



HANKINSON DUCKETT ASSOCIATES

**Countryside Protection Zone Study
for
Uttlesford District Council**

May 2024

Revision 02



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1 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 The Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ) emerged as a policy in the 1995 Local Plan and was carried through into the current 2005 Local Plan (see figure 1).
- 1.2 The policy came about following the 1984 report by Sir Graham Eyre QC, concerning the 1985 planning permission for Stansted Airport. In recommending approval for the airport, Eyre acknowledged the importance of the site's open, countryside setting and described it as an 'airport in the countryside'. Sir Graham saw the CPZ as a way to control the expansion of the airport into the surrounding countryside, much like a metropolitan green belt controls the spread of major cities elsewhere in the country.

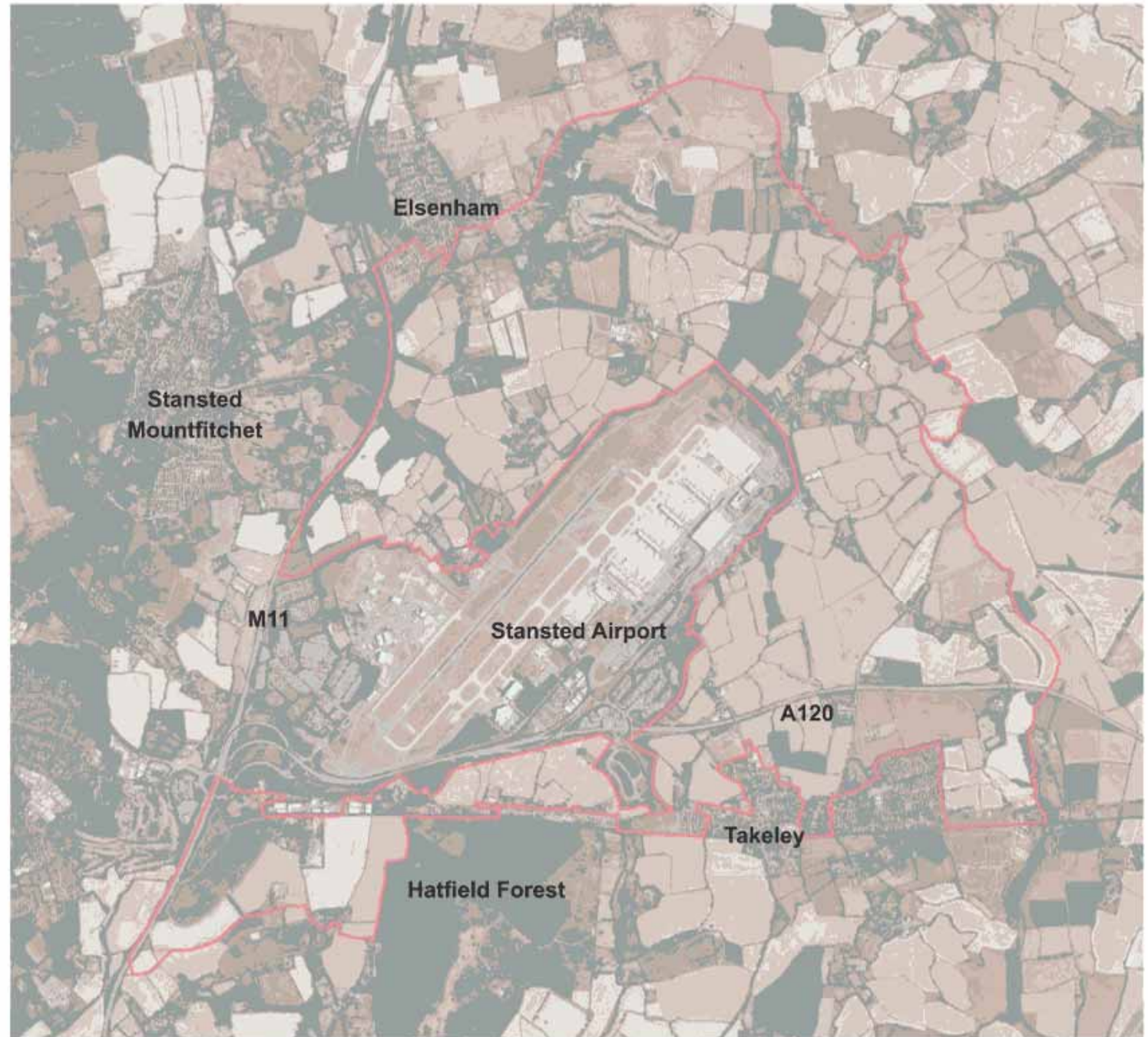


Figure 1 Countryside Protection Zone: Current boundary and context

Current Policy

- 1.3 The 'airport in the countryside' principle continues to be a material planning consideration in relation to any future development at Stansted. The Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted January 2005) makes reference to the CPZ as follows:

"2.2.9. Airport in the countryside. The Plan identifies a Countryside Protection Zone. The priority within this zone is to maintain a local belt of countryside around the airport that will not be eroded by coalescing developments. Development consistent with national planning policy for the countryside will only be permitted if it also accords with this overriding objective."

- 1.4 Policy S8 'Countryside Protect Zone' defines an area around the airport to restrict development (see figure 2). The wording of this policy is as follows:

"The area and boundaries of the Countryside Protection Zone around Stansted Airport are defined on the Proposals Map. In the Countryside Protection Zone planning permission will only be granted for development that is required to be there or is appropriate to a rural area. There will be strict control on new development. In particular development will not be permitted if either of the following apply:

- a) New buildings or uses would promote coalescence between the airport and existing development in the surrounding countryside;*
- b) It would adversely affect the open characteristics of the zone"*

Local Plan Review

- 1.5 The current 2005 Local Plan which contains Policy S8 is under review. If the council is to maintain a CPZ it must do via the emerging Local Plan for the period 2021-2041. There is no statutory requirement or national policy that requires the CPZ (unlike metropolitan Green Belt which is defined nationally). However, the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan has sought to take the policy forward through Core Policy 12 and a revised CPZ boundary, which is set out in Appendix 7 of the Regulation 18 publication (see figure 3).

