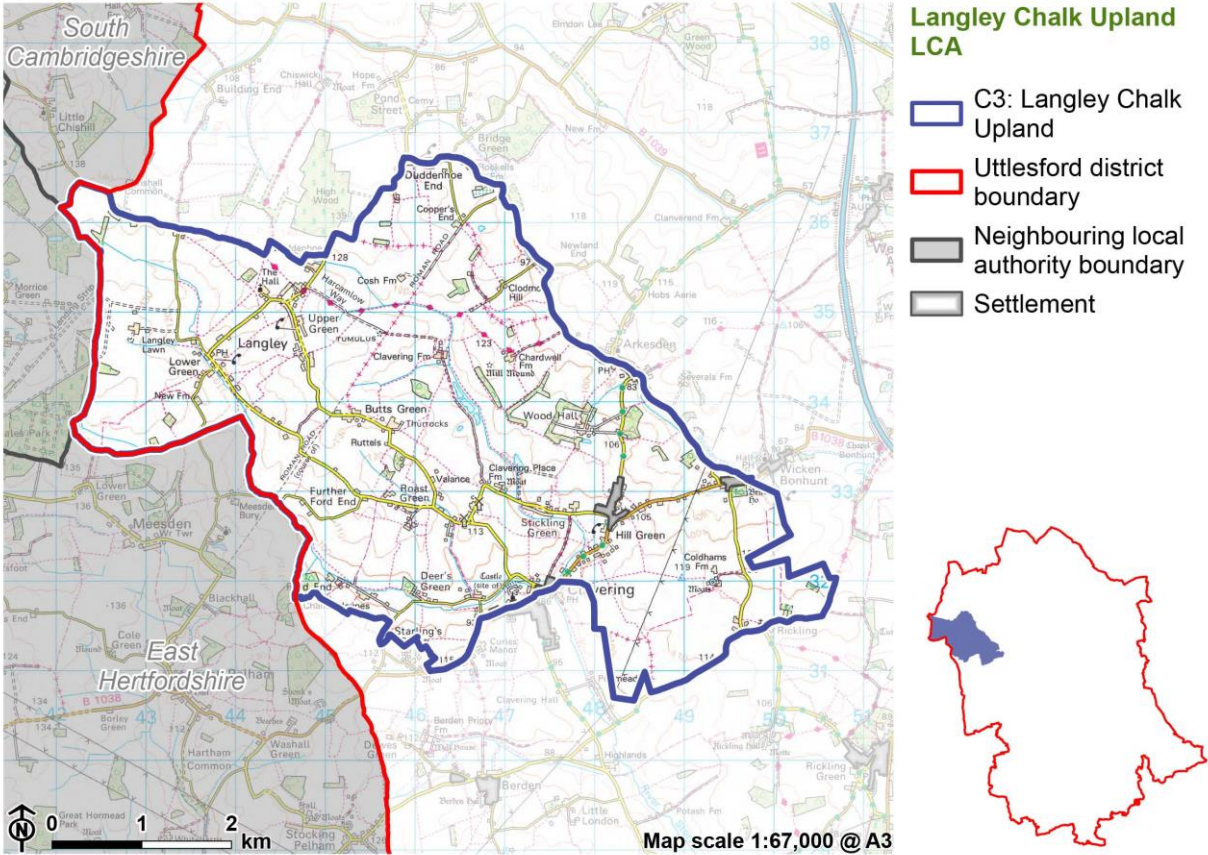


Figure 5.75: Typical view of the LCA: large open arable fields with wooded horizons



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- Rolling plateau landscape with broad ridges, eroded by narrow stream valleys.
- The chalk bedrock results in light soils which are well suited to arable farming.
- Wicken Water runs along the eastern boundary, and the River Stort rises near Langley.

Land use and field patterns

- Dominated by intensive arable agriculture, with a medium- to large-scale regular field pattern. Smaller scale pasture for horse grazing is found close to settlements.

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- Fragmented hedgerows, ditches and grassy tracks provide field boundaries.

Trees and woodland cover

- An open and exposed landscape with few woodlands or trees except for broadleaved woodland associated with valley bottoms and streams, including Wicken Water.
- Small shaws are located south of Arkesden, with small copses found around farmsteads.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Limited semi-natural habitats except for small woodlands and grasslands, some designated as Local Wildlife Sites, and pasture along the Wicken Water. Arable field margins provide some biodiversity interest.

