

### **3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF BRAINTREE DISTRICT**



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#### **3.1 General**

3.1.1 This section of the report provides the detailed ‘profiles’ of Landscape Character Areas within Braintree District, structured as follows:

- Location of character area (map)
- Boundaries of character area (map)
- Photograph
- Key characteristics
- Overall character description
- Visual characteristics
- Historic land use
- Ecological features
- Key planning and land management issues
- Sensitivities to change
- Proposed landscape strategy objectives
- Suggested landscape planning guidelines
- Suggested land management guidelines

The profiles should be read as a whole when used to inform decision making. Where Landscape Character Areas fall within two or more adjacent District/Borough areas included in the Study report, the same profile has been included within the respective section. In such instances, a cross-reference is noted in the respective Character Area profile(s). Reference should also be made to other studies for neighbouring authority areas including:

- Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment.
- Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (in preparation).

3.1.2 The following Landscape Character Types and Areas have been identified within Braintree District (see Figure 3.1), and are described in the following sections:

#### **A - River Valley Landscapes**

A2 - Stour River Valley  
 A4 - Colne River Valley  
 A5 - Pant River Valley  
 A9 - Blackwater River Valley  
 A10 - Brain River Valley  
 A12 - Pods Brook River Valley

#### **B - Farmland Plateau Landscapes**

B2 - Hempstead Farmland Plateau  
 B3 - Bumpstead Farmland Plateau  
 B4 - Belchamp Farmland Plateau  
 B5 - Yeldham Farmland Plateau  
 B6 - Wickham Farmland Plateau  
 B9 - Stambourne Farmland Plateau  
 B11 - Lindsell & Bardfield Farmland Plateau  
 B13 - Rayne Farmland Plateau  
 B16 - Felsted Farmland Plateau  
 B17 - Terling Farmland Plateau

B18 - Silver End Farmland Plateau  
B19 - Langley Green Farmland Plateau  
B21 - Boreham Farmland Plateau

**F - Wooded Farmland Landscapes**

F1 - Gosfield Wooded Farmland  
F2 - High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland  
F3 - Totham Wooded Farmland



## **3.2 River Valley Landscapes**

3.2.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

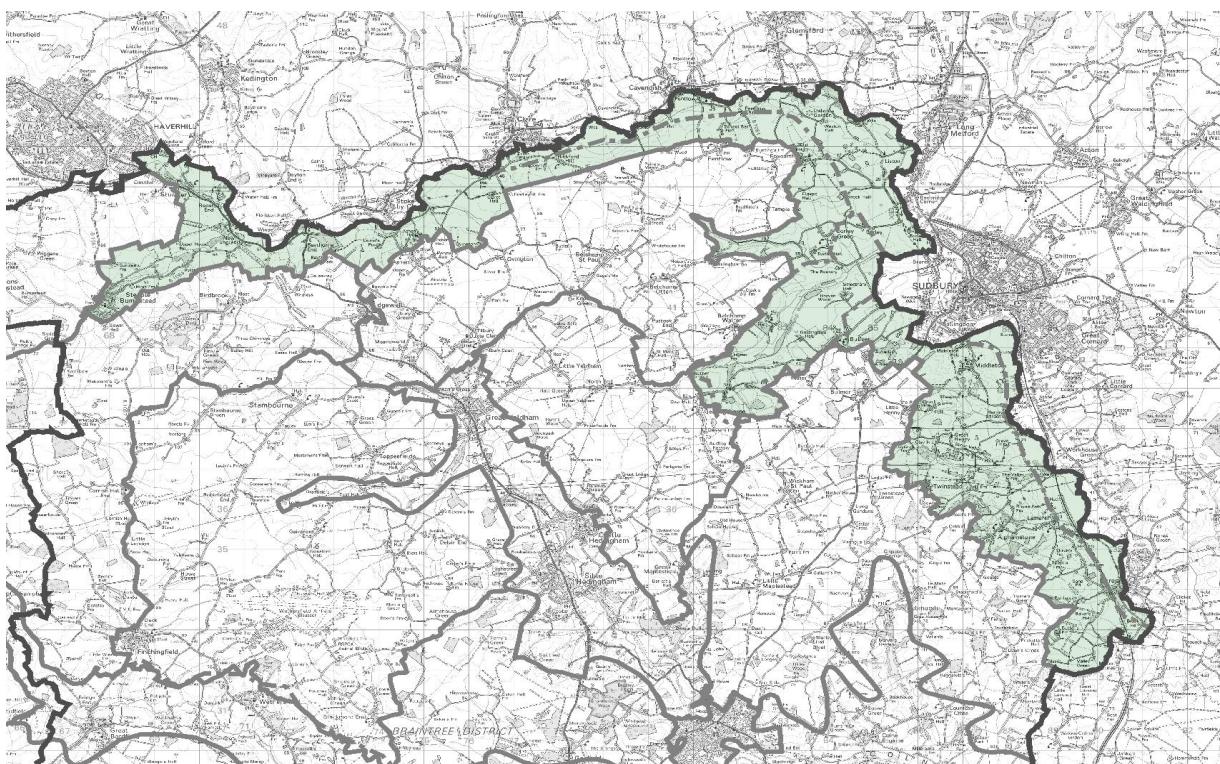
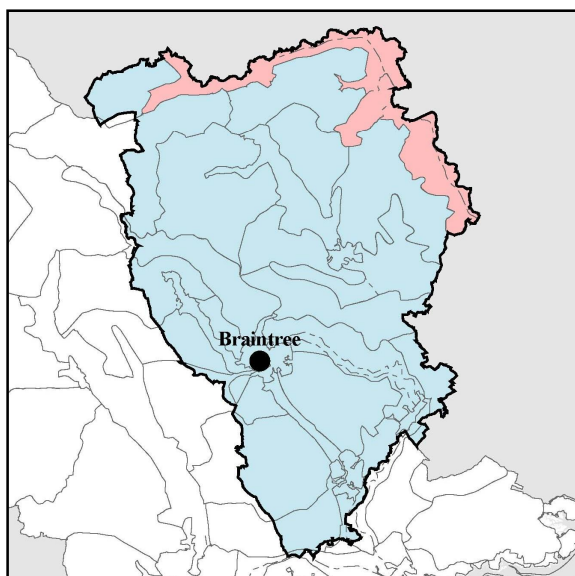
- V-shaped or u-shaped landform which dissects Boulder Clay/Chalky Till plateau
- Main river valley served by several tributaries
- Flat or gently undulating valley floor
- Intimate character in places
- Wooded character in places

3.2.2 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Character Areas:

A2 - Stour River Valley  
A4 - Colne River Valley  
A5 - Pant River Valley  
A9 - Blackwater River Valley  
A10 - Brain River Valley  
A12 - Pods Brook River Valley



## A2 STOUR RIVER VALLEY



### Key Characteristics

- Gentle rounded arable valley sides.
- Valley sides dissected by tributary valleys.
- Several small settlements are located near the top of the slope or within adjoining valleys.
- Mostly tranquil, secluded character away from the settlements.
- Sinuous pattern of lanes and roads are generally located at the edges of the valley floor and valley sides.

*(Sub-Unit A2a)*

- Typically wide flat valley floor with floodplain meadows, riverbank willow trees and small wet woodlands.
- Church towers, traditional villages, farmsteads, barns and mills are distinctive features.

*(Sub-Unit A2b)*

- Steep valley sides.
- Narrow valley with a stream in the centre.
- Meadows and small wet woodlands cover the floor of the valley.
- Large arable fields are located on the valley slopes.

**Overall Character**

The Stour Valley is a wide valley with a broad flat valley floor with a mixture of well drained and sticky soils for much of its length. In Braintree District the valley starts at Haverhill and ends at Bures with only the western half of the valley within the District. The Stour Valley also includes tributaries such as Belchamp Brook. In the north and west, arable farmland tends to dominate the valley, but it becomes more pastoral south of Sudbury. Here there is a patchwork of pasture, arable farmland and woodland on the valley sides and mainly meadows divided by hedgerows and/or wet ditches on the valley floor. Plantations of cricket bat willows and hybrid poplars are also common on the floodplain. A mixture of settlement sizes characterise the valley floor from farmsteads to large sprawling settlements with modern extensions and industrial units and derelict water mills. On the valley sides, traditional small settlements and isolated farmsteads with limited modern development occur. Where the landscape is more open, such as south of Sudbury, there are panoramic views of the valley. In more enclosed parts, east of Haverhill, views are framed and focused. Church towers, traditional villages, farmsteads, barns and mills form distinctive features. Away from the larger settlements, there is an overall sense of tranquillity, with a network of quiet rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.

**Visual Characteristics**

- The River Stour forms a key focal point throughout the valley and surrounding slopes.
- The key landmarks are the sewage works and industrial estates scattered along the valley floor.
- Churches form the key landmarks on the valley slopes such as at Great Henny and Borley.
- Panoramic views occur from valley slopes and channelled views along valley floor.

**Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by meadows in the valley floor, with 18<sup>th</sup> century or later enclosure on the valley sides, interspersed with the occasional area of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular enclosure. The field boundaries echo the lie of the contours, with the long fields formed by the later enclosure running down the slope. There is little settlement in this area, as historically the villages were located on the crest of the valley slope. There are however a number of isolated farms and structures associated with the river itself, most notably mills, in the valley bottom.

**Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture, with the riparian corridors of the River Stour and its tributaries as key ecological features. The area contains 30 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Glemsford Pits SSSI (part of) – comprises a series of water-filled disused gravel workings and a length of the River Stour that supports an outstanding assemblage of dragonflies and damselflies as well as unimproved habitats of acidic grassland and scrub/woodland.
- Five CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats Wiggery Wood (5.5 hectares), Heaven Wood, Coopersfield Wood, part of Moyns Wood and Ansell's Grove/Ash Ground.

- Twenty two CWS sites with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats including: Little Waltons Farm Marsh, part of Long Lane, Western Hall Meadow, Liston Hall Meadow, Glebe Meadow, Lapwing Meadow, Borley Green, Borley Special Road Verge, Borley Hill Meadow, Valley Walk, Belchamp Hall Meadows, Belchamp Brook Valley Marsh, Fenn Farm Mosaic, Twinstead Marsh, Alphamstone Meadows, Moat Farm Marsh, Shrubs Farm, part of Alphamstone Complex, Pebmarsh House, Clamps Grove, Edgars Farm East Meadow and Edgar's Farm Meadow.
- A further two CWSs, Loshes Meadow and Daws Hall, that are also Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) reserves.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Re-use of past industrial/mill/mining sites.
- Small urban expansions of the larger settlements within the valley.
- Encroachment of development on the river banks and within the floodplain.
- Potential for pollution of the River Stour from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from surrounding farmland.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the patchwork of pasture and woodland on the valley sides and meadows (divided by hedges and/or wet ditches) on the valley floor, which would be sensitive to changes in land management. The secluded and relatively tranquil character of the network of quiet rural lanes and public rights of way is also sensitive to change. The skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive, with potential new development being highly visible within views across and along the valley floor. Views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. There is a relatively strong sense of historic integrity within the character area as a result of the presence of historic features (such as derelict water mills and churches), meadows within the valley floor and also isolated historic farmsteads and structures. Several important habitats for wildlife and biodiversity are scattered throughout the area (including 29 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising a mixture of ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, and scrub and wetland habitats). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon valley slopes.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Conserve the tranquil undeveloped character of the intimate tributary valley of Belchamp Brook.

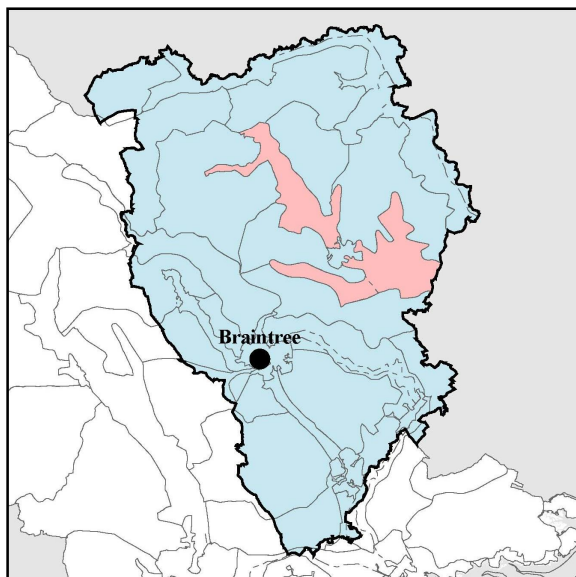
### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Encourage the planting of native alder, willow, ash, oak and Black Poplar in groups along the riverside where appropriate.

- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

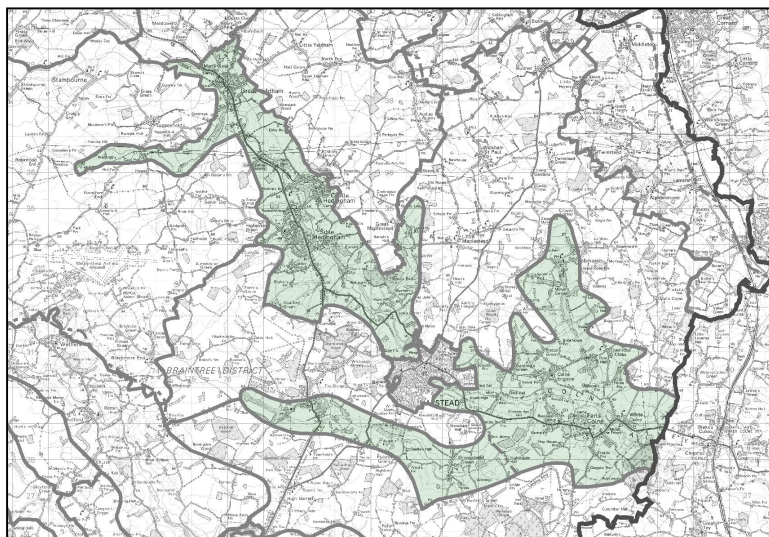


## A4 COLNE RIVER VALLEY



### Key Characteristics

- Shallow river valley with relatively steep valley sides, which varies in width throughout its length.
- The meandering River Colne and its tributaries are narrow in comparison with the broad spread of the floodplain across which the river flows.
- River Colne is bridged by roads and lanes, which connect the north, and south valley slopes and facilitates views along the river corridor.
- Land use adjacent to the river is predominantly pastoral grazed by horses.
- The A1017 runs through the centre of the valley parallel with the river.
- The views are enclosed by trees and settlements.
- On the valley slopes the land use is predominantly arable.



### (Sub-Unit 4a)

- Narrow river valley.
- Bourne Brook is small and meandering.
- Land use in the valley and up the valley sides comprises large arable fields with low hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

### Overall Character

This character area encompasses a moderately enclosed, medium scale, shallow river valley with relatively steep valley sides surrounding the narrow meandering River Colne in the centre. Alluvial deposits originating from the river dominate the geology of the area. The fertile composition of the

soils and geology has led to a mixed land use of pasture adjacent to the river, arable fields on the gentle well drained slopes of the valley sides and sprawling settlements such as Great Yeldham and Castle Hedingham dominating the valley floor in close proximity to the A1017. Castle Hedingham is a Conservation Area. The fields in this character area are small to medium bound by hedges in mixed condition varying from thick to gappy and fragmented, ditches and fences. Surrounding the settlements are warehouses and barns used for light industry and agriculture. The Colne Valley Steam Railway and Hedingham Castle form key tourist destinations in the area with the railway running parallel to the river. There is also a network of pylons dissecting the landscape. Stimulus from the views is provided by the mixed land use and a number of local vernacular buildings with timber frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs. There is a dense network of roads dissecting the river valley and bridging the river itself providing access and creating interesting views along the river corridor. The tranquillity of the area varies from moderate to tranquil depending on the proximity of the settlements and the roads.

### Visual Characteristics

- The Colne Valley Steam Railway forms a linear landmark along the river valley.
- Generally open views across fields which are framed in places by small patches of woodland and the hedges with trees.
- Hedingham Castle forms a key focal point from the eastern edge of Castle Hedingham.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin or earlier, and later enclosure of common arable land, with extensive areas of enclosed meadow along the valley floor. Settlements are generally aligned along the river, with some clustering at crossing-places, as at Earls Colne, Halstead, Sible Hedingham and Great Yeldham. The remainder of the settlement comprises isolated farms and moated sites and small villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- An enormous variety of field sizes, from large rectangular ones on the side of the valleys, to small irregular paddock-sized examples clustered around the settlements.
- Parks of medieval origin, congregated in the areas immediately to the north of Halstead.
- Ancient Woodland, largely on the valley sides, and some area of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century plantation.
- Castle Hedingham, located on a natural spur jutting out into the valley.
- Slight to moderate post-1950s boundary loss.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 37 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Chalkney Wood SSSI and CWS (part of) – comprised of a variety of ancient woodland types including acid birch-ash-lime, acid oak-lime and base-rich springline alder and oak-hornbeam and has uncommon flora including violet helleborine *Epipactis purpurata* and uncommon liverworts.
- Six CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Chestnut Grove, Rockwoods Rough, Chalkney Wood Willow Plantation, Aldercar Wood Valley, Bullock Wood and Lake Wood.
- Fourteen CWSs to the north-west of Halstead with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats Spencer Grange, Yeldham Station Marsh, Redbeards Wood Green Lane, The Willows, Hedingham Station Marsh North and South, Hedgerows Cottage Marsh, Purlshill Grassland, St Giles Churchyard, Maplestead Special Roadside Verge, Howe Meadow, part of The Howe, Slowhills Meadow and Sloe Cottage Meadow.
- Sixteen CWSs to the south and east of Halstead with unimproved grassland, scrub open water and wetland habitats.
- Cross End Marsh, Spoons Hall, Spoons Hall Pebmarsh Special Roadside Verge, Pebmarsh Marsh, Aldercar, Stream Strip Colne Engaine, Langley Mill Marsh, Munns Farm, Brick Marsh Meadow,



Bourne Brook Grasslands, Homely Ash Grounds, Ash Bottom, Perces Meadow, Gosfield Pits and Lake.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Potential for pollution of the River Colne that dissect the fields from fertiliser.
- Potential residential expansion of settlements onto the surrounding valley sites which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increase of tourist traffic and coaches during peak tourist periods e.g around Castle Hedingham.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.
- Utilities development i.e. Masts, pylons.
- Developments with individual large/bulky buildings.
- New road being constructed north of Halstead.
- Visual intrusion of road traffic in undeveloped floodplain landscape, particularly where the main railway line and A12 cross the area.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include riverside pasture, thick hedgerows in places and a number of local vernacular buildings with timber frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs (the loss of which, would alter the character of this area). The skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive to potential new development, which may be visible within open and framed views across and along the valley. Views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive to potential new development. Relatively strong historic integrity is evident, with historic settlements (such as Earls Colne, Halstead, Sible Hedingham and Great Yeldham) clustered at river crossing places, and parks of medieval origin. Several important wildlife habitats are scattered throughout the area (including 36 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising a mixture of ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, hedgerows and roadside verges). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

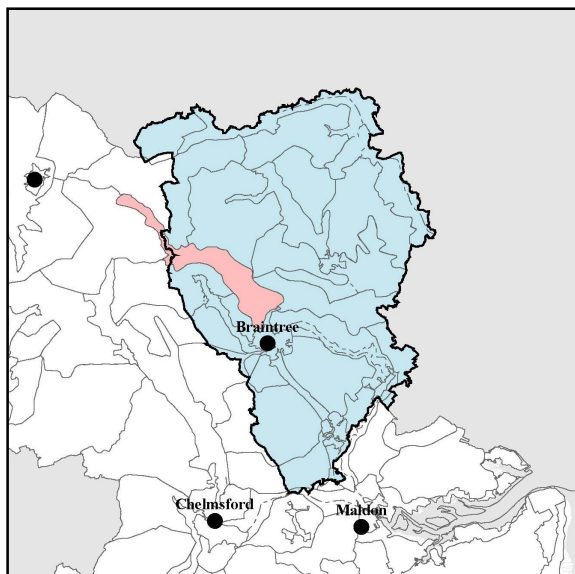
- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings on the open arable landscape.
- Ensure that any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Develop strategies to reduce potential for pollution in ditches and streams bounding the fields.
- Conserve and enhance the existing field boundary pattern, and strengthen where appropriate to local landscape character through planting native species such as hawthorn and new hedgerow trees.
- Conserve and enhance areas of semi-natural woodland as important landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and enhance the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and manage marshland, wet meadows and pasture within the floodplain.

- Conserve and promote the use of building materials in keeping with local vernacular landscape character.
- Seek opportunities for habitat restoration along the floodplain.
- Encourage the planting of native alder and willow riverside trees where appropriate.

## A5 PANT RIVER VALLEY (shared with Uttlesford District)

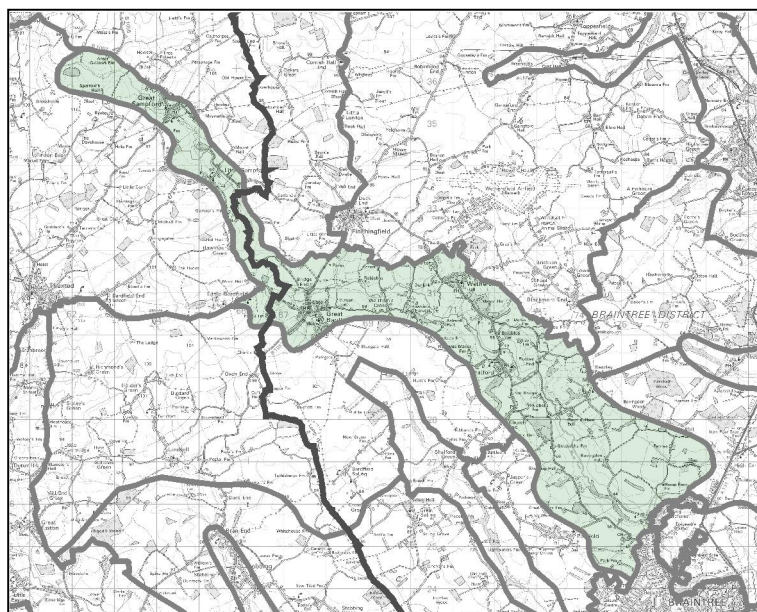


### Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley.
- Predominantly arable farmland with well hedged medium to large fields on valley slopes.
- The valley is narrow with undulating valley sides.
- Some linear poplar and willow plantations along the valley floor adjacent to the river.

### Overall Character

The head of the River Pant valley is narrow by Little Sampford and widens as the river flows down the valley until it joins the River Blackwater at Braintree. The valley for its whole length is shallow, with undulating valley sides. The valley sides are dominated by medium to large arable fields bounded by low well trimmed hedgerows. Some hedges by the roads are taller with more hedgerow trees. In contrast, the valley floor and lower slopes are dominated by small to medium sized pastoral fields. Some are wet meadows adjacent to the river banks and are associated with wet woodland. In addition, there is a pig farm with its fields sparsely covered in vegetation on the valley slopes between Shalford and Braintree. Hedge banks or grass banks line the roads, especially in the valley. Several small, often linear settlements are located on the valley slopes with a few in the valley such as Shalford. There are a number of local vernacular buildings (timber frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs are common). Upstream from Braintree there is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the river valley with several quiet, rural lanes and footpaths winding through the landscape.



### Visual Characteristics

- The church of Shalford adjacent to Shalford Hall and sewage works form a key landmark downstream of the village.
- Generally open views into the gently meandering valley, which are framed in places by small patches of woodland or hedgerow trees.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older. In the valley bottom there are extensive tracts of enclosed meadow. Historically the settlement comprised very dispersed settlement of church/hall complexes, manors, farms, moated sites and small villages strung out along extensive network of linear and triangular greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- Numerous small areas of ancient woodland on the higher ground, and areas of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century woodland or scrub in the valley floor.
- Slight to moderate post-1950s field loss, which largely takes the form of amalgamation of smaller fields in order to provide larger units, however, the overall grain to the landscape remains largely unchanged.
- The significant modern intrusions of the Second World War airfield at Wethersfield.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture within the valley of the River Pant. The area contains 16 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Seven CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Warren Grove, The Willows/Hawkins Harvest, Lady's Hole Alder Coppice, Shalford Park/Levelly Wood, Great Codham Hall Wood, Bovingdon Rows and Oak Wood.
- Eight CWSs with unimproved grassland, wetland and scrub habitats including Bridge End Meadow, Great Bardfield Marsh, Blackmore End to Wethersfield Special Roadside Verge, Beazley End, Sheering Hall Spring, Bocking Special Roadside Verge, part of Oxney Wood and Cow Wood.
- Wethersfield Manor Lake CWS and 'EWT Reserve' with open water habitat.

### Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Clearance of fields and hedgerows for pipeline on the valley slopes between Shalford and Walthams Cross.
- Potential for pollution of the River Pant from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural valley slopes.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods and rush hour.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include low, well-trimmed hedgerows, wet meadows and wet woodland adjacent to the riverbank, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The skyline of the valley slopes are visually sensitive to potential new development, with open views possible along across and along the river corridor. Views to the valley sides from adjacent Landscape Character Areas are also sensitive. Historic integrity is relatively strong with extensive tracts of enclosed meadow along the valley floor, a dispersed settlement pattern of church/hall complexes, manors, farms, moated sites and small villages and a number of local vernacular buildings (timber-frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs). Several important wildlife habitats are scattered throughout the area (including 16 sites of importance for nature conservation,

comprising a mixture of ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, hedgerows, roadside verges and open water habitats). Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

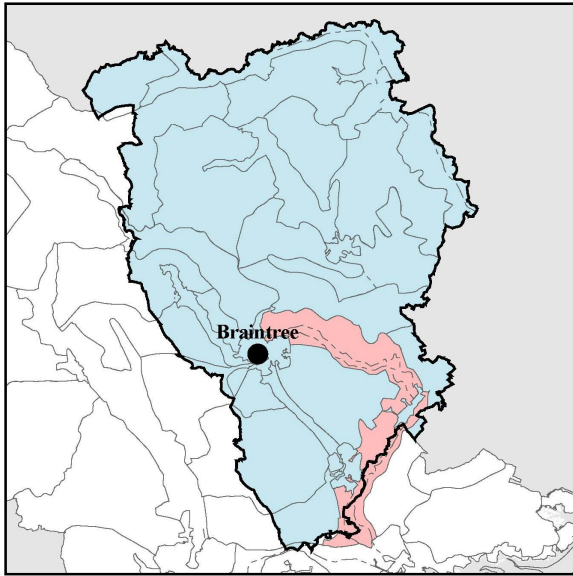
- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon valley slopes.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting which is appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.