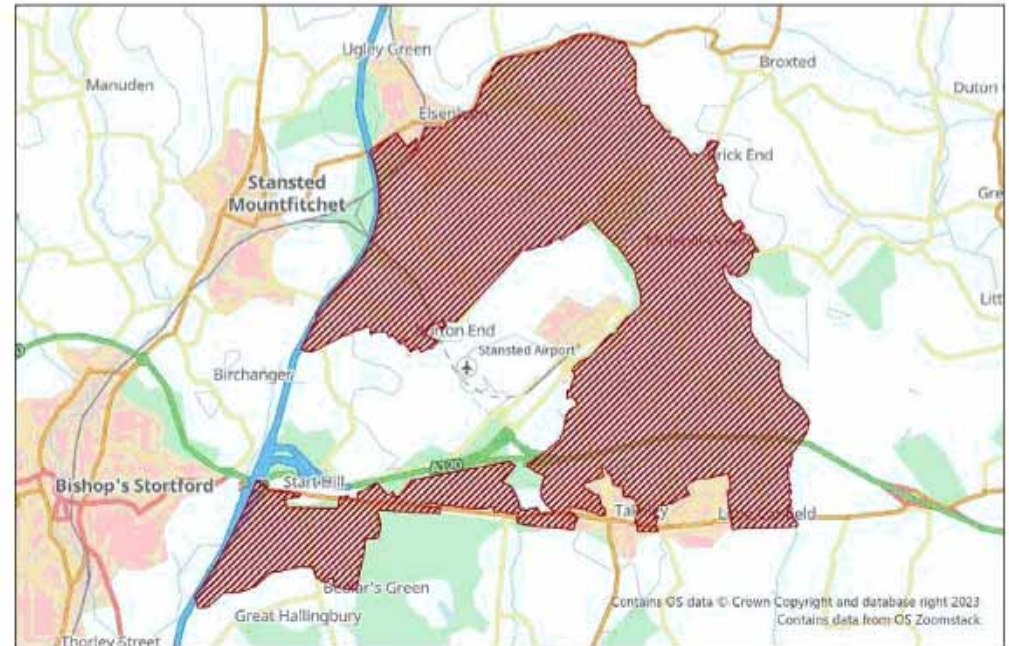


Figure 2 2005 Local Plan: Policy S8 - Countryside Protection Zone

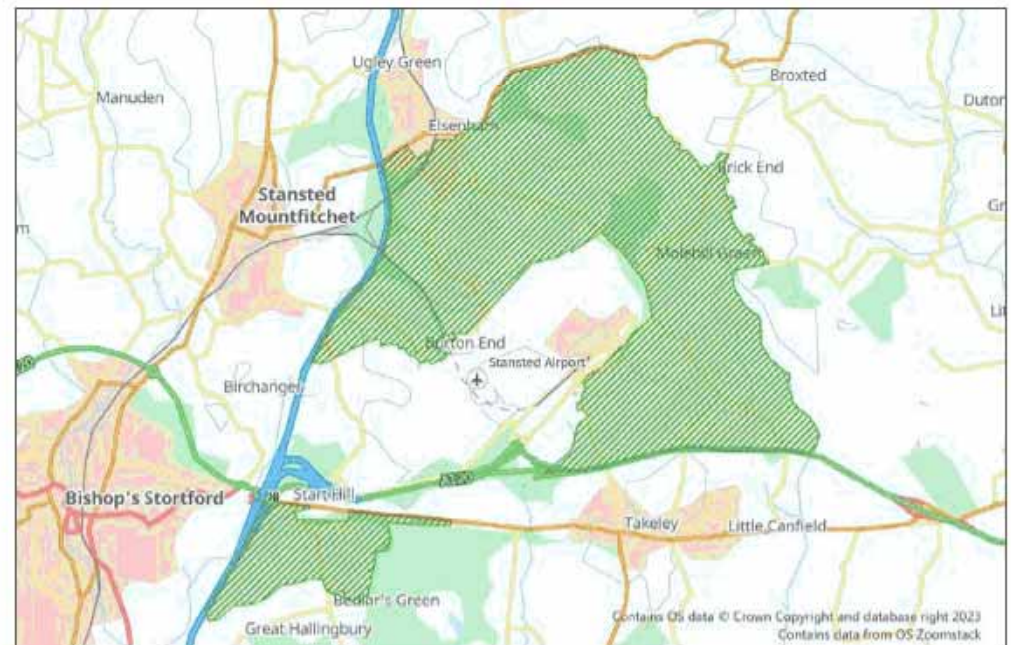


Figure 3 Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan: Core Policy 12 - Countryside Protection Zone, Policies map, Appendix 7

Instruction

- 1.6 In April 2024 (following the publication of the Regulation 18 Local Plan), Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA) was commissioned by Uttlesford District Council to undertake a study of the CPZ as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan review. Aims of this study are to test the objectives of the CPZ policy, review its performance in relation to existing and proposed policy objective, investigate potential wording and boundary of the CPZ, and possible mitigation opportunities.

Relationship with 2016 CPZ Review

- 1.7 A review of the CPZ was undertaken in 2016. This was prior to the publication of the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) last updated in December 2023) and Landscape Character Assessment for the district (published in October 2023). In addition a number of planning permissions within the area since 2016, have the potential to change some of the findings.
- 1.8 This study will consider the findings of the previous study, in combination with the latest Landscape Character Assessment and planning context. These will all be used as a basis for policy consideration and recommendations.

2 SUCCESS OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 The existing policy has been successful to a point, however, there have been a number of planning decisions that have allowed development within the CPZ in spite of its local protection (see figure 4).
- 2.2 As part of the development control process (planning decisions and appeals), planners and inspectors have on occasion identified that the current adopted policy is not wholly compliant with the NPPF. This is partly due to the lack of an up-to-date Local Plan and partly due to the restrictive nature of the wording within the policy.

- 2.3 There have been a number of appeals that reference the CPZ, including 'Land Known As 7 Acres', Warish Hall Farm, Parsonage Road, Takeley (ref UTT/22/2744/FUL), where the inspector found that:

"Policy S8 is more restrictive than the balancing of harm against benefits approach of the NPPF, noting that the NPPF at paragraph 170 advises that decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and that the 'protection' afforded to the CPZ in Policy S8 is not the same as the Framework's 'recognition.'" (Para 14.4.13)

- 2.4 Similarly, there are examples from decision takers that the continuation of the policy has a degree of consistency with the NPPF including 'Land South of Stortford Road', Little Canfield, CM6 1SR (ref UTT/21/3272/OP) where the inspector stated that:

"Although the Framework takes a less restrictive approach to development than these policies, it nonetheless seeks to protect and enhance the countryside and natural environment, and to make effective use of land in urban areas. Policy S8 recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, which is consistent with the Framework. In this respect, the policies are not wholly out of date." (Para 13)