Historic landscape character

- The medieval landscape is still evident, with the fieldscape dominated by large common-fields.
- Rich cultural heritage of vernacular architecture, with pale colour-washed buildings and thatched roofs.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Small linear settlements set around village greens are located along the valleys, with few on the higher ground.
- Many lanes with good vehicular access, generally open to the fields.
- Good network of public rights of way including Harcamlow Way and route of a Roman Road.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Contrast between large-scale, expansive and isolated higher ground and small-scale, intimate wooded valleys.

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- Wide views from higher ground contrast with enclosed views along Wicken Water.
- Feeling of openness with few trees and little visible settlement.
- Highly rural area, with good levels of tranquillity and dark night skies. Electricity pylons are visible across the area.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

1.24 An upland landscape, with broad ridges intersected by narrow valleys to provide a rolling landform. Topography ranges from 95 metres AOD to 145 metres AOD. Located on the Lewes Nodular Formation, with considerable overlays of glacial diamicton, while Head deposits of gravel, sand, silt and clay follow Wicken Water and the River Stort. Clavering Lakes are a series of man-made lakes constructed for fishing.

1.25 The resulting soil is lime-rich loamy and clayey with impeded drainage, and generally classified as Grade 2 (very good). The higher ground is dominated by large-scale and intensive arable agriculture. Fields are regular shaped and medium to large-scale, bound by broken hedgerows and isolated trees. Some grazing and rough grassland is found on the edges of settlements, and the river valleys are marked by meadows.

1.26 Small scattered blocks of woodland are generally recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland, with three small ancient woodlands. Occasional priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland is found along the river and stream valleys. Many of the woodlands and pasture fields are locally designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Cultural influences

1.27 The original medieval settlement pattern largely survives and consists of dispersed linear villages alongside greens, mostly within stream valleys. The settlement pattern is more dispersed in other parts of the LCA, with a number of individual halls and farmsteads. In places these have coalesced along the roads to create linear villages, such as Hill Green and Clavering.

1.28 A distinctive characteristic of this area is naming the villages and hamlets after the village green, for example Stickling Green and Butts Green. Where small hamlets cross streams, it is not uncommon to have to cross small individual bridges to reach the houses on the riverbanks, as at Mill End. Villages contains many historic listed buildings, with Clavering designated as a Conservation Area. A rich heritage of vernacular buildings survives, with local materials including colour-washed plaster, thatched roofs and mellow old red brick. Some new development on the edge of existing settlements is relatively well integrated, and constructed of local materials such as pale plaster.

1.29 Historic farm outbuildings are constructed with weatherboarding and red brick common, and many are listed. A scattering of Scheduled Monuments provides time-depth, including a Roman barrow, medieval moated site and earthwork remains of Clavering Castle .

1.30 Narrow open lanes bound by fragmented hedgerows cross the landscape, connecting the small settlements. Many are designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values. In contrast, lanes leading to Clavering in the Stort valley are sunken and tree-lined.

1.31 The historic field pattern consists of large irregular fields of pre-18th century origin, interspersed with patches of pre-18th century unenclosed commons.

1.32 An extensive network of interconnected public footpaths crosses the area. This includes the line of the ancient Roman Road (thought to link Great

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Chesterford and Braughing) which runs south-west to north-east and the promoted route, Harcamlow Way, which crosses the north and south-east.

Views and perceptual influences

1.33 An open landscape with big skies, and panoramic views from higher ground over the rolling arable fields. Woodland forms a backdrop to the landscape as a dense block on the horizon or lining the valleys below.

1.34 The open areas contrast with more intimate landscapes on the Stort and Wicken Water valley floors, with views channelled along tree-lined sunken lanes. The sound of water from weirs and fords along Wicken Water adds to the sense of place.

1.35 Electricity pylons and a phone mast are visible in the Clavering area, but in general, only telegraph poles, hedgerows or trees break the horizon, resulting in a rural and largely undeveloped landscape, with a strong sense of place.

1.36 Tranquillity is high away from Clavering and the busier roads, and there is a good experience of dark night skies. The texture of the landscape is varied and interesting.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

1.37 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Scattered blocks of dense woodland, some ancient, on the horizon and within valleys form conspicuous landscape features in the open landscape.