## A9 BLACKWATER RIVER VALLEY (shared with Maldon District)

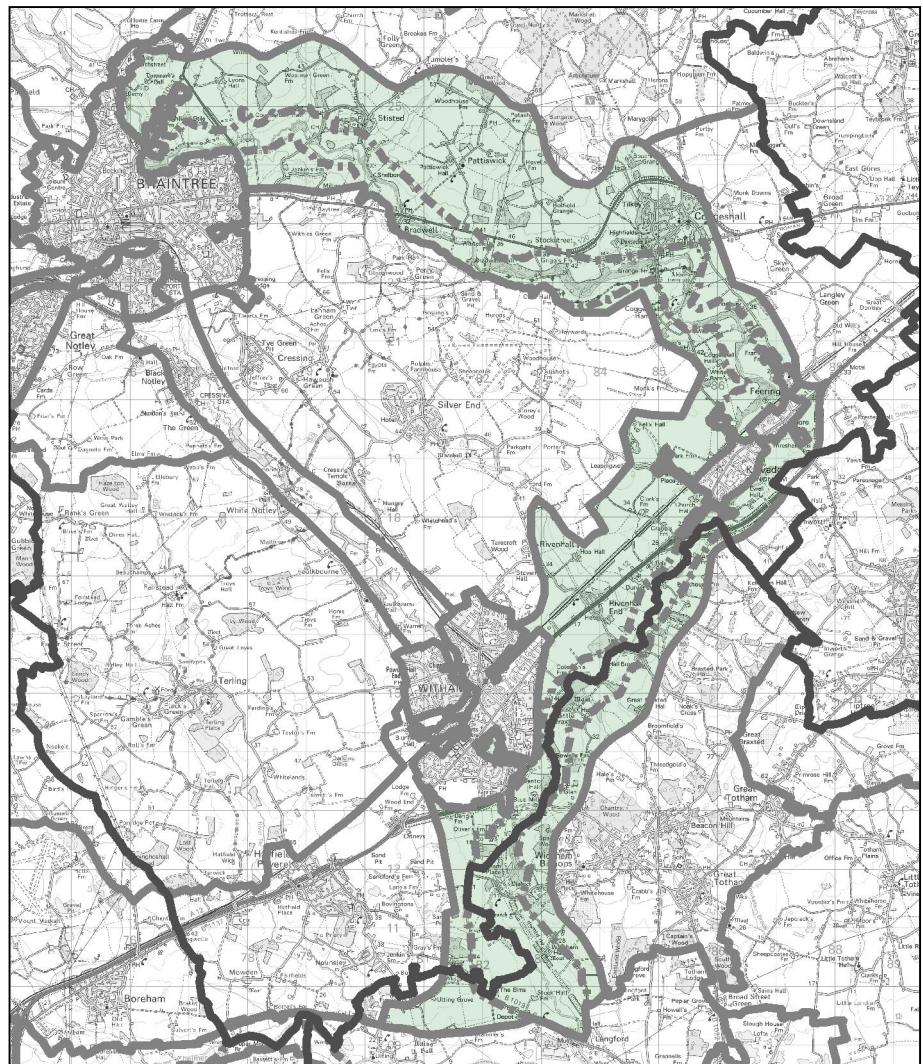


### Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley.
- The valley sides slope gently up from the valley floor.
- Predominantly arable farmland on the valley slopes.
- The Lower Blackwater near the confluence with the River Chelmer has gently valley slopes.
- Overall strong sense of place and tranquillity away from the settlements of Braintree, Witham and Maldon and the A120, A12 and the railway line.

### (Sub-Unit A9a)

- Mixture of arable and pastoral on the valley floor.
- The River Blackwater Valley floor north of the A120 is narrow.
- The River Blackwater near the confluence with the River Chelmer has a wide flat valley floor.



- Extensive linear poplar and willow plantations are a distinctive features especially along the river banks.

### **Overall Character**

The Upper Blackwater near Braintree is located in a relatively narrow valley with slopes that start gently at the top and get steeper the further into the valley to form a typical v-shape river valley centred on the river. There are areas of woodland located on valley slopes of the upper valley. As the river meanders down the valley, the valley floor becomes more wooded especially south of Coggeshall. Around Bradwell Village, the former sand and gravel pits are well vegetated with areas of poplar and willow plantations associated with the Blackwater River and its small tributary streams adding to the good tree cover and enclosure in the area. However in the lower reaches of the river until it joins the River Chelmer near Maldon the valley becomes wider with a flat valley floor with gently sloping valley sides. In this area there are few plantations and areas of woodland. The landscape becomes more open dominated by large open arable fields which benefit from the well drained fine loamy and sandy soils overlying chalk. Throughout the valley the hedgerows delineating field boundaries are in mixed condition with some well trimmed hedges and others that are more scrubby and fragmented with scattered hedgerow trees. The valley floor has large settlements such as Braintree and Witham along industries centred on the river such as watermills. Many of these mills have been converted to tourist attractions but maintain original features. On the valley slopes surrounding the river there are isolated farmsteads that are occasionally moated and small villages. The villages tend to be linear centred on the roads. All the settlements are well screened by deciduous trees. Interest is added to the landscape through the presence of a number of halls and large dwellings made from brick with a timber frame. The river valley has a strong sense of character and place with tranquil areas located along the narrow rural lanes away from the key settlements and busy roads.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- Holfield Grange and the churches at Langford and Ulting form key landmarks along and across the river valley.
- The views are open and occasionally panoramic in the lower reaches of the river valley where they are unconstrained by hedgerow trees.
- Views along the valley corridor.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older and pre-18<sup>th</sup> century co-axial fields, also of probable medieval origin. The valley bottom contains present and former enclosed meadow. The historic settlement pattern is largely dispersed, comprising isolated manors, church/hall complexes, farms, moated sites and villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- The valley to the south of Coggeshall which now contains extensive willow plantations.
- The historic settlements of Kelvedon and Coggeshall.
- The Roman roads of Stane Street and the former A12 which have left their imprint on the modern landscape, influencing field alignment and settlement distribution.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 16 sites of nature conservation including:

- Ten CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including part of Barrowfield Wood, Blackwater Plantation, Tilkey Road, Coggeshall, Blackwater Plantation West, part of Bungate Wood, part of Great Monk Wood, Coven Plantation, Lyonshall Wood and Bramble Wood.

- Six CWSs with unimproved grassland, hedgerow and wetland habitats including Moor Gardens, Riverview Meadows, Disused Railway - Witham, Hoo Hall Meadow, Feering Marsh and Whet Mead, also a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and the River Blackwater from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from the surrounding agricultural fields.
- Potential for rubbish being thrown from car windows along the busy roads especially the A12.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and houses within the open landscape, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads including large lorries and HGVs.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include distinctive linear poplar and willow plantations along the river banks, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive, with potential new development being visible within several views to and from adjacent Landscape Character Areas and also within views across and along the valley. There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from enclosed meadows within the valley bottom, historic settlements (including Kelvedon and Coggeshall) and a dispersed settlement pattern, comprising isolated manors, church/hall complexes, farms and moated sites. There area also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including sixteen County Wildlife Sites, comprising a mixture of semi-natural woodland, unimproved grassland, hedgerows and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Manage the traffic flows along the minor roads especially those not suitable for HGVs and lorries due to narrow bridges.
- Ensure that new built development is in keeping landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Enhance the screening of the A12 and the railway line.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges and ditches within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which area in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.
- Manage the roadside flytipping and rubbish thrown from cars that lands in the road verges.



## A10 BRAIN RIVER VALLEY

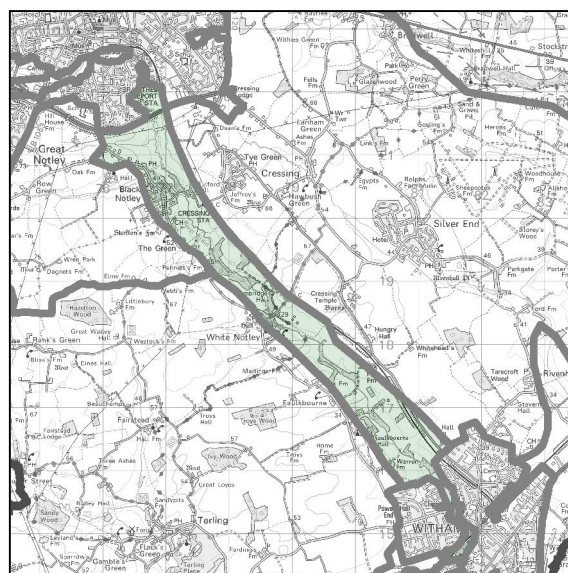


### Key Characteristics

- Shallow valley.
- The River Brain valley is narrow with undulating valley sides.
- Settlements tend to be on the valley sides near the highest points marking them very visible.
- Pastoral irregular shaped fields slope down the valley sides to the river.

### Overall Character

The River Brain valley is relatively narrow with steep to moderate sloping sides. The valley runs between Braintree and Witham in a southerly direction crossing the farmland plateau. The gradient of the slopes decreases towards Witham where the valley widens out to meet the River Blackwater and its valley. Small to medium scale pastoral and arable farmland dominate through out valley's length sloping down the valley sides to meet at the small meandering river. Scrubby hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees delineate the field boundaries. The hedgerows are often gappy and fragmented. Along the banks of the river willow and poplar plantations are common along with pockets of wet alder/willow woodland. Roads line the top of the valley slopes on either side with only one crossing point at Cressing. In addition a railway runs along the eastern valley side runs a railway. Associated with the roads is the dispersed pattern of settlement. Black Notley lies at the head of the valley with White Notley and Cressing along the valley sides. Although the settlements tend to have a historic core, the main residential areas are composed of modern housing with unscreened exposed boundaries with the surrounding farmland. In the more rural areas of the valley the buildings are dominated by farmsteads. Pylons cross the valley south of Black Notley. The valley views are constrained by the valley sides and the trees make views channelled. Some areas of the valley are secluded and tranquil but these areas are rare due to the heavy traffic on the surrounding roads and close proximity to Braintree and Witham.



### Visual Characteristics

- Black Notley Church forms a key focal point within and along the valley slopes.
- The views are channelled by the valley sides and the tall trees.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and pre-18<sup>th</sup> century co-axial fields also of probable medieval origin. The valley bottom contains present and former enclosed meadow. The historic settlement pattern is largely dispersed, comprising isolated manors, church/hall complexes, farms, moated sites and small villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- The former airfield of Rivenhall, which is now a gravel-extraction site, and forms a dominant landscape features.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 3 sites of nature conservation including:

- Two CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Stream Wood and Adam's Wood.
- Witham Marsh CWS with unimproved grassland and wetland habitat.

### Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the River Brain from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from the surrounding agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and houses within the open landscape, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.
- Earthworks in the south eastern valley side outside Witham.

### Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include pockets of wet alder/willow woodland along the river banks, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The skyline of the valley slopes, in particular at the edges of Black Notley, White Notley and Cressing, are visually sensitive to potential new development (which may be visible within several views to and from adjacent character areas). There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from enclosed meadow within the valley bottom and a dispersed historic settlement pattern, comprising isolated manors, church hall complexes, farms, moated sites and small villages. Overall, this character area has moderate – to high sensitivity to change.

### Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

**Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Ensure that new built development is in keeping landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges and ditches within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which area in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

## A12 PODS BROOK RIVER VALLEY

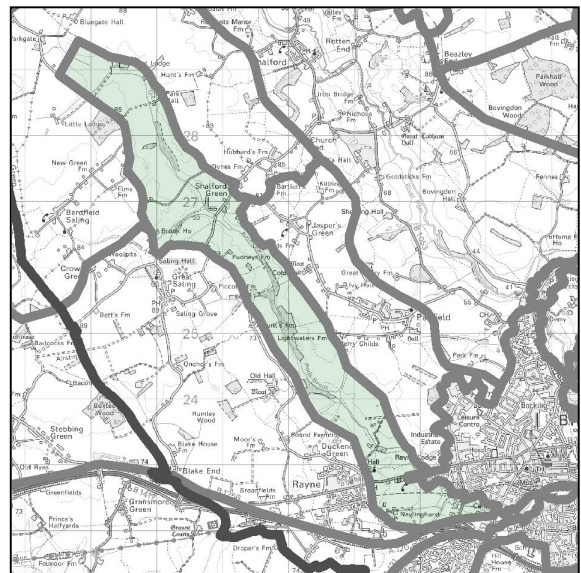


### Key Characteristics

- Narrow shallow valley.
- Predominantly pastoral and heavily wooded.
- Wet meadows.

### Overall Character

Pods Brook lies in a narrow shallow valley. It cuts into an area of farmland plateau. It is sparsely populated with isolated often local vernacular dwellings with timber frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs found along the valley floor as well as at the top of the valley sides. Great Lodge is located at the head of the valley. The valley sides are covered by irregularly shaped fields which slope down to the valley floor. A complex of small pastoral fields and deciduous woodland plantations dominates the valley floor. Pods Brook itself, is lined along its length by a row of deciduous trees which mark its course. As the river reaches the edge of Braintree woodland cover is reduced and the valley becomes more open with larger arable fields that slope down to meet at Pods Brook. Hedgerows with hedgerow trees delineate the field boundaries along the length of the river valley. Occasionally the hedgerows are fragmented and gappy. The only settlement within the river valley is Shalford Green a small linear village. Upstream from Braintree there is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the river valley with several quiet, rural lanes and footpaths winding through the landscape.