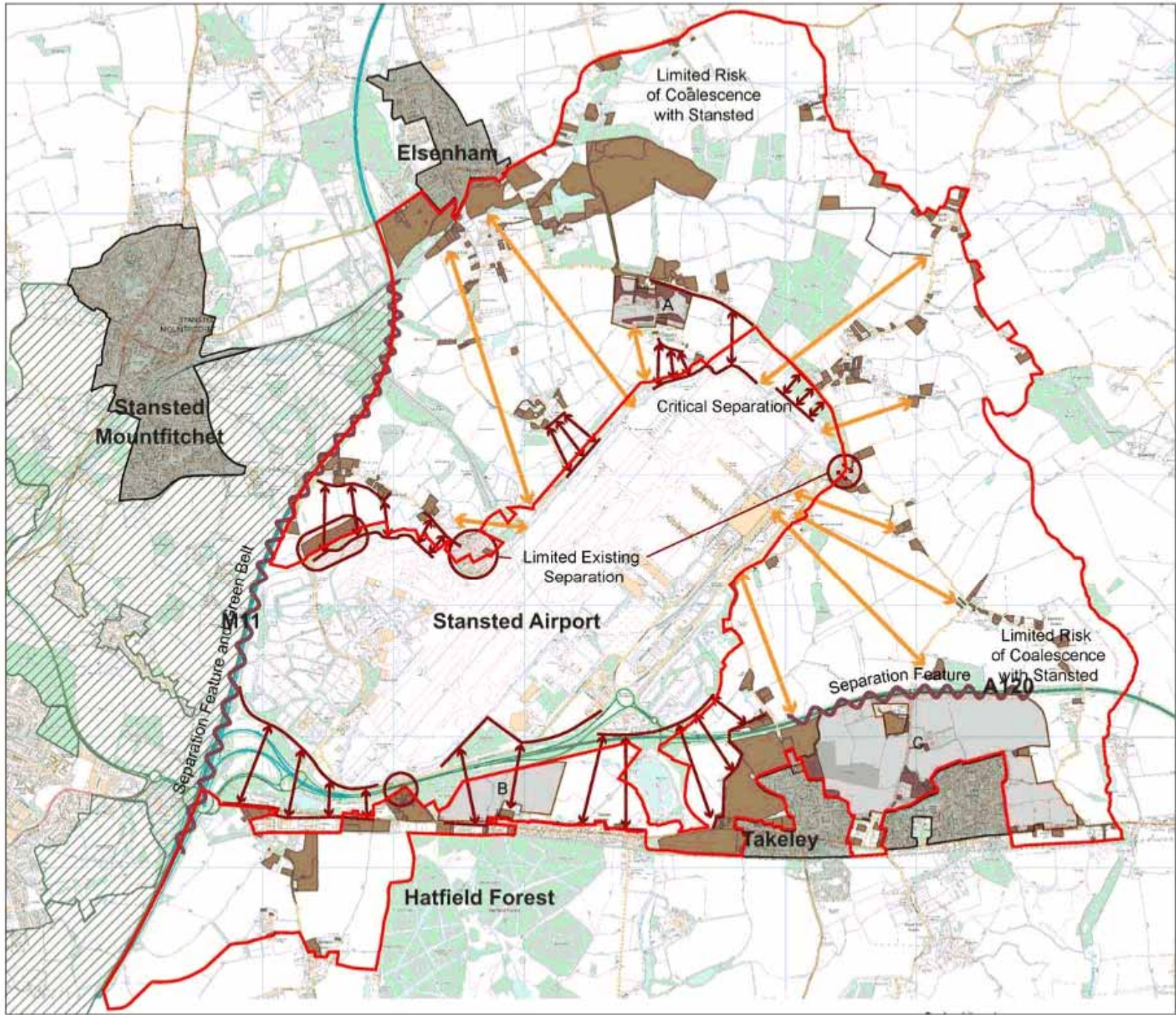
"As set out above Local Plan Policy S8 is a more nuanced planning control in relation to maintaining open countryside around the airport. There is nothing in the evidence which would indicate that the rationale for this policy is no longer relevant, and the policy recognises the intrinsic character of the countryside." (Para 76)

- 2.5 The benefit of having a specified boundary is that it is clear where the implications of the policy would apply.

- 2.6 Examination of a range of planning and appeal decisions (since 2005), suggest that the second test of the policy (regarding openness) seems to gain more traction in decision taking. The first test (regarding coalescence) appears to be weaker for two reasons:
- A substantial amount of built development could occur within the CPZ without causing coalescence between the airport and development.
 - The restriction in terms of coalescence is only placed between the airport and development, as opposed to development between settlements within the CPZ, which would also have an urbanising effect on the designation.

3 EMERGING POSITION

- 3.1 The concept of protecting the countryside around Stansted Airport is supported in the Regulation 18 Local Plan through Core Policy 12.
- 3.2 The Regulation 18 Consultation version of the wording for Core Policy 12 is as follows:
*“An area around Stansted Airport (the Stansted Airport Countryside Protection Zone) is protected from development to preserve the ‘rural’ character of the area around the airport. The area is shown by the Policies Map and Appendix 7.
Within the defined area, development will only be supported where, either of the following apply:
i. new buildings or uses would not promote the coalescence between the airport and the existing or allocated development in the surrounding countryside within the CPZ, and
ii. the proposal would not adversely affect the open characteristics of the CPZ.”*
- 3.3 The wording is very similar to the adopted policy, albeit with a less restrictive terminology, which would bring the policy in line with the current NPPF. The two tests in particular are very similar to the existing policy wording.
- 3.4 The allocations put forward within the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan would appear to conflict with the policy wording as it stands. In response, the draft plan seeks to adjust the boundary of the CPZ (see figure 3), such that the allocations fall outside of the boundary.
- 3.5 While this is a logical response, the alterations set out within Appendix 7 of the Regulation 18 publication have the potential to compromise the future effectiveness of the policy. The proposed changes substantially reduce the quantum of countryside within the CPZ to the south of the airport, which is a location of development pressure. As a consequence, there is a risk that the rural setting to the south of the airport could be compromised in the future.
- 3.6 The area between A120 (the A120 did not exist when the CPZ was first envisaged) and Stortford Road needs careful consideration for the following reasons:
- Intense development pressure
 - Limited space
 - Rurality already eroded
- 3.7 The separation between Stansted airport and nearby development is demonstrated on figure 5 (overleaf).
- 3.8 There is thus, the indication that retention of the policy would be acceptable, but that the wording of the policy should be carefully considered. In order to inform recommendations regarding the policy wording, further consideration has been given to the landscape context of the CPZ.



- KEY**
- Countryside Protection Zone - adopted boundary
 - Limited Existing Separation
 - Critical Separation between Stansted and Existing Development
 - Wider Separation
 - Green Belt
 - Settlement
 - Approved Planning Applications within CPZ since 2005
 - Residential / Employment Allocations
 - A - Gaunts End
 - B - North Takeley Street
 - C - North East Takeley