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- Ditches and grassy tracks on field edges create an open character.
- Tree-lined sunken lanes in the Stort valley contrast with the open narrow lanes on higher ground.
- The open skyline and spectacular views from high ground across rolling farmland and down to the wooded stream valleys.
- Historic integrity of the dispersed settlement pattern arranged along linear greens and stream valleys.
- The strong local vernacular of pale colour-wash and thatched roofs found in the many historic buildings.
- High sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Figure 5.76: Open arable field with a wooded horizon



Figure 5.77: Historic houses around a linear green at Langley



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Pressure for expansion of Butts Green and Roast Green, which may be detrimental to landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new, larger farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Potential for pollution of Wicken Water from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley sides and farmland plateau areas.

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- Pressure for telecommunication masts that may be visually intrusive in this open landscape.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- The chalk upland landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Langley Chalk Uplands LCA is to conserve the open, rural, tranquil character of this intensively farmed area. Seek to reinforce and restore hedgerow and other field boundaries, and restore marginal riverside habitats along Wicken Water and River Stort.

Protect and conserve

- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and road upgrades.

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- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character, including within Clavering Conservation Area.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage and protect regeneration of woodlands; consider promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.
- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern and structure of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species. Manage grazing mammals and vigorous weed species to promote a greater range of age classes.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Strengthen and enhance the marginal riverside habitat along Wicken Water and River Stort, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.

Plan

- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by a programme to create new hedgerows and calcareous grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.

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- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Plan tree planting and new woodland creation, on hilltops and scarps to form focal points to reinforce the chalklands landscape character. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

LCA C4: Berden Chalk Upland

Location and summary

5.273 This character area is formed of the chalk upland that rises west of the Stort valley slopes. It comprises a broad undulating plateau landscape interspersed by small river valleys. Large-scale arable farming contrasts with steeply sloping wooded stream valleys.

5.274 It is bounded by the River Stort valley to the east (LCA A3), and the administrative boundary with Hertfordshire to the west and south. The Chalk Uplands continue to the north in LCA C3.