### Visual Characteristics

- Generally open views into the gently meandering valley, which are framed in places by small patches of woodland or hedgerow trees.

## Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by areas of enclosed meadow along the valley floor and numerous small areas of woodland. The fields are predominately pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older. Historically the settlement comprised very dispersed settlement of church/hall complexes, manors, farms, moated sites and small villages strung out along extensive network of linear and triangular greens, the latter located at road junctions.

## Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture and fragmented hedgerows. The area contains two sites of nature conservation value centred around the Pods Brook including:

- Ash Ground CWS comprised of woodland.
- Pods Brook Complex CWS comprised of a variety of scrub, wetland and grassland habitats within the river valley.

## Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of Pods Brook from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural valley slopes.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods and rush hour.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

## Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include a complex pattern of small pastoral fields and deciduous woodland plantations along the valley floor and deciduous trees, which mark the course of the river and are sensitive to changes in land management. The overall sense of tranquillity and skyline of the valley slopes would also be potentially affected by new development within the area. There is a sense of historic integrity within the character area, with enclosed meadow along the valley floor, a historic settlement pattern (with church/hall complexes, manors, farms, moated sites and small villages strung out along an extensive network of linear and triangular greens. This pattern would be sensitive to new large-scale development. Overall, the character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

## Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

## Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon the sparsely populated valley.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.

### **3.3 Farmland Plateau Landscapes**

3.3.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

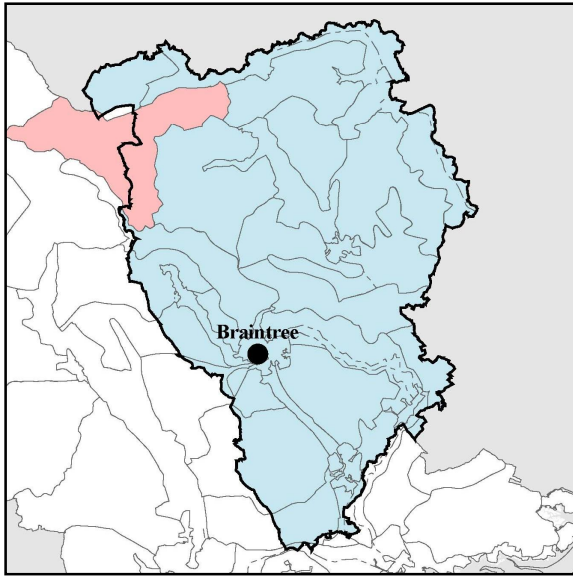
- Elevated gently rolling Boulder Clay/Chalky Till plateau landscape which is incised by river valleys
- Network of winding lanes and minor roads
- Medium to large-scale enclosed predominantly arable fields
- Long distance views across valleys from certain locations
- Well wooded in places (with several areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland)

3.3.2 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Landscape Character Areas:

B2 - Hempstead Farmland Plateau  
 B3 - Bumpstead Farmland Plateau  
 B4 - Belchamp Farmland Plateau  
 B5 - Yeldham Farmland Plateau  
 B6 - Wickham Farmland Plateau  
 B9 - Stambourne Farmland Plateau  
 B11 - Lindsell & Bardfield Farmland Plateau  
 B13 - Rayne Farmland Plateau  
 B16 - Felsted Farmland Plateau  
 B17 - Terling Farmland Plateau  
 B18 - Silver End Farmland Plateau  
 B19 - Langley Green Farmland Plateau  
 B21 - Boreham Farmland Plateau



## B2 HEMPSTEAD FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Uttlesford District)

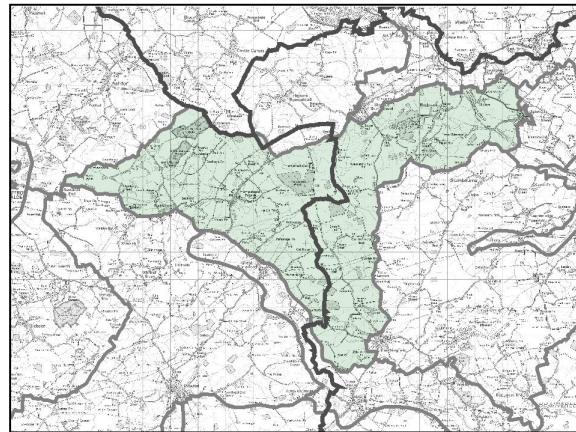


### Key Characteristics

- Rolling arable farmland and hills surrounding steep valleys with small streams.
- Settlements located in the valleys.
- Number of interesting and colourful vernacular buildings within small linear settlements.
- Overall strong sense of tranquillity and sense of place.

### Overall Character

This character area encompasses rolling hills and valleys predominantly covered by medium scale arable fields stretching from Steeple Bumpstead in the north, Ridgewell in the east, edge of Finchingfield in the south and Radwinter in the west. Small copses of woodland occasionally punctuate fields. The woodland areas are either deciduous or mixed with coniferous trees and irregular in shape. A lot of the woodland in the area is located in close proximity to roads and buildings. Boundaries of fields are generally delineated by low well maintained hedges or tree belts. The tree belts combined with the woodlands in places create an enclosed feel to the landscape with trees lining the horizon. Several small, often linear settlements are located in the valleys such as Cornish Hall End, Hempstead, Finkley Green and Stocking Green. Variety and interest is 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 or as isolated farmsteads on the tops of the rolling hills. 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.



### Visual Characteristics

- The key landmarks are the churches with towers or spires within views into and across the valleys.
- The farmsteads provide landmarks on the top of the rolling hills.



## Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a mixture of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and former common fields, usually enclosed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by piecemeal agreement. In the valley bottom there are extensive tracts of enclosed meadow. Substantial pockets of woodland survive, as does the historic settlement pattern of dispersed villages focussed on greens and commons, and scattered farmsteads in an irregular field and woodland pattern. The main historic landscape features include:

- A number of ancient woodlands on the higher ground, and in the valley floors are areas of 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century woodland or scrub.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss, creating some areas of large, but still irregular, fields. Interestingly, those fields most affected are the former common fields which are hence being restored to their original dimensions.

## Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 30 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Eighteen CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including: Great and Little Bendysh Wood, Holbrook Wood, Burntfield Grove, Wilderness Grove, Tilekiln Grove, Roundlay Grove, Oak Wood, Homestead Grove, Hempstead Wood, Lakehouse Grove, Oldhall Wood, Maze Plantation, Moyns Park, Park Wood, Three Chimneys Wood, Great Howe Wood and Long Almonds Grove.
- Twelve CWSs with unimproved grassland and wetland habitats including: Radwinter Manor Place, Plough Meadow, Cowless Hall Meadow, Haylocks Fen, Hempstead Church Meadow, Wincelow Pasture, Great Sampford Sand Pit, Little Sampford – Maynards, Sampford Hall Wood, Mounthall Wood, Howe Farm Meadow and Martin's Farm Meadow.

## Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the streams and rivers located in the bottom of the river valleys.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the valley slopes, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

## Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include small copses of woodland and low, well-maintained hedges or tree belts (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The skyline along the rolling hills is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a historic and scattered or dispersed settlement pattern, which is sensitive to potential large-scale development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 30 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, semi-natural grassland and wetland habitats), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

## Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

**Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and into the valleys.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Develop strategies for managing and monitoring traffic on minor roads during busy tourist periods.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

### B3 BUMPSTEAD FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Uttlesford District)

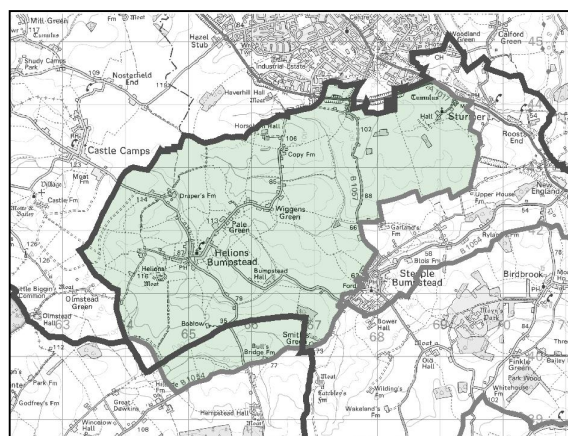


#### Key Characteristics

- Medium to large scale arable fields bounded by hedges with trees and ditches.
- Rolling hills and deep narrow valleys.
- Dissected by narrow rural lanes lined with hedges or ditches.
- Small villages with a wealth of historic buildings.
- Tranquil character.

#### Overall Character

The Character Area stretches from Haverhill in the north, Sturmer in the east, South Green in the south and Castle Camps in the west. It encompasses rolling hills and valleys covered by medium to large scale arable fields with scattered isolated farmsteads and dwellings, creating a medium scale landscape. The fields overlie pebbly clay drifts over Bagshot Beds which lead to acidic fertile soils ideal for arable use. Deciduous hedges with trees, interspersed with small copses, delineate the fields. The hedgerow condition varies from low well managed to gappy hedgerows with trees. However there are no large areas of woodland within the area. Rural roads and public rights of way cross this open rural landscape. The area is in general very tranquil and peaceful away from Haverhill and its bypass. Helions Bumpstead forms the main settlement and is nestled in a valley. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of the timber framed cottages with colour washed walls with either red tiled or thatched roofs that occur in the villages or as isolated dwellings.



#### Visual Characteristics

- Panoramic views in all directions.
- Key landmarks are the village churches and towers on tops of hills and Haverhill industrial estates.

## Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a complex mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and common arable field enclosed by agreement. The latter type of field had largely been enclosed by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and is more concentrated in the eastern half of the area. Historically the settlement was very dispersed, consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- Small areas of ancient woodland, scattered along the ridge.
- Ancient enclosed meadows in the tributaries of the River Stour.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss, rising to high on a number of farms.

## Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture adjacent to settlements. The area contains 5 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Four CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats: Balance Wood, Garlands Wood, Greatley Wood and Bex Grove.
- Bumpstead Hall Road Verge CWS of unimproved grassland habitats.

## Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Decline in traditional countryside management, e.g. gappy hedgerows.
- Encroachment of Haverhill industrial estates on views.
- Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams that flow through the area from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

## Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include deciduous hedgerow trees, interspersed with small copses, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The open nature of the skyline of the tops of areas of rolling hills is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is also a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern (consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages) which is sensitive to potential large-scale development. The area also contains several patches of ancient woodland, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate – to high sensitivity to change.

## Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

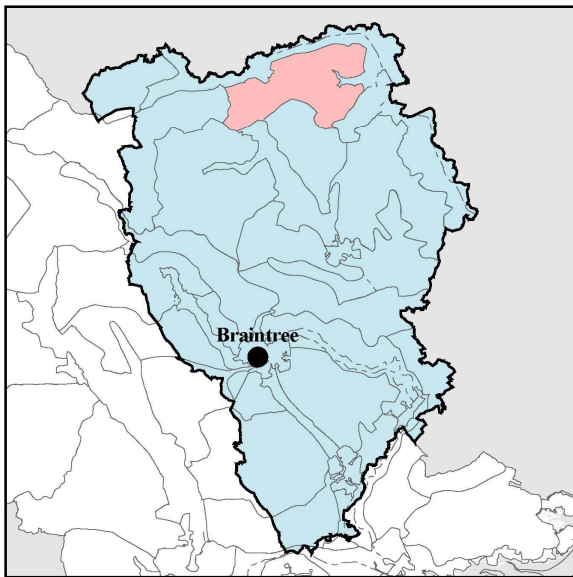
## Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Ensure new built development is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve panoramic views.
- Screen visual detractors, e.g. Haverhill industrial estates.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and manage field boundaries, and strengthen where necessary through planting native species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage woodland/ancient woodland/trees.
- Conserve and manage ecological habitats.
- Develop strategies to monitor and manage traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.

## B4 BELCHAMP FARMLAND PLATEAU

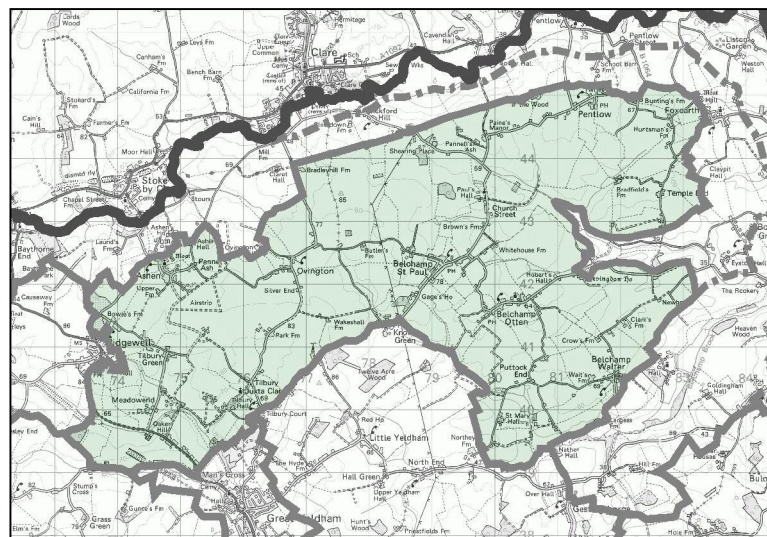


### Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating plateau.
- Very open, wide, large regular arable fields interspersed by a few scattered trees and coves.
- Generally gappy and fragmented field boundaries.
- Some mature hedgerow trees on field boundaries.
- Small villages with a wealth of historic buildings.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.