Figure 5 Separation Analysis of the Current CPZ Boundary

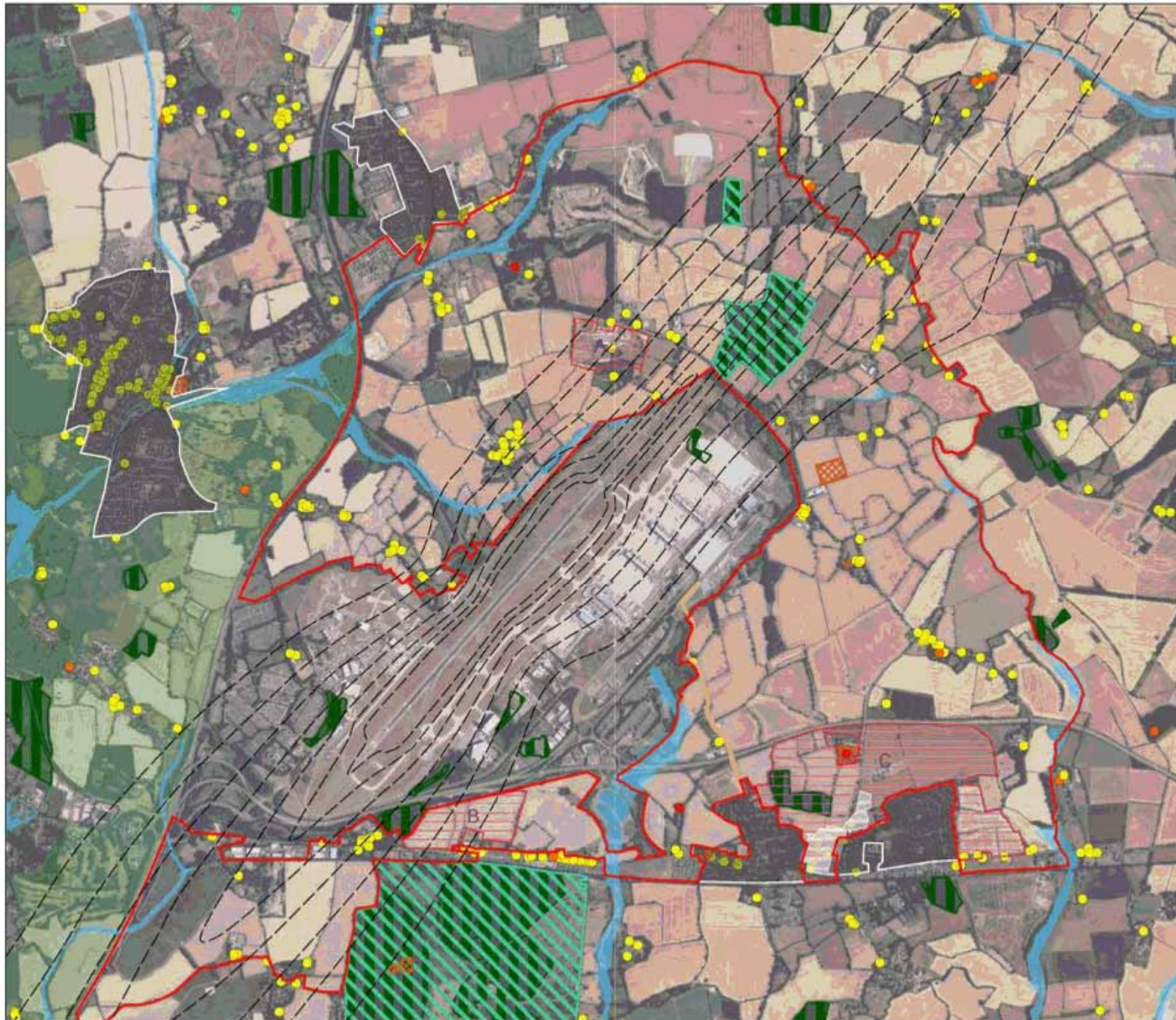


Figure 6 Landscape Related Constraints

4 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

Constraints

4.1 Figure 6 illustrates landscape related constraints and policies within the vicinity of the Countryside Protection Zone. These include noise contours and a strategic transport link associated with the airport. Within the CPZ there are areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3, SSSI and a small area of Ancient Woodland known as Prior's Wood. The CPZ also includes a number of listed buildings, two Scheduled Monuments and the Takeley Conservation Area. To the west, the CPZ abuts Green Belt along the M11.

4.2 Individually and in combination, these constraints will limit the development potential of areas of the CPZ.

2016 CPZ Review

4.3 As set out within section 1 of this report, a review of the CPZ was undertaken in 2016. The aim of the study was to 'assess the extent to which the land within the CPZ is meeting its purposes, as set out in Policy S8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005)'. The study sought to assess the CPZ against clearly defined criteria.

4.4 The study noted (at para 2.21) that:
'...there are similarities between the purposes of the CPZ and those of Green Belts and other strategic planning policies, such as Strategic Gaps or Green Wedges, and guidance can be drawn from previous assessments of these policies.'

4.5 The report then defined four criteria / purposes for assessment, which drew parallels with the policy wording, but did not apply the wording specifically. These criteria were:

- To protect the open characteristics of the CPZ
- To restrict the spread of development from the airport.
- To protect the rural character of the countryside around the airport.
- To prevent changes to the rural settlement pattern of the area by restricting coalescence.

4.6 The CPZ was divided into 10 assessment parcels, based upon areas of similar character, with boundaries defined by recognizable features. Each of the parcels was assessed against the four defined criteria.

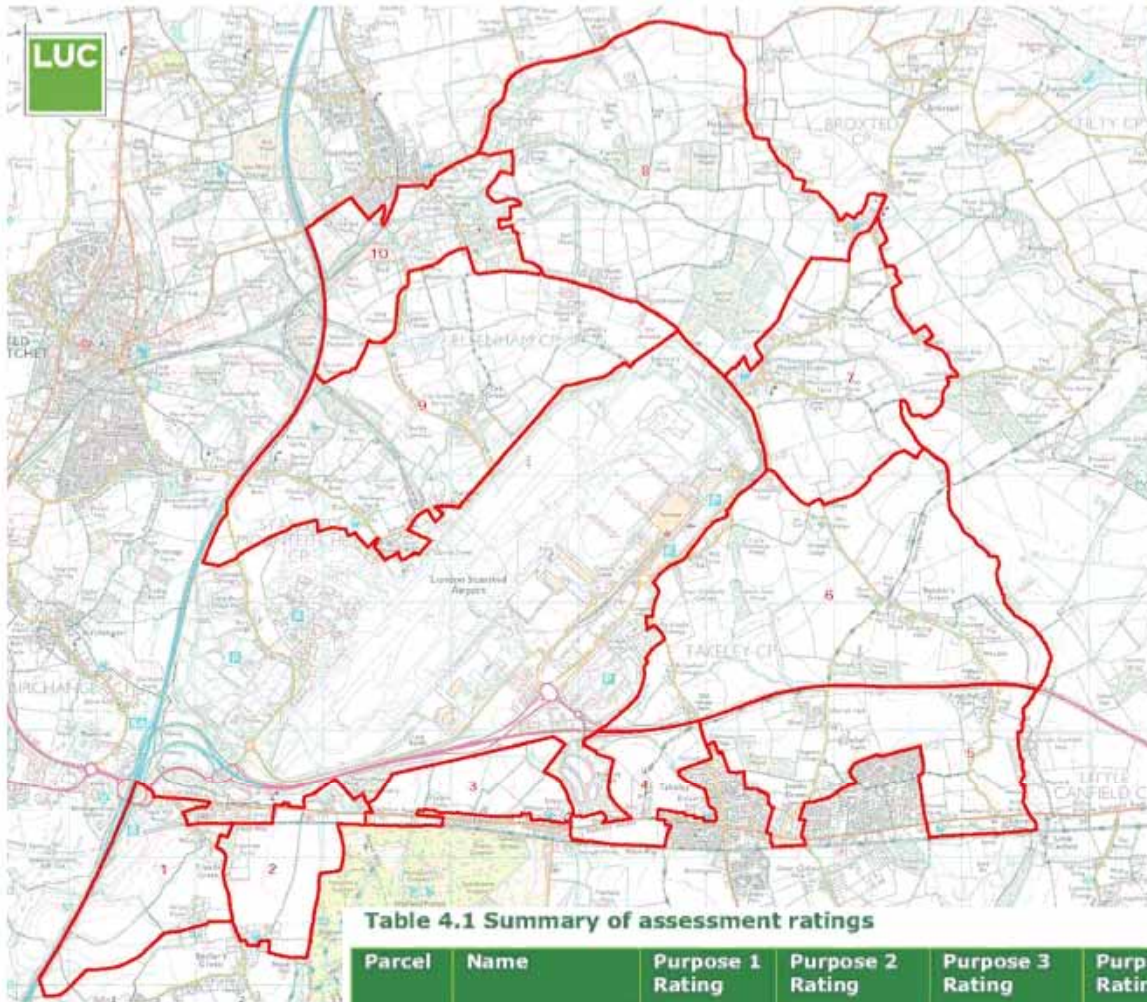
4.7 The summary table of the report and a plan identifying the assessment parcels is provided overleaf.

4.8 The report concluded that:

'5.1 ... there are variations in the contribution that different parcels in the study area make to CPZ purposes. However, this study has demonstrated that the majority of the CPZ is performing well against the purposes defined for it. The CPZ helps to maintain the openness of the countryside and protects its rural character and restrict the spread of development from the airport. For some parcels, particularly to the south of the airport, the CPZ plays an essential role in protecting the separate identity of individual settlements.'

'5.2 In summary, therefore, the CPZ is helping to maintain the vision of the 'airport in the countryside'. Unless other planning policy considerations suggest otherwise, we recommend that the CPZ is carried forward into the new Local Plan.'