Figure 5.78: Location of C4 Berden Chalk Upland

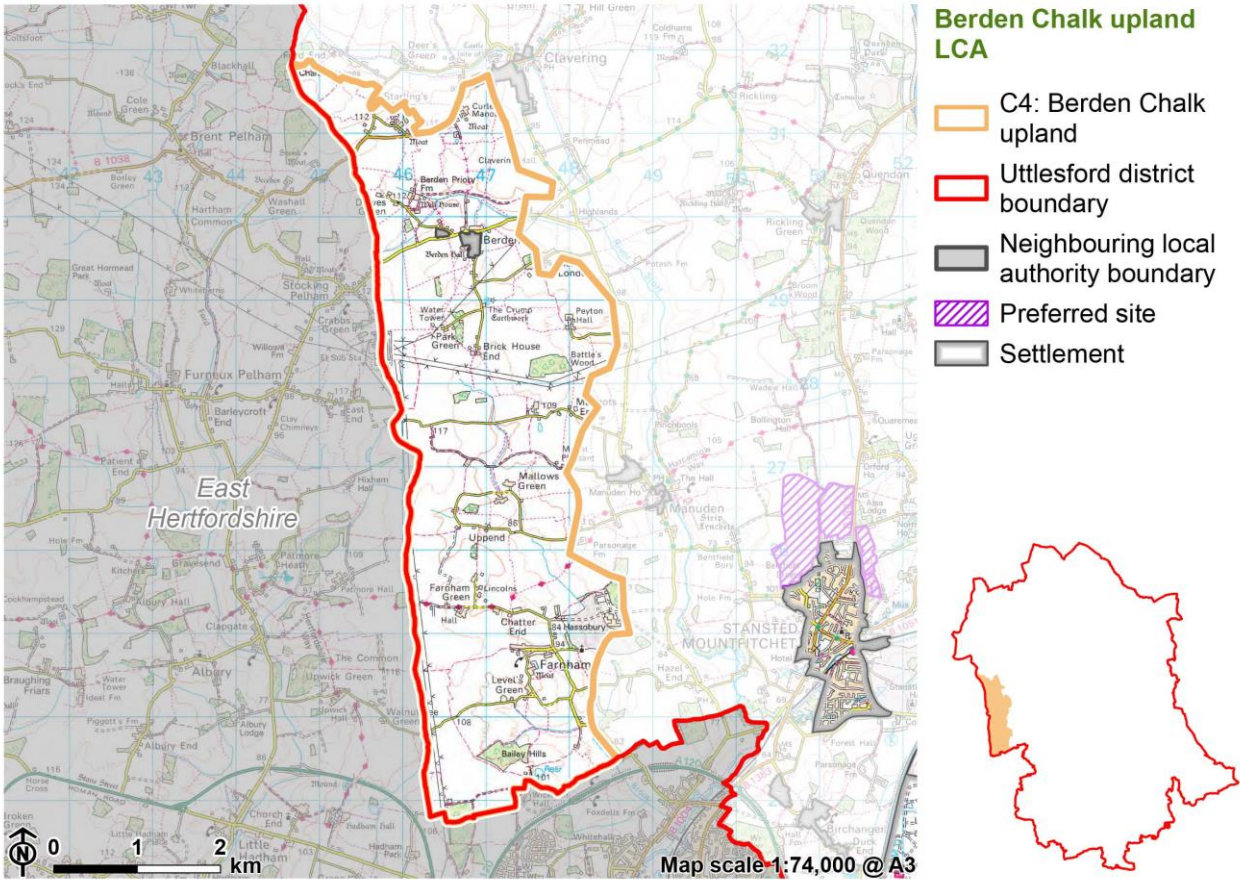


Figure 5.79: Typical view of the LCA: open arable fields with tree cover along field boundaries and pylon routes



Key characteristics

Geology, soils, topography and drainage

- An elevated landscape that rises from the Stort Valley. Broad undulating slopes flatten at the highest elevations, dissected by small watercourses.
- A complex underlying geology which transitions from chalk in the north to clay, silt and sand in the south, overlain by fertile soils.

Land use and field patterns

- A regular large-scale field pattern on higher ground, supports intensive arable production. Fields are bounded by fragmented hedgerows.
- The field pattern becomes smaller and more organic in the valleys in the south and around villages where pasture, often horse grazing, is more common.

LCT C: Chalk Uplands

Trees and woodland cover

- Spares woodland cover of small deciduous woodland blocks, many of ancient origin and scattered tree groups.

Semi-natural habitats and biodiversity

- Deciduous woodlands and some unimproved grasslands and wetlands provide semi-natural habitats, many designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Arable field margins provide some biodiversity interest.

Historic landscape character

- A high concentration of historic farmhouses, halls and moated sites, with a strong vernacular of traditional materials including timber-frame and plaster buildings.

Settlement, transport pattern and rights of way

- Infrequent settlement concentrated in the villages of Farnham and Berden, Otherwise, a widely dispersed settlement pattern, with scattered farmsteads and halls.
- Limited vehicular access along narrow lanes, which often lead to dead ends.
- A good network of public rights of way, including Harcamlow Way in the south.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Wide open vistas with big skies on higher ground contrast with more intimate, enclosed character along the steep-sided Bourne Brook.
- Distinct blocks of trees provide a wooded horizon and frame views. Electricity pylons are a common feature in views.
- Strong sense of emptiness and openness, with good levels of tranquillity and dark night skies.

Landscape character description

Natural influences

1.38 An upland landscape of broad undulating slopes that flatten at the highest elevations. Topography varies from 120 metres AOD to 70 metres AOD, where the landscape is dissected by small springs and watercourses including Bourne Brook, and a number of small ponds. Around Berden the upland ridges are broad and almost flat, moving southwards the slopes become more rolling and wooded.

1.39 Located on the transition from Lewes Nodular and Seaford Chalk Formations in the north to Thanet Formation and Lambeth Group clay, silt and sand and London Clay Formation in the south. Considerable overlays of glacial diamicton are found across the area, with occasional small patches of glacial sand and gravel and Head deposits along the watercourses. Mallows Green Chalk Pit is an overgrown chalk pit showing exposure of Reading Beds overlying Chalk, designated as a Local Geological Site.