### Overall Character

This character area encompasses the flat to gently undulating plateau which extends north to the top of the River Stour slopes near the settlement of Clare, east to Belchamp Otten, south to Tilbury Green and west to Ridgewell. The plateau is generally covered in large regular arable fields which are slightly larger on the highest parts of the plateau. These extensive fields allow continuous panoramic views across the farmland to low horizons, punctuated by intermittent lines of mature trees. Farmsteads and small villages, along with small coves of deciduous woodland, occasionally punctuate the fields. Field boundaries are generally delineated by ditches and occasional stretches of hedgerows with trees which tend to be gappy and fragmented. Several small settlements such as Belchamp St Paul, Belchamp Otten and Ovingdon are located in linear patterns along roads. The quiet rural roads and public rights of way form a comprehensive network across the area. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of local vernacular buildings (timber frames, colour wash and thatched roofs are common). These are commonly found in Belchamp St Pauls and Belchamp Otten. The key landmarks in the area providing a strong sense of place are the church tower at St Paul's Hall and the church spire at Belchamp Otten. In addition, there is a private airstrip south-east of Ashen on a large closely cut grassfield. There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.





### Visual Characteristics

- The church tower of St Paul's Hall and the church spire at Belchamp Otten are landmarks within views across the plateau.
- In the west, the airstrip at Ashen provides a focal point in views towards Ashen.
- Generally panoramic views across the plateau framed in places by small patches of woodland.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a complex mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and common arable field enclosed by agreement. The latter type of field had largely been enclosed by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and is more concentrated in the eastern half of the area. Historically the settlement was very dispersed, consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- The Second World War airfield at Ashen.
- Small areas of ancient woodland scattered along the ridge.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 8 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Three CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Pettyfield Wood (5.7 hectares), Dollery Wood and Langley Wood.
- Five CWSs with unimproved grassland and wetland habitats Ridgewell Hall Meadow, Park Farm Meadow, Ovington Meadow, Belcham Otten Churchyard and Long Lane.

### Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams that bound the fields from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural land.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the open plateau which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### Sensitivities to Change

The open nature of the skyline of the highest parts of this plateau area (for example along the ridge) is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau and also from adjacent character areas (for example the Stour valley). The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is a sense of historic integrity within the area, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern (consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages) which is sensitive to potential large-scale development and also the presence of several vernacular buildings. The area also contains small areas of ancient woodland along the ridge, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate – to high sensitivity to change.

### Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

**Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

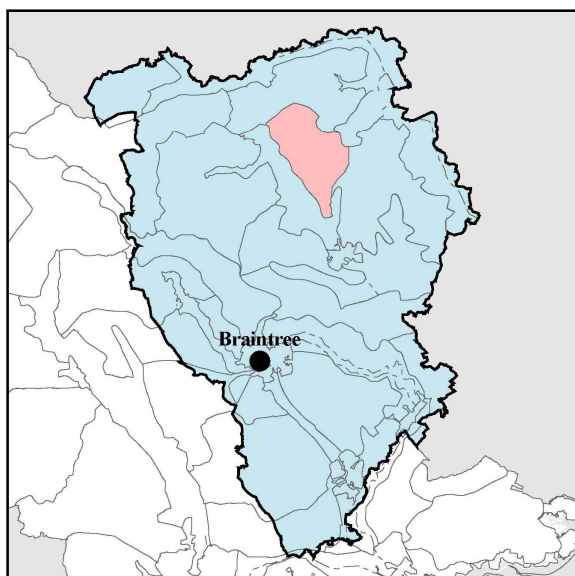
- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings on the surrounding plateau.
- Maintain characteristic views across the plateau.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement patterns, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular landscape character.



## B5 YELDHAM FARMLAND PLATEAU

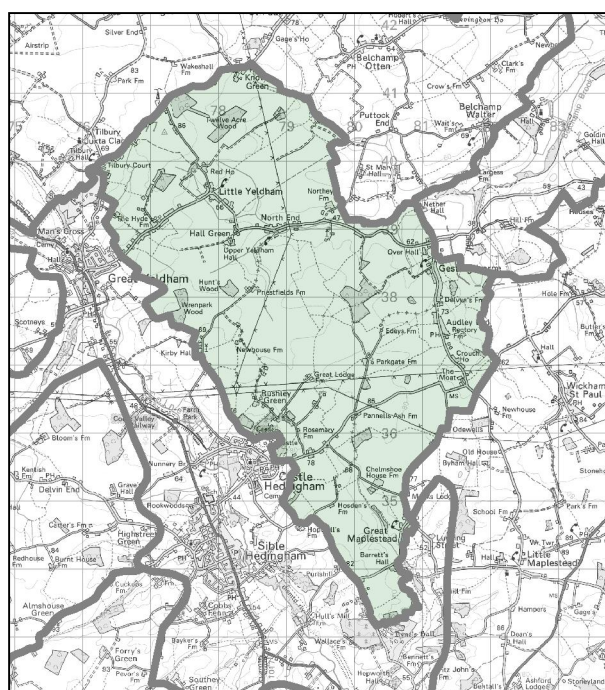


### Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating.
- Predominantly agricultural fields, interspersed by villages and farmsteads.
- Generally gappy and fragmented field boundaries.
- Number of interesting and colourful vernacular buildings within small linear settlements.
- Overall strong sense of place and relative tranquillity.

### Overall Character

This character area encompasses the general undulating plateau between the river valleys of the Stour and Colne. It stretches from Knowle Green in the north, Gestingthorpe in the east, Great Maplestead in the south and Castle Hedingham in the west. The gently undulating plateau is covered with predominantly regular shaped medium to large arable fields which become smaller at the edge of the villages. Farmsteads and occasionally small irregular copses of deciduous woodland punctuate fields. Field boundaries are generally delineated by scrub, hedges with trees or tree belts, all of which tend to be gappy and fragmented. Several small often linear settlements are scattered across the plateau, often screened from the surrounding fields by trees and hedges. These include Little Yeldham, North End and Gestingthorpe. The settlements have mixed age buildings that vary in style from modern brick to timber frames, colour wash and thatched roofs. There is an overall sense of place and tranquillity throughout the character area, with several quiet rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.



### Visual Characteristics

- The isolated farmsteads and settlements form the key landmarks.
- Generally open views into the surrounding valleys and across the plateau.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by complex mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and later enclosure of common arable. Historically the settlement was very dispersed, consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages and there has been little modern development. The main historic landscape features include:

- A scatter of ancient woodlands along the crest of the ridge overlooking the Stour valley and small areas of enclosed meadow in the valleys.
- Areas of 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> century woodland plantation, which are largely located in the tributary valleys.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss, rising to high on a number of farms.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 11 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Six CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Marshy Wood, Twelve Acre Wood, Hyde Wood, Wrenpark Wood, Three Cornered Wood and Ridleys Wood.
- Five CWSs with unimproved grassland and wetland habitats Park Gate and Pannels Ash Farm Special Road Verges, Branwhites Grove, Kendalscroft Grove and Castle Hedingham to Gestingthorpe Special Road Verge.

### Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution in the ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from the agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the plateau, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential residential expansion of villages, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads especially during busy tourist periods.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### Sensitivities to Change

The open nature of the skyline of the higher parts of this plateau is visually sensitive to new development, which may be visible within panoramic views across the plateau and also from adjacent character areas. The overall sense of tranquillity, particularly along quiet rural lanes, particularly along quiet rural lanes within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development. There is a sense of historic integrity within the area, resulting from a dispersed linear historic settlement pattern (consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages) which is sensitive to potential large-scale development and also the presence of several vernacular buildings. Overall, this character area has moderate sensitivity to change.

### Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

**Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

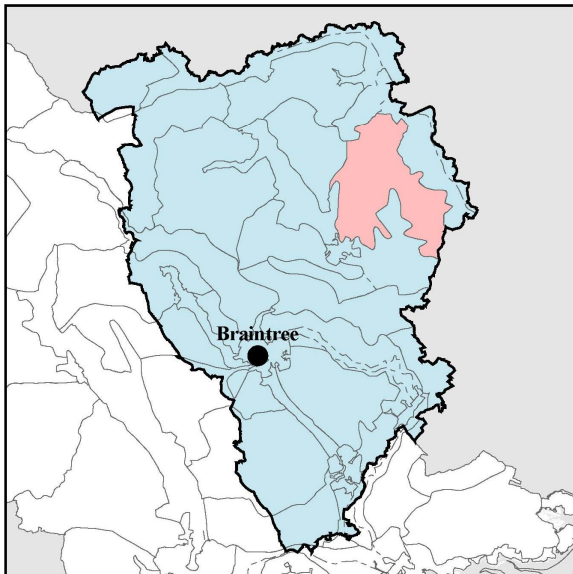
- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and from buildings.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Develop a strategy to manage the increase of tourist vehicles on the rural roads.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and enhance the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular landscape character.



## B6 WICKHAM FARMLAND PLATEAU

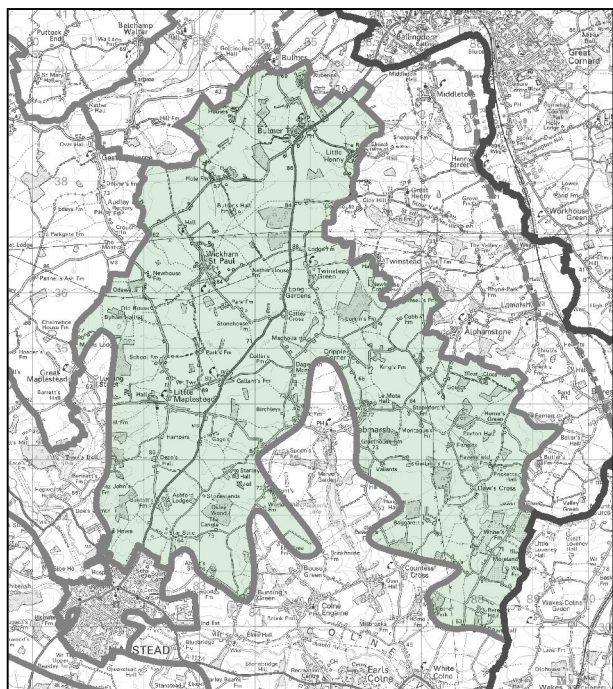


### Key Characteristics

- Rolling hills and valleys.
- Large scale arable field pattern.
- Infrequent small blocks of deciduous and occasionally coniferous woodland.
- Some mature hedgerow trees on field boundaries.
- Wide views across the farmland.
- Small villages with a wealth of historic buildings.
- Strong sense of tranquillity.

### Overall Character

This character area encompasses the rolling hills and valleys between Bulmer in the north, Twinstead in the east, Countess Cross in the south-east, Halstead in the south-west and Gestingthorpe in the west. The river valleys of the Stour and Colne and their tributaries surround the area. It is a landscape of large



arable fields on the flat tops of the hills and smaller pastoral fields, marshes and woodland in the valleys. This provides areas of continuous views with low horizons, punctuated by intermittent lines of mature trees in the higher areas and smaller channelled views within the valleys. Arable fields also tend to give way to smaller fields of improved grassland used as pasture for horses and a few sheep nearer to the settlements and farmsteads with smaller fields especially around Daws Cross. In addition, fields are also used occasionally for growing lines of fruit trees around Wickham St Paul. Throughout the landscape, hedgerows and ditches delineate the fields. Some of the hedgerows have mature hedgerow trees on the boundaries, while others are gappy and fragmented. Farmsteads and irregularly shaped deciduous woodland occasionally punctuate fields. Several small, often linear settlements along roads are scattered across the landscape often in the valleys. These tend to be screened by tall mature trees. Within the villages is found a mix of building styles including a number of local vernacular buildings with timber frames, colour wash and thatched or tiled roofs. Halls are often

associated with the villages such as Maplestead Hall and Twinstead Hall contributing to the character and overall strong sense of place within the area. There is a strong sense of tranquillity away from the A131, with a network of quiet rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- The villages and halls provide landmarks in the views across the farmland.
- Pylons dominate the skyline throughout the centre of the area.
- On the hilltops there are generally open views across the farmland, while in the valleys the views are more channelled.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, which are probably of medieval origin or earlier, and later enclosure of common arable land. The medieval very dispersed settlement pattern, consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages, largely survives, with little modern development. The main historic landscape features include:

- A scatter of ancient woodlands along the crest of the ridge overlooking the Stour valley.
- Small areas of enclosed meadows in the valleys.
- 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century woodland plantation, largely located in the tributary valleys.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 24 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Sixteen CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Parsonage Wood, Almshouse Wood, Butlers Wood, Waldegrave Wood, Parkhill Wood, Seven Acre Wood, The Grove, Fitz John's Grove, Oxley/Birch Woods, Mosse's Wood, Twinsteadhall Wood, Cleeshall Great Wood, Great Wheatley Wood, West Grove, Shrives Wood, and Crofts Wood/Little Wheatley Wood.
- Eight CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub, open water and wetland habitats include Twinstead Green, part of Alphamstone Complex, Link Hills North, Link Hills, Ramsey School - Star Stile Mosaic, Fishpits Marsh, Daws Cross Nursery Farm Meadow and part of The Howe.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and Rivers Colne and Stour tributaries from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural valley slopes.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the top of hills which would be conspicuous on the skylines.
- Potential residential expansion of villages.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include mature hedgerow trees at field boundaries and a patchwork of small pastoral fields, marshes and woodland within the small valleys (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open skyline of the hilltops is sensitive to potential new development (in particular tall vertical development) and the overall sense of tranquillity away from the A131 could also potentially be affected by new development. There is a relatively strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a combination of halls (such as Maplestead and Twinstead, associated with villages), small areas of enclosed meadow within the valleys, a scatter of ancient woodlands along the crest of the ridge overlooking the Stour valley. The area also has a very dispersed settlement pattern (consisting of church/hall complexes,

isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages), that would be affected by potential large-scale new development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 24 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, semi-natural grassland, scrub, open water and wetland habitats), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

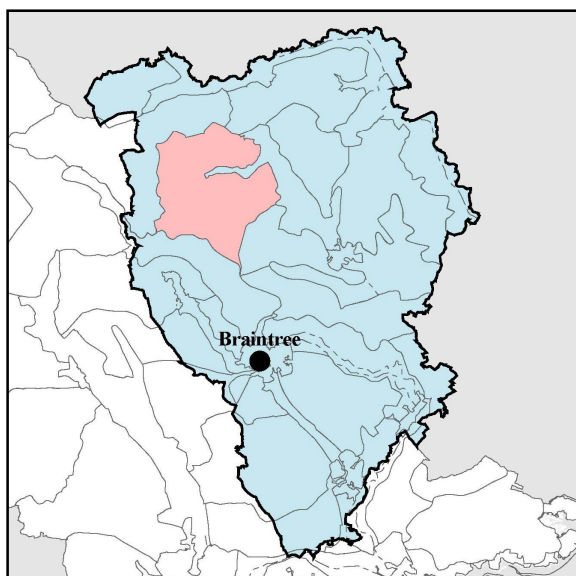
- Consider the visual impact of new residential developments and farm buildings.
- Maintain characteristic views of the valleys and hills.
- Ensure any new exposed development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Develop strategies for managing and monitoring increased traffic during peak tourist periods.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and enhance the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular style.



## B9 STAMBOURNE FARMLAND PLATEAU

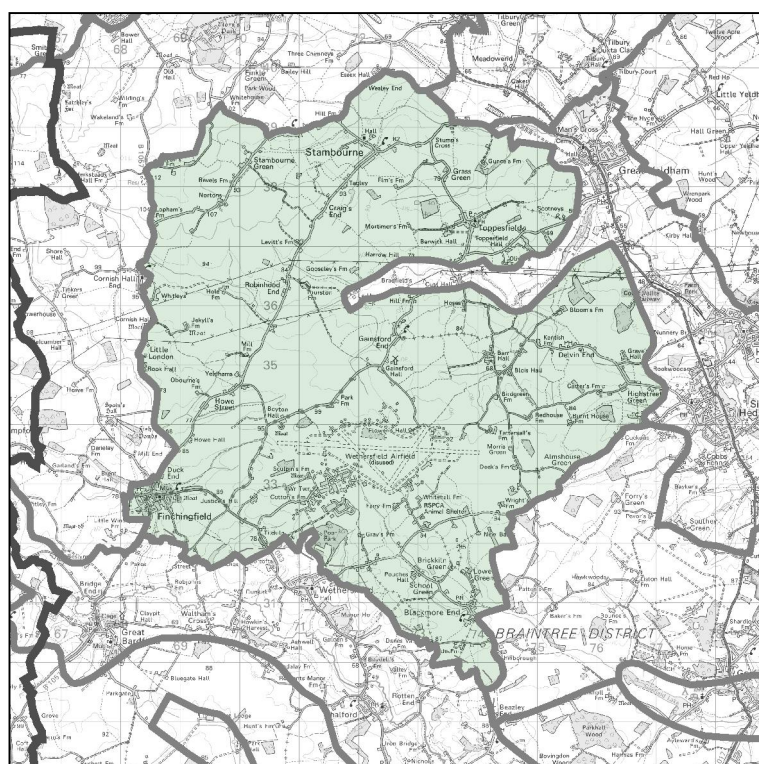


### Key Characteristics

- Relatively open gently undulating arable land.
- Predominantly agricultural land bounded by species rich hedgerows with trees and ditches.
- Narrow country lanes bounded by grass verges and ditches dissect the fields.
- Lines of pylons dissect the open landscape.
- Wethersfield Airfield dominates the views in the south-eastern area.

### Overall Character

This character area encompasses the gently undulating arable land which stretches from Stambourne in the north to Finchingfield in the south west to Highstreet Green in the east. The geology and soils of the area are composed of glacial tills and pelosols providing the fertile soils for arable farming. The gently undulating slopes are covered predominantly with large arable fields with smaller fields in the shallow river valleys adjacent to the narrow, shallow, gently meandering rivers. Farmsteads and isolated dwellings along with small deciduous copses occasionally punctuate fields. To the east, the copses are composed of ancient deciduous irregularly shaped woodland. Low hedges with scattered mature native deciduous trees such as beech and oak in conjunction with narrow ditches delineate field boundaries. Several small linear settlements line the narrow lanes and are often associated with farm buildings and barns. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of local vernacular buildings with timber frames, colour wash and thatched roofs and recently converted barns. These



houses are often mixed in with modern late 20<sup>th</sup> century residential houses with red brick and tiled roofs. The larger villages of Finchingfield and Toppesfield, designated conservation areas, have clear focal point centred around the church and village shops. Finchingfield also has a village common and a duck pond which contribute to the character and overall strong sense of place within this character area. There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the character area with a network of quiet rural lanes winding through the landscape joining the settlements.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- The church towers of Stambourne, Toppesfield and Finchingfield are landmarks within the views towards the villages.
- Generally open views across the arable fields which are framed in places by small patches of woodland and the hedges with trees.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a complex mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and common arable field enclosed by agreement. The latter type of field had largely been enclosed by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and is more concentrated in the eastern half of the area. Historically the settlement was very dispersed, consisting of church/hall complexes, isolated manors and farms, moated sites and small villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- Quendon Par, which is situated along the river valley, in a line of similar parks which are partially in the valley itself and partly on the valley slopes.
- The nucleated village of Finchingfield, which occupies a nodal position in the communications. This nodal position is in turn reflected in the 'spider-web' field pattern which radiates around the village.
- Small areas of ancient woodland scattered along the ridge.
- Moderate post-1950s boundary loss, rising to high on a number of farms.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 12 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Nine CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Berwick Hall Wood, Redbeard's Wood, Grasall's Wood, Cuckoo Hill Wood, Meakley Wood, Thorley Grove, Ostend Wood and Outfield Wood/Boyton Grove and Park Wood.
- Three CWSs with unimproved grassland, woodland pasture and scrub including Robin Hood Farm, Redbeard's Wood Green Lane and Poor Park.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues.**

- Potential for pollution of the ditches that bound the arable fields from fertiliser making them nitrogen and phosphorus rich.
- Potential residential expansion of villages into the surrounding arable land which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increase of tourist traffic and coaches during peak tourist periods e.g around Finchingfield.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the landscape pattern of small patches of ancient woodland scattered across the landscape, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Several high areas of plateau have an open skyline, which is visually sensitive to new development, which may interrupt views across, to and from the plateau. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern (with isolated

farms, moated sites and small villages strung out along linear greens) and historic cores (centred around churches) within villages such as Finchingfield and Toppesfield. This pattern is sensitive to potential new large-scale development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 12 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, grassland, woodland pasture and scrub), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate to- high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

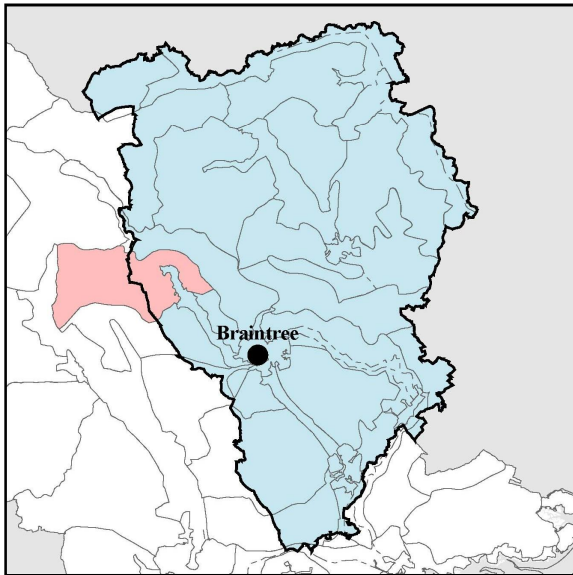
- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings on the open arable landscape.
- Ensure that any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Develop strategies to reduce the impact of tourist traffic and coaches during peak periods.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Develop strategies to reduce potential for pollution in ditches and streams bounding the fields.
- Conserve and enhance the existing field boundary pattern, and strengthen where necessary through planting native species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials in keeping with local vernacular landscape character.

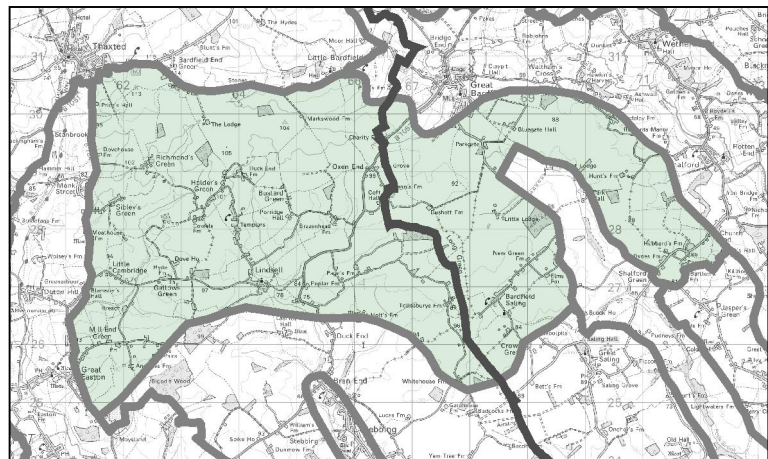


## B11 LINDSELL AND BARDFIELD FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Uttlesford District)



### Key Characteristics

- Glacial Till farmland plateau in Central Essex farmlands.
- Open, broadly rolling plateau, dissected by Pods Brook and Stebbing Brook.
- Mainly arable farmland with many shelterbelts forming dark backdrop to many views.
- Shelterbelts often thickly planted containing a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees
- Horse pasture visible near settlements.
- Linear settlement pattern along roads and lanes, or scattered farmsteads; there are no major villages, although Lindsell has an historic church.
- Vernacular architecture pale cream or white-washed plaster with thatched roofs, some half-timbered buildings.
- Tall species-rich hedgerows along many lanes; some hornbeam coppice visible.



### Overall Character

This character area is located above three river valleys, the Chelmer, the Pant, and the Blackwater and Brain River Valley (A10-Braintree district). Pods Brook (A12) and Stebbing Brook (A6) also drain through this plateau area. Bounded on the north by the Thaxted-Great Bardfield road, its southern boundary lies along the plateau edge marked by lanes and footpaths above Stebbing (see B13). It is gently rolling, open countryside, covered by medium to large arable fields. Regular field patterns are delineated by a variety of vegetation but the overall character of the area is formed by the constant backdrop of trees, sometimes as dense shelterbelts, and sometimes interspersed between field boundaries, along with gappy hedgerows. Hedges are usually hawthorn and it is used in a variety of ways: as low field dividers, as tall screens along lanes, as gappy remnants of pre-enclosure and as mature specimens in isolation or grouped together, especially near settlements. Shelterbelts appear as

dark blocks on the ridges, possibly owing to the mix of conifers they sometimes contain. Mature trees also dot the field pattern: in hedgerows, along ditches, or in isolation in a field. Some Scots Pine is also planted along lanes. Patches of ancient woodland have woven themselves along with newer planting into the field pattern. In spite of the tree cover, the landscape appears very open; the field pattern is medium to large scale and there are no villages of any size. Settlement pattern is linear or dispersed. Large farms with many buildings vary in condition from utilitarian to carefully restored historic structures. Roads bound the area but narrow winding lanes and tracks are the main access routes. The B1057 cuts the area in half. The vernacular architecture is colour-washed plaster, usually white or cream, with thatched roofs and occasionally red brick and flintwork. Newer residential development appears suburban, and can look out of character on a country lane, as outside Lindsell. The texture of this character area is as varied as the topography, but the general impression is of a landscape that offers changing interest with views that may progress from open to closed to open again, depending on the location. It has a sense of isolation despite its proximity to Stansted Airport, and retains a moderate to strong sense of tranquillity.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- Views across farmland plateau from roads and public rights of way are usually open, but often framed or limited by tree belts or high hedges.
- Attractive views across the Chelmer valley slopes can be gained from the western edges of the area
- Thaxted visible from higher ground in north of the area.
- The ancient church at Lindsell is enclosed by trees and therefore not visible from a distance.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by predominately pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, relatively small in size in the southern half of the area and getting larger to the north. There is also the occasional common field which had been later enclosed piecemeal by agreement. 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. The main historic landscape features include:

- Twisting and often partially sunken roads, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older.
- A number of small parks and some ancient woodland.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable. The area contains 14 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Seven CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Marks Wood Thaxted, Avesey Wood, Gallows Wood, Lubberhedges Wood, Lodge Wood, Hart Wood, Small part of Shalford Park /Levelly Wood.
- Seven CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats Sweetings Meadow, Bustard green, Lindsell - Daisyley Road, Duck End, part of Bran End Meadows, Parsonage Farm Meadow and Reding Spring.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Past loss of hedgerows and decline in hedgerow management.
- Potential loss of hedgerows and field pattern due to the further introduction of intensive agricultural practices.
- Pressure from increased traffic on rural lanes and erosion of verges.
- Pressure from expansion of settlements which may be detrimental to landscape character (Lindsell, Little Cambridge).
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive.

## Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the landscape pattern of small patches of ancient woodland scattered across the landscape, which are sensitive to changes in land management. Several high areas of plateau have a very open skyline, which is visually sensitive to new development that may interrupt views across, to and from the plateau. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and a network narrow lanes (several of which are partially sunken). There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 14 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats), which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate sensitivity to change.

## Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

## Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

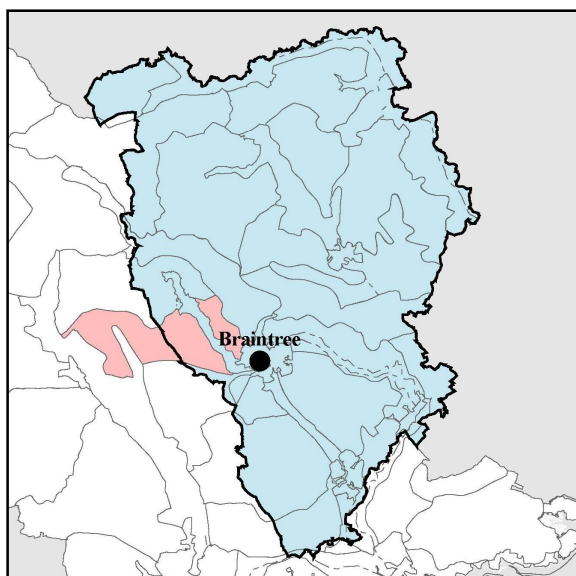
- Conserve the rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that use of materials, and especially colour, is appropriate to the local landscape character; such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings.
- Small scale development should be carefully sited in relation to existing farm buildings.

## Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted.
- Enhance existing landscape character by avoidance of further conifer planting along roads.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats.

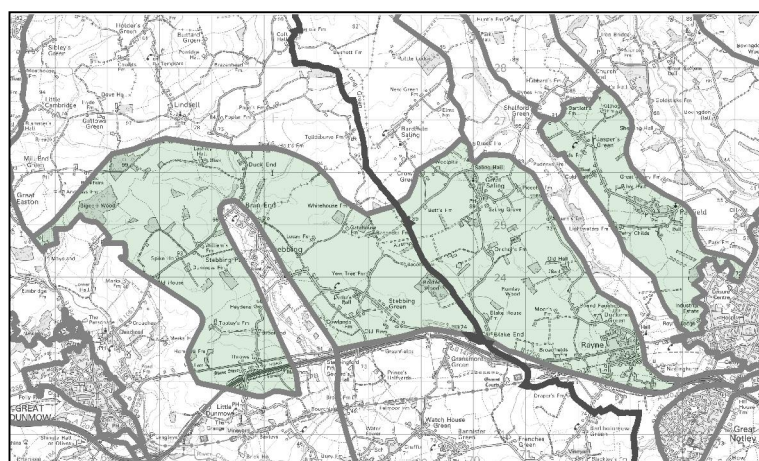


### B13 RAYNE FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Uttlesford District)



#### Key Characteristics

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium and large arable fields, marked by sinuous fragmented hedgerows and ditches.
- Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern comprising a few small villages.
- A concentration of isolated farmsteads, some with moats.
- A comprehensive network of rural lanes and Public Rights of Way.



#### Overall Character

The Rayne Farmland Plateau is an area of gently rolling hills with wide flat tops and valleys covered by predominantly medium to large arable fields interspersed with small grass paddocks and pasture used for grazing horses. The farmland plateau is located west of Braintree with its southern boundary abutting the A120. The area is cut into by two small narrow river valleys with small narrow meandering streams which exaggerate the landscape slopes. Away from the valleys, there are long distance wide views over the large fields with the field boundaries generally delineated by hedges, which are often gappy and fragmented. The hedgerows vary in height from low well trimmed to tall with lots of hedgerow trees across the whole area. Some of the fields were only bound by ditches creating a very open view. On the valley slopes the fields are smaller and the views more channelled by the topography of the land and the higher density of trees. The valley floors are dominated by wet meadows marshes and woodland which create constrained views. In the open view south west of Stebbing lies Andrew's Field airstrip with a large grey hanger and several light aircraft adjacent to the grass runway. Several small, often linear settlement are scattered across the landscape concentrated in the eastern and western extents of the area dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century brick houses. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of occasional local vernacular buildings with timber-frames, colour

wash and thatched roofs and isolated farmsteads, some of which have moats. There is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the area away from the A120 and Braintree with a comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways winding through the landscape.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- The circular tower of Bardfield Saling Church and the Andrew's Field airstrip form the key landmarks within the views across the farmland plateau.
- The views on the tops of the hills are generally open to panoramic depending on the heights and density of the surrounding trees and hedgerows.
- Views along the valley corridors are generally constrained or channelled depending on the frequency and density of trees.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, interspersed by what is categorised as 'mixed origin' fields. Historically the settlement comprised dispersed or polycentric settlement with isolated farms, moated sites and small villages strung out along linear greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- A number of small parks and some ancient woodland.
- Extensive enclosed meadow pastures along both river valleys.
- Occasional common fields, which have been later enclosed by agreement.
- Andrews Field World War II airfield.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture with pockets of parkland. The area contains 19 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Twelve CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including part of Oxney Wood, Panfield Wood, Mouslin Wood Stebbing, Ridley Wood, Dow Wood/Four Corner Spinney, Bigod's Wood, Hick's Plantation, Homeley Wood, Broxted Wood, Blackbush Wood, Blackbush Wood and Golden Grove.
- Seven CWSs with unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitats part of Pods Brook Complex, Hall Farm Meadows, Whitehouse Spring, Brick Kiln Farm Pastures, part of Bran End Meadows, Nick's Hole and Stebbing Green.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams crossing the farmland from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the open farmland, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential residential expansion of villages, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include many small woods and copses and a mosaic of wet meadows, marshes and woodland along the valley floors, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. The skyline of the valley slopes is also sensitive to new development, which may be visible within views across and along the valleys. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern (with isolated farms, moated sites and small villages strung out along linear greens, several of which are visible today) and extensive enclosed meadow pastures along

both river valleys. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 19 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate to- high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

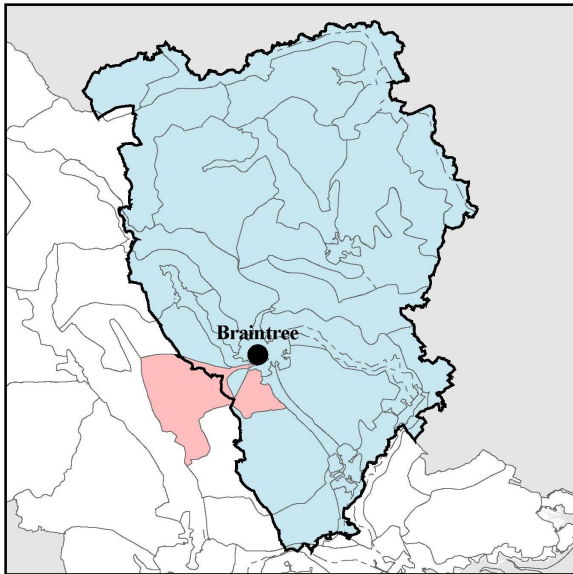
### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon the farmland plateau.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across the farmland.
- Ensure and new development within the farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

## **B16 FELSTED FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Chelmsford Borough and Uttlesford District)**

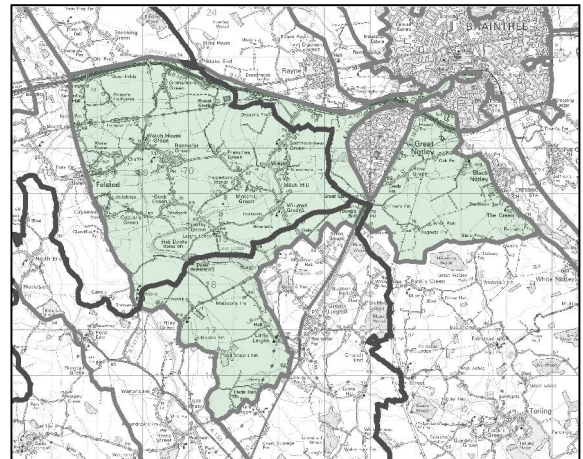


### **Key Characteristics**

- Gently undulating farmland.
- Network of narrow, winding lanes.
- Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- The farmland is predominantly arable with field boundaries delineated by fragmented hedgerows.

### **Overall Character**

The Felsted Farmland Plateau extends from the A120 in the north to Black Notley in the east, Chatham Green in the south and Felsted in the west. The farmland is gently undulating with a patchwork of irregular medium to large fields. Their boundaries are enclosed by either thick but intermittent hedgerows, or just marked by grassy banks and ditches. In long views scattered small woods and copses and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The farmland surrounding the villages of Mole Hill Green, Bannister Green and Watch House Green is composed of smaller irregular predominantly pastoral grass fields. The area is fairly densely populated with villages straggling along the roads to coalesce with each other. The farmsteads also form clusters of buildings. There is a comprehensive network of narrow winding rural lanes around which the settlement pattern is based. Many of the roads surrounded by fields tend to be surrounded by raised banks or hedges. Interest and variety is added to the area through the presence of local vernacular buildings with colour washed walls and red tiled or thatched roofs. The area has a strong sense of place and away from the key settlements and the A120 and A131 is relatively tranquil.



### **Visual Characteristics**

- The views are open to panoramic across the farmland. The variation in the nature of the view is dictated by the trees.

## Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, relatively small in size in the southern half of the area and getting larger to the north. 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.

## Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains one site of nature conservation value - Flitch Way CWS comprising unimproved grassland and hedgerow habitats. Other ecological features include:

- Patches of ancient woodland at Margaret Roding Wood, Nightingale Wood, Garnetts Wood and Barnston Lays.
- Species rich hedgerows and ditches bounding the arable and pastoral fields.
- Small deciduous woodlands and copses scattered across the area.
- Tree/scrub-lined stream corridors.

## Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the streams and ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and residential dwellings on the edge of the settlements, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.
- Increased traffic on the minor roads when the Essex Showground is open.

## Landscape Strategy Option

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

## Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

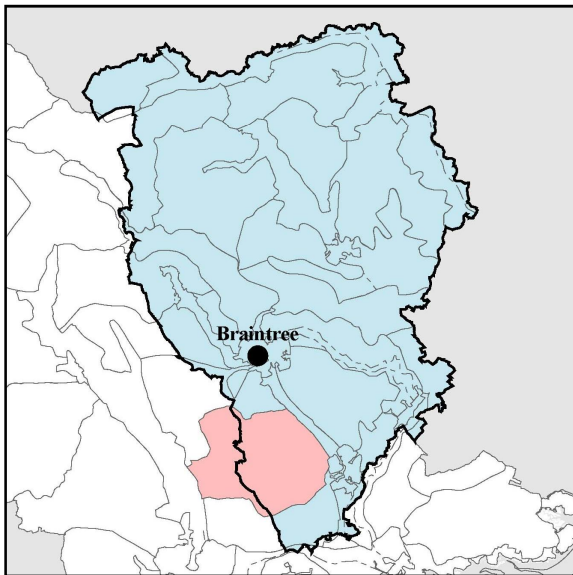
- Ensure that new build is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Maintain cross-valley views and characteristic views across and along the valley.
- Ensure any new development on valley sides is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

## Suggested Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of semi-natural woodland as important landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.



## B17 TERLING FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Chelmsford Borough)

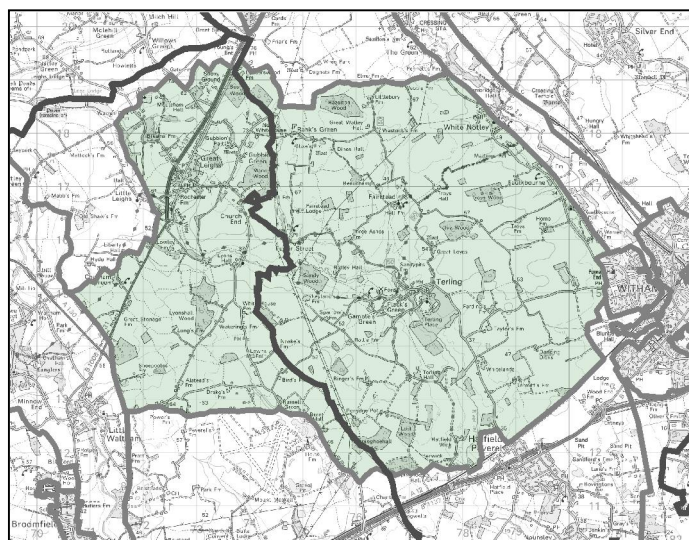


### Key Characteristics

- Rolling arable farmland.
- Irregular pattern of medium to large scale fields.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small villages, typically with greens and ponds.
- Network of narrow winding lanes.
- Mostly tranquil away from the A12 and A131.