4.9 The emerging Local Plan seeks to take forward the CPZ designation. The comment in the conclusions regarding the separate identity of individual settlement is not reflected in the wording of either the adopted or regulation 18 policy wording. It is evident from recent planning permissions (notably to the west of Takeley), provided since the publication of the 2016 CPZ Review, that this element of the assessment is not currently a key policy consideration, but is an element that could be introduced through a future CPZ policy.



Uttlesford DC - Countryside Protection Zone Review

Figure 3.1

Countryside Protection Zone Parcels

Parcel Boundary

Table 4.1 Summary of assessment ratings

Parcel	Name	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Summary of Harm
1	Tilekiln Green	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Moderate
2	Yewtree Farm	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
3	Takeley Street	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
4	Takeley	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
5	Smith's Green	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
6	Bamber's Green	High	High	High	Low	High
7	Molehill Green	High	High	High	Medium	High
8	Pledgdon Green	High	High	High	Low	High
9	Tye Green	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate
10	Elsenham	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Moderate

2016 CPZ review extracts

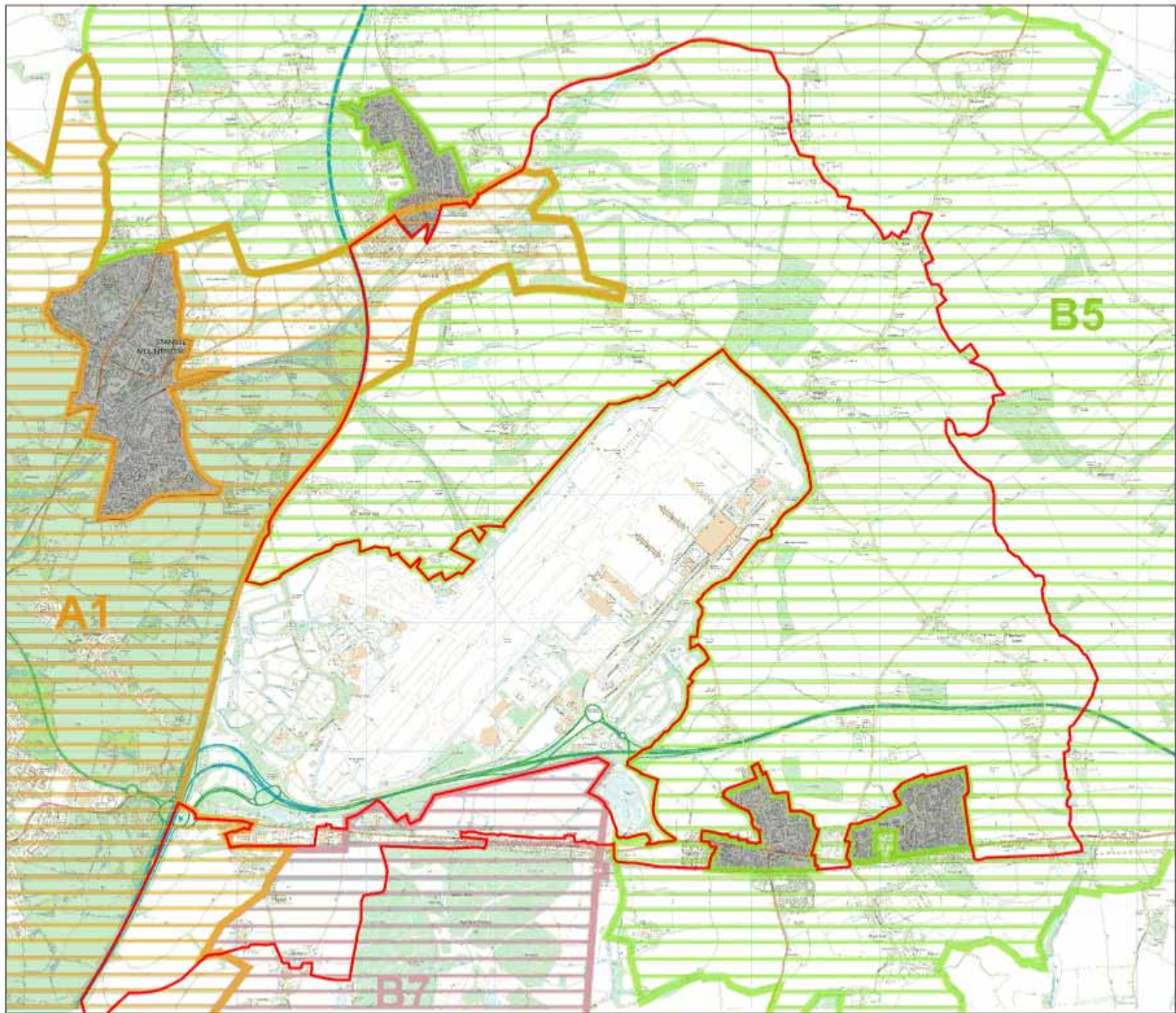
4.10 The 2016 CPZ review promoted the retention of all assessment parcels, but also put forward a number of boundary recommendations, which included the following:

- Rationalising the boundary of Parcel 1 to exclude the eastern extents of Junction 8 of the M11).
- Moving the northern boundary of Parcel 10 to the railway line (which itself could prevent coalescence between the airport and Elsenham to the north).
- Redefining the boundary of parcels 2 and 3 to maintain the rural character of the area and prevent further consolidation of the villages by extending the boundary of the CPZ to Flich Way to the south of Takeley Street in Parcel 3 and by redefining the boundary of Parcel 2 to exclude the Vision Industrial Estate.




4.11 These can be taken into consideration within an emerging policy boundary, however thought would also need to be given to current landscape character and settlement extents, as well as emerging allocations.

Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.12 The Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was published in October 2023 as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan review to help inform locational policies, appropriate design and mitigation, and provide baseline information for more detailed landscape and visual assessment. The Character Assessment is comprehensive and has helpful guidance.
- 4.13 The LCA identifies three generic Landscape Character Types across the Borough:
- Type A: Chalk Upland
 - Type B: Farmland Plateau
 - Type C: River Valley
- 4.14 Landscape Character Types are sub-divided into discrete geographic areas forming a total of 19 local Landscape Character Areas across the District. The CPZ is covered by three Landscape Character Areas (see figure 7):
- Character Area B5 - Broxton Farmland Plateau: covers the majority of the CPZ, in particular the central and eastern parts of the policy.
 - Character Area B7 - Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau: relatively small southern portion of the CPZ.
 - Character Area A2 - Stort River Valley: relatively small north-western and south-western parts of the CPZ.
- 4.15 For each Character Area, the report provides:
- A location and summary;
 - Key characteristics;
 - Landscape character description; and a
 - Landscape Evaluation
- 4.16 The landscape evaluation contains a summary of landscape qualities and sensitivities, anticipated forces for changes (for example agricultural intensification or development) and landscape guidelines. The guidelines set out an overarching ambition for the character area, along with suggestions as to how this can be achieved.
- 4.17 The designation of the CPZ could be seen to tie in with the overarching landscape guidelines for each of the character areas. These are re: provided below for convenience:
- 4.18 Character Area B5 - Broxton Farmland Plateau: *'The overall strategy for Broxton 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.'*
- 4.19 Character Area B7 - Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau: *'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.'*
- 4.20 Character Area A2 - Stort River Valley: *'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.'*



KEY

-  Countryside Protection Zone
-  Greenbelt
-  Settlement

Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment 2023




-  A2 - Stort River Valley
-  B5 - Broxted Farmland Plateau
-  B7 - Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau

Figure 7 Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment - Landscape Character Areas

4.21 The character assessment findings note that the existing boundaries of Stansted airport are generally well defined and well treed, that the airport has a major influence on the landscape and that there are more human influences to the south of the CPZ than to the north, including urbanising influences from expanding settlement and the noise from the A120 and the B1256. It appears that the 'rural' character of the area to the south of the airport has been adversely affected since the adoption of the policy within the current Local Plan.