1.40 The resulting soil is lime-rich loamy and clayey with slightly impeded drainage, and generally classified as Grade 2 (very good) which support intensive arable cropping. The higher ground in the northern and middle part of the area is dominated by large-scale arable fields which are large and regular in shape, bounded by fragmented hedgerows and scrub-lined ditches. In the valleys and around villages the field pattern is generally more irregular and smaller in scale, and in use as pasture. Much of the pasture has now been converted to horse grazing. Occasionally post- and-rail fences enclose fields.

1.41 Tree cover is sparse, with tree groups and small blocks of priority habitat deciduous woodland concentrated in the centre and south along the Bourne Brook, many recorded as ancient woodland. The woodlands and a small number of unimproved grasslands and wetlands are locally designated LWS.

Cultural influences

1.42 A very rural landscape, with settlement concentrated at Berden and Farnham. Berden originated as a church/hall complex, with the Grade I listed church of St Nicolas and II* listed Berden Hall set apart from the rest of the village. A former priory and associated hospital at Berden are evidence of the religious communities once found across Uttlesford.

1.43 Elsewhere, settlement is widely dispersed along linear greens and 'Ends'. A high number of moated sites, halls and large historic farmsteads with outbuildings, many of which are listed buildings. A strong local vernacular of timber-frame, colour-washed plaster buildings with occasional red brick outbuildings.

1.44 Narrow rural lanes run east to west, and divide the area almost in thirds. Roads are often dead ends, or turn into private tracks resulting in a relatively inaccessible landscape. The lanes are often lined by fragmented or missing hedgerows, providing an open character. Many are designated as Protected Lanes, for their historic, biodiversity and aesthetic values.

1.45 Evidence of historic land use is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, with a number of small areas of pre-18th century unenclosed common.

1.46 A strong public right of way network allows recreational access across the area. The promoted Harcamlow Way runs through the south, and connects to Manuden and Hertfordshire to the west.

Views and perceptual influences

1.47 Panoramic views with big skies on the higher open ground in the centres and north over the rolling arable fields provide a distinctive sense of place. These contrast with the more enclosed and intimate character along the steep more

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wooded slopes of the Bourne Brook valley to the south, where narrow lanes are sunken and/or tree-lined.

1.48 Electricity pylon routes dominate the skyline, and on the plateau outside Berden lead to a highly visible electricity transformer station on the western district boundary.

1.49 The limited settlement and access by road leads to a sense of remoteness and good experience of relatively dark night skies. Tranquillity is generally high, particularly in the north and west, but impacted locally by proximity to Farnham, and to Bishops Stortford to the south. The texture of this landscape changes with the landform; moving from smooth expansive fields to winding lanes to steeply sloping mature woodland.

Landscape Evaluation

Key landscape qualities and sensitivities

1.50 The most valued attributes of this LCA, which would therefore be most sensitive to change are summarised as:

- Small blocks of semi-natural woodland, some ancient, provide landscape structure and frame views.
- Small springs and watercourses create interest within the landscape.
- Historic, narrow lanes, which are enclosed along the Bourne Brook and open on the higher plateau.
- Historic integrity of the widely dispersed settlement pattern of traditional villages and strong local vernacular .
- The varied character, with the open skylines on the ridges, with panoramic views across the plateau contrasting with the intimate feel of the steep wooded slopes descending to the Bourn Brook

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■ An often inaccessible and highly rural landscape with a sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Figure 5.80: Open fields with a wooded horizon



Figure 5.81: Isolated farmsteads set in open arable fields



Pressures and forces for change

- Agricultural intensification leading to further loss or fragmentation of semi-natural habitats, now limited to the hedge network and woodland blocks.
- Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Pressure for telecommunication masts that may be visually intrusive in this open landscape.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes impacting local levels of tranquillity and erosion of verges.
- Potential for expansion of Farnham and Berden, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character and the sense of tranquillity.
- Potential for erection of new, larger farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.
- Drive for more renewable energy generation leading to demand for wind turbines and solar farms either within or visible from the LCA.
- Potential for pollution of Bourne Brook from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding valley sides and farmland plateau areas.
- The chalk upland landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests/ pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die-back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows.
 - Loss of woodland /trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations.
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed.
 - Changes in cropping and land use as a response to climate change impacting the character of the farmland.

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- Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape.

Landscape Guidelines

The overall strategy for Berden and Farnham Chalk Uplands LCA is to conserve the open, rural, tranquil character of this intensively farmed area. Seek to reinforce and restore hedgerow and other field boundaries, and restore marginal riverside habitats along Bourne Brook.

Protect and conserve

- Protect and conserve ancient and semi-natural woodlands and hedgerows.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges. Avoid unsympathetic highways works, including lighting and road upgrades.
- Protect the sparsely settled, tranquil character of the landscape.
- Conserve the local distinctiveness of historic buildings and their contribution to landscape character.
- Conserve the rural character of historic farmsteads as features of the agricultural landscape.
- Conserve dark skies by limiting unnecessary lighting along narrow lanes/road junctions and associated with new development.

Manage

- Manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland through traditional woodland management techniques as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites. Where opportunities arise, encourage woodland planting to link fragmented sites.
- Encourage regeneration of woodlands; promoting natural colonisation adjacent to existing woodland.

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- Strengthen and enhance the traditional pattern of the landscape by augmenting fragmented hedgerows using native species.
- Manage and expand the area of land available for arable field margins, and ensure these are protected from agricultural inputs to adjacent crops.
- Manage and expand the areas of unimproved grassland.
- Manage the recreational use of the landscape (PRoW) which provide informal access on linked routes through farmland.

Plan

- Plan tree planting and woodland creation, on hilltops to form focal points to reinforce the chalklands landscape character. Use climate hardy species and follow 'Right Tree, Right Place' principles.
- Enhance landscape character and local biodiversity by creating new hedgerows and grasslands, as part of a wider network of connected habitats.
- Seek to restore marginal riverside habitat along Bourne Brook, including marshland, pasture, reed beds and off-stream wetlands.
- Plan to decrease erosion and siltation of water courses through appropriate crop species and minimising nutrient applications.
- Ensure that plans for modern farm buildings are sensitively located and their impacts on the landscape mitigated through careful design and deciduous tree planting.
- Use planning and design guidelines to resist urbanisation in this very rural landscape. Any new development should utilise traditional materials and building styles.

Appendix A

User guide

This user guide is designed for applicants and developers to follow when considering a development proposal outside of the main towns and villages, and for Development Managers within Uttlesford District Council reviewing applications, to ensure landscape character is considered.

A.1 Applicants should follow the steps set out below before submitting a planning application to ensure that key characteristics, key landscape qualities and sensitivities and guidelines are considered at an early stage and considered in the planning and design of the development.

A.2 Development proposals must demonstrate, as part of a planning application, how landscape character has influenced their siting, scale and design. Proposals that are likely to have a significant impact on the landscape and/or visual amenity will require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to be undertaken. For proposals that are not likely to result in significant effects on the landscape and/or visual amenity, an informal landscape assessment can be undertaken.

Step 1: What type of change is proposed?

Step 2: Which landscape character area is the proposal in (refer to **Figure 5.2**)? If the proposal is close to the edge of two or more landscape character areas all relevant profiles will need to be considered.

Step 3: Will any of the key characteristics in the landscape character area be affected by the proposal? If so, which ones and how?

Step 4: Will any of the key landscape qualities and sensitivities be affected by the proposal? If so, which ones and how?

Step 5: Will the proposal conflict with the management guidelines? Can the proposal and mitigation help implement the guidelines and contribute to objectives for conservation, enhancement or restoration? If so, which ones and how?

Step 6: If the answer is yes to any of steps 3, 4 or 5, can the proposal be altered in any way to avoid adverse effects on key characteristics, key landscape qualities and sensitivities or guidelines? If not, can adverse effects be reduced or offset? How?

Step 7: Use the LCA and other related guidance including the Uttlesford Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2023) to inform the design process, address green and blue infrastructure proposals and biodiversity net gain to achieve an optimum design proposal for planning consideration.

Checklist

Referring to the relevant landscape character area profiles, have you considered the following general prompts?

- Does the proposal reinforce and enhance local distinctiveness and local landscape and/or settlement character?
- Does the proposal enhance the sense of place through careful design (including consideration of siting, massing, scale and materials)?
- Do proposals for new buildings respond to the existing topography?
- Does the choice of materials and colours for new buildings and structures reflect the landscape around them, as well as traditional building styles?