4.22 Relevant extracts from the Landscape Character Assessment are provided within Appendix 1.

5 POLICY GUIDANCE

5.1 The NPPF contains a whole chapter concerning Green Belt, but no direct advice on specific policies relating to separation or gaps. However, there is significant precedence of 'gap' policy having been established by various Local Authorities over the last few decades. In December 2008, the Partners for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) published '*Policy Framework for Gaps*' which sets out criteria to guide establishment of Settlement Gaps within the south of Hampshire. This criteria has also been utilised by authorities outside south Hampshire.

5.2 The core criteria for gap policy set out by PUSH '*Policy Framework for Gaps*' (December 2008) is as follows:

- a) The open nature/sense of separation between settlements cannot be retained by other policy designations;
- b) The land to be included within the gap performs an important role in defining the settlement character of the area and separating settlements at risk of coalescence.
- c) In defining the extent of a gap, no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements should be included having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation

5.3 These criteria could assist with the future consideration of the CPZ designation, which has parallels with the concept of settlement gaps designated within Local Plans for other authorities.

5.4 Paragraphs 3.2 - 3.4 of the PUSH guidance are also considered relevant to the emerging CPZ policy:

'3.2 Local Development Documents will identify the location of the gap(s) and include a policy and ancillary documentation which show on an Ordnance Survey map base the extent of land included within the gap(s). The policy will set out the types of development which will be permitted within the gap(s) based on the principle that development within Gaps will only be permitted if:-

- a) it would not diminish the physical and/or visual separation of settlements; and*
- b) it would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.*

3.3 The designation of a gap therefore does not completely preclude development. Proposals which would not adversely affect the function of the gap and which would otherwise be acceptable in planning terms could be permitted. However the cumulative impact of a number of even small scale developments could have a significant impact on the sense of separation between settlements and would be a consideration in the decision making process.

3.4 In considering the future planning of the land within defined gaps, the local planning authorities will consider opportunities for the positive uses of the land within the gap to meet wider planning objectives, such as provision of green infrastructure.'

6 CURRENT CHALLENGES

6.1 The preceding sections of this study have identified a number of challenges regarding the CPZ, that should be considered within the emerging policy. These primarily relate to land associated with the A120 and Stortford Road and include:

- Changes to the settlement pattern within the CPZ since the adoption of the policy. Some of these changes - for example the permitted development to the west of Takeley - have changed the relationship between settlement and Stansted airport.
- Development pressure, both through ongoing speculative applications and draft allocations within the regulation 18 Local Plan. A future CPZ policy will need to balance the reasons for this pressure, not least the sustainability of these locations for development (evidenced outside this report), with the need to protect the rural setting to the airport.
- The proposed CPZ boundary alterations set out within Appendix

7 of the Regulation 18 publication would substantially reduce the quantum of countryside within the CPZ to the south of the airport. As a consequence, there is a risk that the rural setting to the south of the airport could be compromised in the future.

- Erosion of settlement pattern through piecemeal ribbon development. This is not currently an explicit consideration of the policy.
- Additional urban influences from new and expected development and road infrastructure, that has changed the context of areas within the CPZ.
- The potential for cumulative effects - currently outside of policy wording.
- Identified potential weaknesses within the policy wording.
- Recognition of the findings of the CPZ review, which identified further purposes that the policy could relate to and that the existing land within the CPZ contributed positively to those purposes.

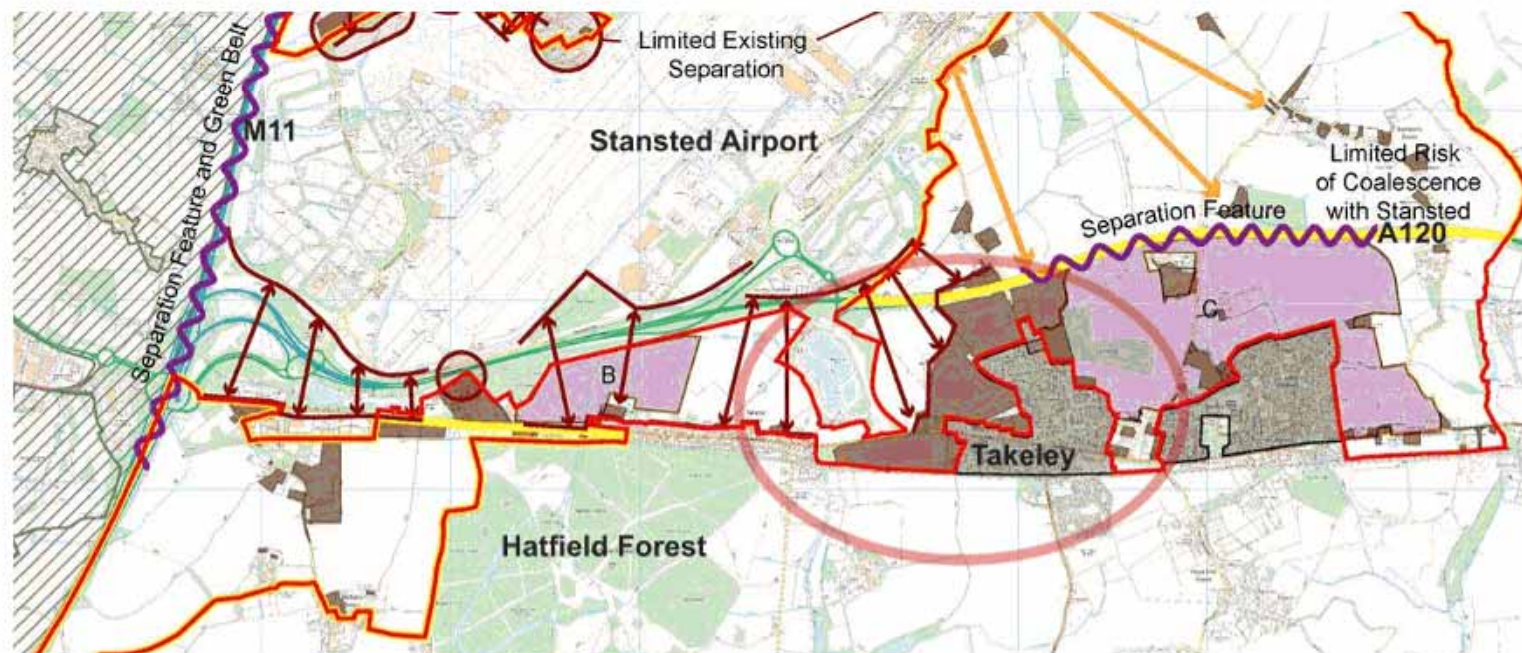


Figure 8 Representation of some of the spatial challenges within the southern part of the existing CPZ

7 POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

7.1 There are opportunities to strengthen the policy and to broaden its objectives, whilst maintaining the overarching concept of an airport in the countryside. This could be consistent with the national approach to Green Belt for example and draw inspiration from other policy guidance and the evidence base already in place for the Local Plan.