- Does the proposal protect and enhance key views into, out of, and across settlements?
- Does the proposal retain existing vegetation and enhance with new planting?
- Does the proposal use existing roads and tracks for site access? Do new roads and tracks fit in with the landscape character and complement the pattern of existing road networks?
- Does the proposal improve access to the public rights of way network and/or open access land?
- Does the proposal include aspects of Green Blue Infrastructure, integrated with biodiversity enhancement and high quality public open space where suitable?
- Does the proposal minimise effects on tranquillity relating to light pollution/dark skies?
- Have cumulative effects (including in-combination effects) with other existing or planned developments been considered?

Appendix B

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Table B.1: Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level).
Agricultural Land Classification	The classification of agricultural land in England and Wales.
Analysis	The process of breaking the landscape down, usually in descriptive terms, into its component parts in order to understand how it is made up.
Ancient trees and veteran trees	<p>Individual trees or groups of trees with wood pastures, historic parkland, hedgerows, orchards, park, and other areas. They are often found outside ancient woodlands. irreplaceable habitats with some or all of the following characteristics:</p> <p>Ancient trees</p> <p>An ancient tree is exceptionally valuable. Attributes can include its great age, size, condition, biodiversity value (as a result of significant wood decay and the habitat created from the ageing process), cultural and heritage value.</p> <p>Veteran trees</p> <p>A veteran tree may or may not be very old, but it has decay features, such as branch death and hollowing. These features contribute to its biodiversity, cultural and heritage value.</p>

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Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
Ancient Woodland	Woodland which the evidence shows has had had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD and has only been cleared for underwood or timber production. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, with an exceptionally high diversity of flora and fauna.
Approach	The stepwise process by which a landscape assessment is undertaken.
Arable	Land used for growing crops.
Assessment	An umbrella term used to encompass all the many different ways of looking at, describing, analysing, and evaluating landscape.
BAP	UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK BAP. The original lists of UK BAP priority habitats were created between 1995 and 1999 and were subsequently updated in 2007. See http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155 for further information.
Biodiversity	The measure of the variety of organisms present in different ecosystems.
Built form	The characteristic nature of built development.
Characteristic	An element that contributes to local distinctiveness (e.g. narrow winding lanes, vernacular building style).
Classification	A process of sorting the landscape into different types, each with a distinct, consistent, and recognisable character.

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Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
Condition	A judgement on the intactness and condition of the elements of the landscape.
Coppicing	The traditional method of woodland management in which trees are cut down to near the ground to encourage the production of long, straight shoots, which can subsequently be harvested.
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England, a charity that campaigns to promote, enhance and protect the countryside across England.
Cultural heritage	Cultural heritage includes objects, monuments, individual sites and buildings and groups of buildings and sites that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage and intangible cultural heritage.
Description	Verbal description of what a landscape looks like. This is usually carried out in a systematic manner, but it may also include personal reactions to the landscape.
Drift	The name for all material of glacial origin found anywhere on land or at sea, including sediment and large rocks.
Element	A component part of the landscape (e.g. hedges, roads, woods).
Enclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which there were previously common rights; the merging of commonly held strip fields to form a block surrounded by hedges.

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Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
End	A common English placename, often given to places originally at the end of a road/track e.g. Audley End, Uppend.
Eutrophication	A body of water, or parts of it, contains an excess of minerals and nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus. This can cause a dense growth of plant life.
Feature	A prominent, eye-catching element (e.g. wooded hilltop, church spire).
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks, or if high tides and stormy seas cause flooding in coastal areas.
GIS	Geographic Information System.
GPS	Global Positioning System.
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices) semi-improved (modified by management practices and have a range of species less diverse than unimproved grasslands), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed and consequently species diversity is high).
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
HER	Historic Environment Record – comprehensive index and primary information service for the historic environment within Herefordshire.
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation.
Hydrology	The science dealing with the occurrence, circulation, distribution,

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Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
	and properties of the waters of the earth and its atmosphere.
Intact	Not changed or diminished.
Land cover	Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.
Landmark	An object or feature of a landscape or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location.
Landscape	The term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form, and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture, and cultural associations.
Landscape character	A distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape.
Landscape character area (LCA)	A unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type.
Landscape character type (LCT)	A generic term for landscape with a consistent, homogeneous character. Landscape character types may occur in different parts of the county, but wherever they occur, they will share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation, or human influences.
Landscape condition	Based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual,