7.2 Examples of opportunities include:

- If changing the boundary of the CPZ, consider including additional land to the south, to maintain a larger area of rural land to the south of the airport. Currently the CPZ extends further to the north and east than to the south.
- Consider the boundary of the CPZ in the context of current settlement (including permissions).
- Consider revising the policy tests in order to conform with the NPPF and have a greater synergy with the overarching aims of the CPZ.
- Look at the potential for land-use change that would benefit the CPZ (i.e would benefit the rural character of the land within the CPZ). This would need to be carefully considered and worded to ensure that it would not conflict with the operation of the airport (for example proposals to plant trees which may increase the risk of bird strike).
- Potential to include the consideration of settlement identity and separation.
- Potential to tie in the findings and guidelines set out within the 2023 Landscape Character Assessment, which generally seek to enhance rural character, for instance *“strengthening landscape patterns through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting adjacent woodlands”*.
- Potential to consider mitigation measures for proposed development which may reduce the harm to the CPZ.



Figure 9 Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment 2023



Figure 10 Hedgerow Boundaries and Connected Woodlands (Image: Woodland Trust)

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the council retains the policy but seeks to adjust the policy wording and the boundary extents of the CPZ.

Boundary extents

8.2 As noted previously within this study, the boundary changes proposed within the regulation 18 Local Plan, would remove a large area of the designation to the south-east of Stansted airport, which has the potential to compromise the future integrity of the policy.

8.3 This report has analysed the development changes to the south of the airport and has also considered the proposed allocations to the south of Stansted. In order to maintain an area of open countryside around Stansted, without preventing sustainable growth, it is recommended that additional land to the south of the airport is included within the CPZ, and that the inner boundary is redrawn to accommodate some of the development. This strategy would allow for additional housing and employment within the area, whilst preserving the aims and functionality of the CPZ.

8.4 Figure 11 identifies the key boundary changes proposed. The plan identifies the existing policy boundary as a red dashed line, the regulation 18 boundary as a yellow line and a revised alternative boundary in blue.

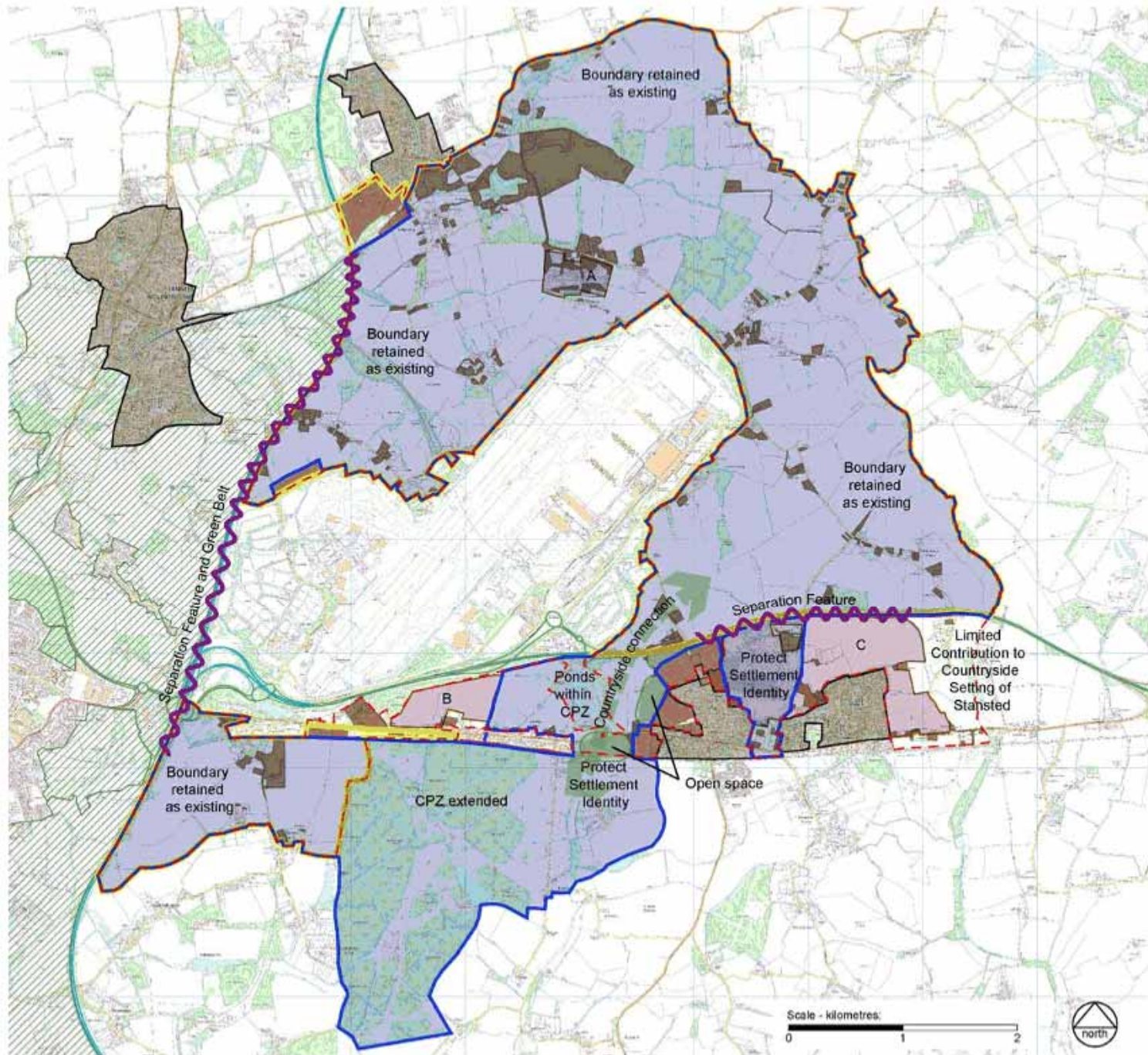
8.5 The boundary to the south-west of the airport would remain as existing, but the southern edge would extend to encompass Hatfield Forest and land to the south-west of Takeley, returning northwards to the Flitch Way along identifiable landscape features. The permitted developments to the west of Takeley would be removed from the CPZ, however the open space land uses secured as part of the permissions would be retained within the CPZ in order to maintain a gap between Takeley and the ribbon development associated with the B1256.

8.6 The open land associated with basins between the B1256 and the A120 would be moved into the CPZ (it is currently excluded). This change would maintain a rural buffer between the north-western edge of Takeley, Stansted airport and the ribbon development associated with the B1256, which would connect the main body of the CPZ to the proposed southern extension.

8.7 To the north of Takeley, it is proposed that the western part of the allocation - located to the west of Smith's Green is retained within the CPZ, in order to maintain settlement pattern and identity. The land to the east of Smiths Green, however, would be removed, with the boundary being re-drawn along the alignment of the A120. In this location it is considered that there is sufficient open and rural land to the north and west of the A120, to maintain the countryside setting to Stansted.

8.8 These changes seek to respond positively to the findings of the 2016 CPZ review, whilst being mindful of the current settlement context and aspirations of the emerging Local Plan. The southern expansion of the designation would enable the provision of a tangible rural setting to the south of Stansted for the foreseeable future.

8.9 It is recommended that the boundary to the north, east and west should generally remain as existing, but with a small change to the north-western boundary, between the airport and Elsenham, by moving the boundary south to align with the railway line and new edge of development. This change falls in line with one of the suggestions set out within the 2016 CPZ review.