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Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
	functional, and ecological perspectives. It reflects the state of repair or intactness of individual features or elements (relating to that feature's primary condition or ultimate desire).
Landscape value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
Linear settlement	A settlement that is built along a road, in comparison to a nuclear or dispersed settlement.
Listed building	A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest, as designated under Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
Local Plan	A development plan prepared by local planning authorities.
LGS	Local Geological Site
LSA	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

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Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
Natural character	Character as a result of natural or semi-natural features such as woodland, grassland, hedgerows etc.
Natural heritage	Natural features, geological and physiographical formations and habitats that are valued for science, conservation or natural beauty.
NCN	National Cycle Network Route.
NE	Natural England.
NNR	National Nature Reserve.
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Nucleated settlement	A settlement that is clustered around a centre, in comparison to a linear or dispersed settlement.
Open access land	An area where the public have a right of access on foot as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2005.
OS	Ordnance Survey.
Pargetting	Application of a decorative render to plaster buildings, a technique particularly associated with Essex and Suffolk.
Pasture	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle.
Remnant	A part or quantity left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed.
Riparian habitat	Riverbank habitat.
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change, as designated under the

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Term	Abbreviation and Meaning
	Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
Semi-natural vegetation	Any type of natural vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.
Sense of place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that makes a place memorable.
Sensitive	The response to change or influence.
Skyline	The outline of a range of hills, ridge or group of buildings seen against the sky.
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest.
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).
Topography	Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.
Valued landscape attributes	Positive features and characteristics that are important to landscape character and that, if lost, would result in adverse change to the landscape.
Vernacular	Buildings constructed in the local style, from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings.

Appendix C

Data sources

Table C.1: GIS Data

Mapping

Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2023, licence number 100018688.

Name	Source
Aerial Imagery	ESRI
Topography	ESRI
OS 25k	Uttlesford District Council
OS 50k	Uttlesford District Council

Administrative Boundaries

Name	Source
Local authority boundary	OS boundary line

Natural Heritage

Name	Source
NNR	Natural England
SSSI	Natural England
AWI	Natural England

Appendix C Data sources

Name	Source
National Forest Inventory	Forestry Commission
Priority habitats	Natural England
Traditional Orchard Inventory	Natural England
RSPB Reserve	RSPB
IBA	RSPB
Local Wildlife Site	Uttlesford District Council
Local Geological Site	Uttlesford District Council
Essex Wildlife Trust Reserves	Uttlesford District Council

Landscape Character and Designated Landscapes

Name	Source
National Character Areas	Natural England
Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2006)	Uttlesford District Council

Historic Environment

Name	Source
Listed Buildings	Historic England
Scheduled Monuments	Historic England
Registered Historic Parks and Gardens	Historic England
Heritage at Risk	Historic England
Conservation Areas	Uttlesford District Council
Historic Landscape Characterisation	Essex Historic Environment Record

Access and recreation

Name	Source
National Cycle Network	Sustrans
National Trails	Natural England
Open Access: Common Land	Natural England
Country Parks	Natural England
Public Rights of Way	Uttlesford District Council
Cycleways	Uttlesford District Council

Dark Skies and Tranquillity

Name	Source
Light pollution	CPRE
Tranquillity	CPRE

Planning

Name	Source
Settlement boundaries	Uttlesford District Council
Consented and committed sites	Uttlesford District Council

Agriculture

Name	Source
ALC	Natural England
Corine Landcover	EEA

Water resources

Name	Source
Flood Zones 2 and 3	Environment Agency
FSA	Environment Agency
SFD	Environment Agency
SPZ	Environment Agency
Uttlesford Natural Flood Management Catchments	Uttlesford District Council

References

- 1 Natural England (2014), An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf
- 2 National Character Areas
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profilesdata-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>
- 3 Natural England (2014), An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (as above)
- 4 Essex County Council (2009), Uttlesford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project.
https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/1823/Uttlesford-District-Historic-Environment-Characterisation-Project-Report/pdf/Historic_Environment_Characterisation_Project_Report.pdf?m=638176682866600000

Report produced by LUC

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