KEY

-  Countryside Protection Zone - adopted boundary
-  Countryside Protection Zone - proposed boundary for regulation 18 Local Plan
-  Proposed Countryside Protection Zone
-  Green Belt
-  Settlement
-  Approved Planning Applications within CPZ since 2005
-  Residential / Employment Allocations
 - A - Gaunts End
 - B - North Takeley Street
 - C - North East Takeley

Figure 11 Potential Countryside Protection Zone

Policy wording

- 8.10 The analysis undertaken within this study has identified some weaknesses within the current policy wording, which could be addressed through different wording. In addition, re-wording the policy could further align the policy with the current NPPF and incorporate some aspirations for the beneficial use of the CPZ.
- 8.11 Some guidance could be taken from the 2016 LUC study of the CPZ, which set out 4 purposes for the designation:
- To protect the open characteristics of the CPZ
 - To restrict the spread of development from the airport
 - To protect the rural character of the countryside around the airport
 - To prevent changes to the rural settlement pattern of the area by restricting coalescence.
- 8.12 An alternative would be to re-word the first test of the policy, such that new development would not individually, or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development, compromise the integrity of the separation between settlement within the CPZ and Stansted in order to maintain the integrity and rural character of the CPZ. This could encompass settlement identity as well as physical and visual separation between the development and the airport.
- 8.13 Example policy wording could consist of:
- “An area around Stansted Airport (the Stansted Airport Countryside Protection Zone) is protected from development to conserve and enhance the ‘rural’ character of the area around the airport. The area is shown by (add reference to appropriate plan).*

Within the defined area, development will be permitted where, all of the following apply:

- i. it will not (either individually or cumulatively) diminish the physical and / or visual separation between settlements within the CPZ and Stansted airport;*
- ii. the proposal would not adversely affect the open characteristics of the Countryside Protection Zone;*
- iii. it will protect individual settlement identity; and*
- iv. the proposals would implement positive landscape measures which would strengthen characteristic landscape patterns within the CPZ, in accordance with the guidelines set out within the Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment.*

In addition, land use change will be permitted where the proposals result in positive uses of the land within the CPZ, in accordance with the guidelines set out within the Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment.

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 This study has analysed the councils existing evidence base and draft policies in order to provide advice and recommendations regarding the Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ).
- 9.2 The study concludes that the policy should remain within the emerging Local Plan, however it is recommended that the council seeks to adjust the policy wording and the boundary extents of the CPZ.
- 9.3 In terms of the boundary, the proposed changes envisaged would accommodate the proposed allocations, acknowledge the physical intercession of the A120 but also include new areas of countryside that would maintain the rural setting to Stansted to the south (see figure 11).
- 9.4 It is anticipated that these recommendations would retain the policy within a future Local Plan but would seek to protect the CPZ more effectively than currently allowed for within the Reg 18 Local Plan.

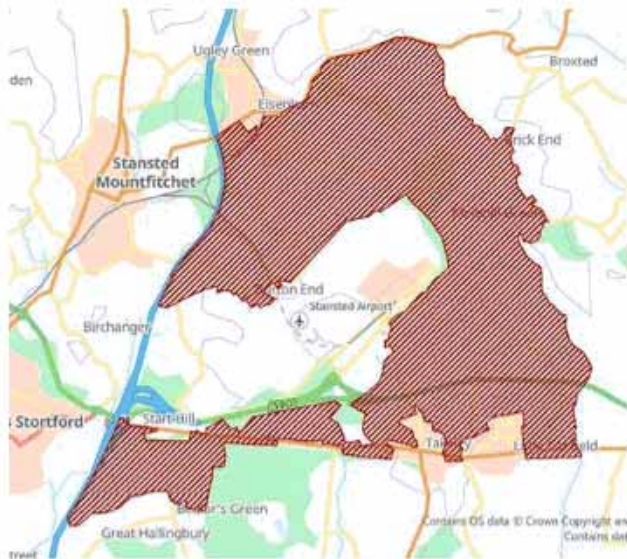


Figure 12 Adopted Countryside Protection Zone

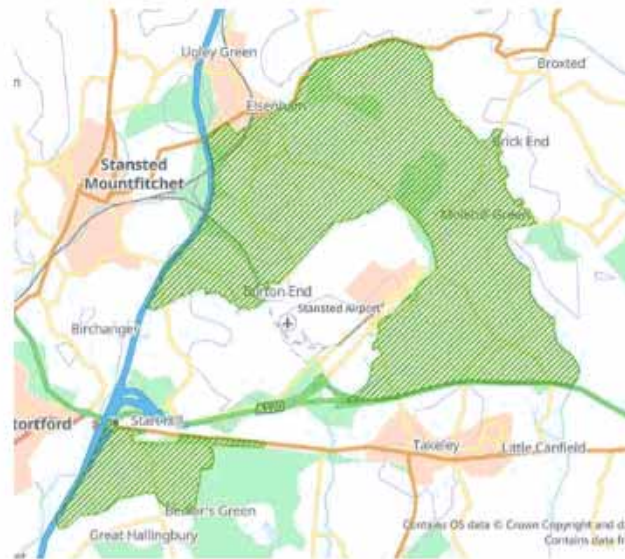


Figure 13 Regulation 18 Countryside Protection Zone

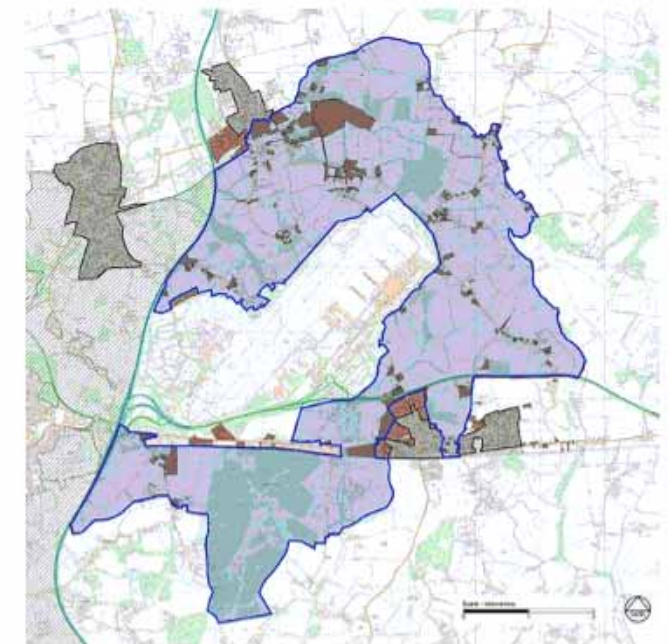


Figure 14 Potential Countryside Protection Zone

APPENDIX 1
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT EXTRACTS

APPENDIX 1

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT EXTRACTS

Relevant extracts (provided verbatim) from the descriptions of each Character Area are listed below:

Character Area B5 - Broxted Farmland Plateau

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.

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 Flitch 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.

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 Flitch Way, and in the north, bringing the northern edge of the settlement closer to the A120.

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.

APPENDIX 1 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT EXTRACTS

Relevant extracts (provided verbatim) from the descriptions of each Character Area are listed below:

Character Area B5 - Broxted Farmland Plateau

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.

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 Flitch 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.

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 Flitch Way, and in the north, bringing the northern edge of the settlement closer to the A120.

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.

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 tranquility. Away from these trunk roads and the Stansted flight path, tranquility is moderate and there is a greater experience of dark skies to the north of the area.

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.

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 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.
 - 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 highways 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Character Area B7 - Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau

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.

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.
- 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
- 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 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.

Character Area A2 - Stort River Valley

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.
- 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.

- 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 Flich 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.