### Overall Character

The farmland plateau surrounding Terling between the A12 and A131 is on rolling hills and valleys especially in the west. North east of Terling the farmland becomes flat and very open overlying deep well drained fine loams. The land is mainly arable with an irregular pattern of medium to large scale fields. Thick but intermittent hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees often delineate the field boundaries. In the north east of the area the grassy banks and ditches often mark field boundaries. There are many pockets of predominantly deciduous woodland with occasional mixed woodland. Some of these pockets form the remnants of ancient woodland. In addition there are several ponds or depressions in the middle of the larger fields that tend to be surrounded in trees. In long views these scattered small woods and copses, and hedgerow trees coalesce to create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The farmland is crossed by a comprehensive network of winding narrow lanes that are often bound by tall hedgerows and trees or where they are sunk below the surrounding fields by ditches and banks. In addition the Essex Way and the East Anglian Farm Rides Horse Riding Trail along with a network of footpaths cross the fields. Pylons cross the farmland creating a strong linear feature within the skyline. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small isolated villages and farmsteads that are occasionally moated, often dispersed along lanes, with the larger village of Terling in the centre of the area. Away from the A12 and A131 there are areas with a tranquil character.





### Visual Characteristics

- Key Focal features are the Terling Church Spire which towers over the surrounding countryside and Terling Place.
- Views in the area vary between open and panoramic depending on the locality and density of trees within the view.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a historic pattern of irregular fields of various sizes. The historic pattern of dispersed settlements and scattered farmsteads survive. Some settlements would have been focussed on greens. The main historic landscape features include:

- Despite moderate to significant boundary loss, the field boundary pattern survives.
- Several areas of ancient woodland.
- The line of the Roman road from Chelmsford to Braintree, which bisects the Character Area.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains 35 sites of nature conservation value:

- The River Ter SSSI and associated wetland habitats.
- 34 CWSs, including 25 with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitat.

### Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the streams and ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and residential dwellings on the edge of the settlements, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include thick (intermittent) hedgerows, frequent hedgerow trees, grassy banks and ditches and many pockets of predominantly deciduous woodland, (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. In association with this, the overall sense of tranquillity within the area is sensitive to change. The open skyline of higher areas of the farmland plateau is visually sensitive to new development that may be visible within views across, to and from the area. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement (comprising dispersed settlements and scattered farmsteads). Several areas of ancient woodland within the character area are also sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate sensitivity to change.

### Landscape Strategy Option

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

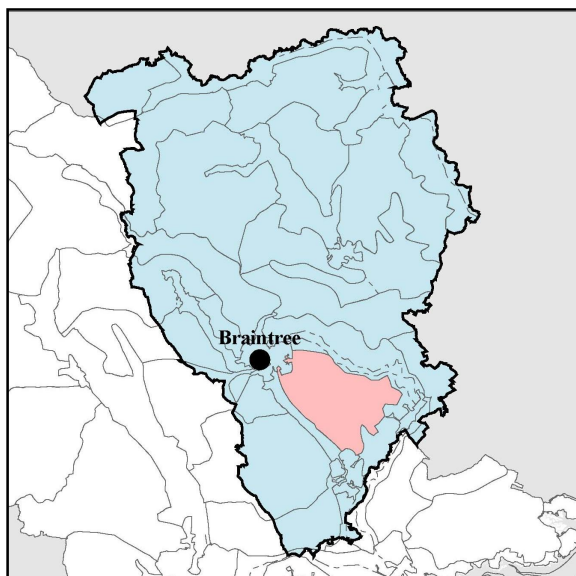
**Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Ensure that new build is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Ensure any new development within the farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

## B18 SILVER END FARMLAND PLATEAU

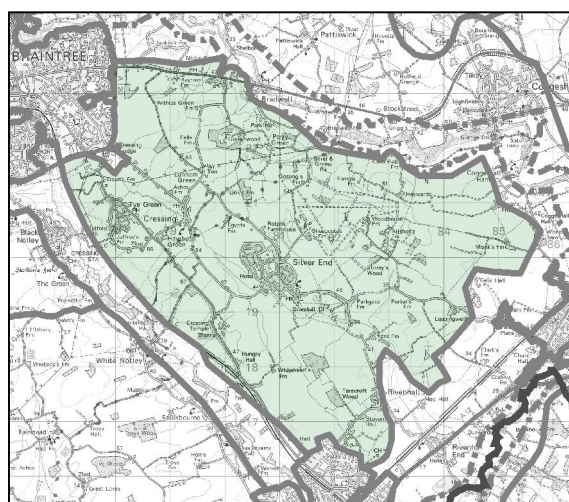


### Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating farmland.
- Irregular predominantly large arable fields marked by sinuous hedgerows.
- Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small villages.
- Network of narrow winding lanes.
- Mostly tranquil character away from the major roads.

### Overall Character

The Silver End Farmland Plateau that stretches from Bradwell in the north, Coggeshall in the east, Witham in the south and Cressing in the west, is formed of gently undulating farmland. The irregular medium to large fields are predominantly arable with hedges and hedgerow trees forming field boundaries. The area is generally open allowing long-distance views. However, there are a number of plantations of small woodlands within the landscape, which also define the edges to fields in open farmland areas. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small isolated farmsteads and villages along the narrow winding roads that form a comprehensive network across the area. The buildings in the area are predominantly agricultural or residential. Some of the buildings are in the local vernacular style with colour wash walls and thatched roofs. In the east of the area near Bradwell lies a large sand and gravel pit with large mounds of sand and gravel. Although deciduous hedgerows are being grown around the site to screen the pit and surrounding earthworks, gaps in the hedgerow make it very exposed from surrounding roads. The pit has been extended over the neighbouring disused airfield and creates a stark contrast to the surrounding fields. Away from the main roads that lie adjacent to the character area and the sand and gravel pit most of the area is tranquil.



### **Visual Characteristics**

- Lanham Green Water Tower forms a focal point in the surrounding fields as it towers above the surrounding trees.
- The views are generally open or panoramic depending on the density and location of trees within the view.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and pre-18<sup>th</sup> century co-axial fields also of probable medieval origin. The historic settlement pattern is largely dispersed, comprising isolated manors, church/hall complexes, farms, moated sites and villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- The Roman roads of Stane Street and the former A12 which have left their imprint on the modern landscape, influencing field alignment and settlement distribution.
- The early 20<sup>th</sup> century village of Silver End.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture with scattered small areas of ancient woodland. The area contains 15 sites of nature conservation value including:

- Six CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Templeborder Wood, Lanham Wood, Links Wood, Upney Wood, Storey's Wood and Rivenhall Thicks and seven areas of unnamed woodland.
- Two CWSs with unimproved grassland, hedgerow and wetland habitats include Park House Meadow and Maxeys Spring.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and residential dwellings on the edge of the settlements in the open farmland, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.
- Expansion of the sand and gravel pit at Bradwell Quarry.
- Planning Application notice states that permission is being sought for a dry silo mortar plant near Bradwell Quarry.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include many small woods and copses that provide structure and plantations of small woodlands, (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open nature of the skyline of several areas of the plateau is visually sensitive, with new development potentially visible within expansive views across the plateau. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern of small villages. The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes, which cross the landscape are sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 15 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, hedgerow and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has moderate to- high sensitivity to change.

## **Landscape Strategy Option**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

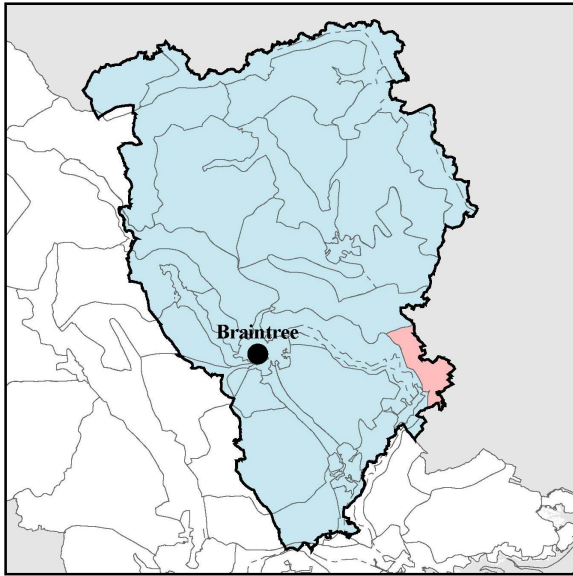
### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Ensure that new build is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Maintain characteristic open views across the farmland.
- Ensure any new development within the farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of semi-natural woodland as important historic, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

## B19 LANGLEY GREEN FARMLAND PLATEAU

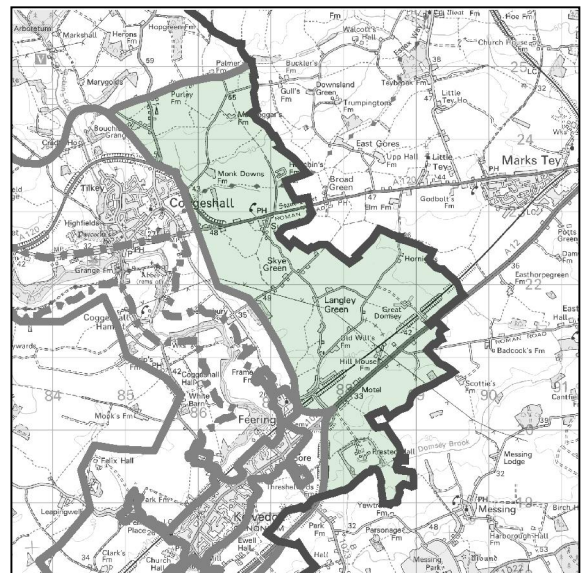


### Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently sloping landform.
- Dominated by large arable fields.
- Generally gappy and fragmented field boundaries especially adjacent to roads.
- Settlement pattern consists of small villages with scattered farmsteads amongst predominantly arable land.
- The houses are predominantly modern constructed from brick.
- Overall strong sense of place and tranquillity away from the A120, A12 and the railway line.

### Overall Character

This character area encompasses the flat to gently sloping agricultural land to the east of the River Blackwater valley centred on the small village of Langley Green. The flat arable landscape is dominated by medium to large fields bound by low hedgerows with trees overlying a boulder clay plateau. Most of the field boundaries were also delineated by deep wide ditches. This has created a relatively open landscape with views only constrained by the hedges with hedgerow trees. There are a series of pylons in the area that break the skyline. The roads are generally at a lower level than the surrounding fields and are surrounded by banks and ditches. There are a mixture of buildings within the area in the villages and dispersed across the landscape as farmsteads. The houses tend to be modern with either colour wash or brick frontages. There are also a range of large agricultural barns and outbuildings associated with the isolated farmsteads. Also in the area is a series of large warehouses or barns in the middle of large fields screened from the nearest road by deciduous trees. These are used for an applied environmental research centre. Away from the A120, A12 and the railway line there is a sense of place and is very tranquil.





### Visual Characteristics

- The views are open and occasionally panoramic where they are unconstrained by hedgerow trees.
- There are no key landmarks.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is complex, comprising a mix of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and pre-18<sup>th</sup> century co-axial fields also of probable medieval origin. The latter in particular respond to the local topography. The historic settlement pattern is largely dispersed, comprising isolated manors, church/hall complexes, farms, moated sites and villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- The Roman roads of Stane Street and the former A12 which have left their imprint on the modern landscape, influencing field alignment and settlement distribution.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture. The area contains no designated sites of nature conservation value. Notable ecological features include boundaries of ditches and species-rich hedgerows.

### Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for pollution of the ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from the surrounding agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings and houses within the open landscape, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include low hedgerows with trees and deep, wide ditches at field boundaries, (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The open nature of the skyline of several areas of the plateau is visually sensitive, with new development potentially visible within expansive views across the plateau. There is a sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern and a strong sense of tranquillity away from the main road and railway corridors (which is sensitive to change or new development). Overall, this character area has low to- moderate sensitivity to change.

### Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

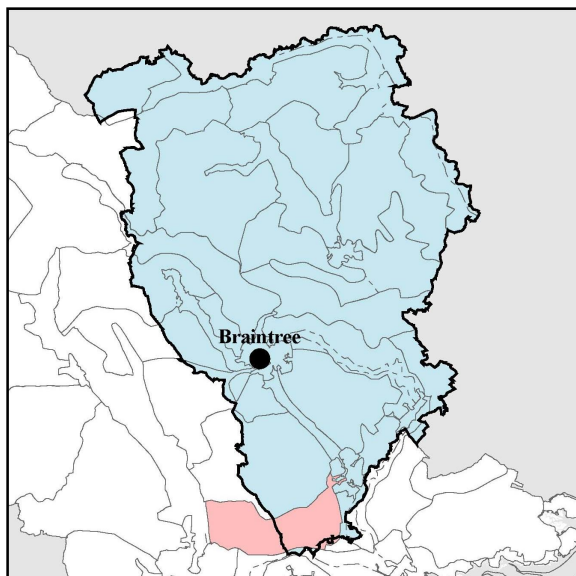
### Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Ensure that new built development is in keeping with landscape character.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.
- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

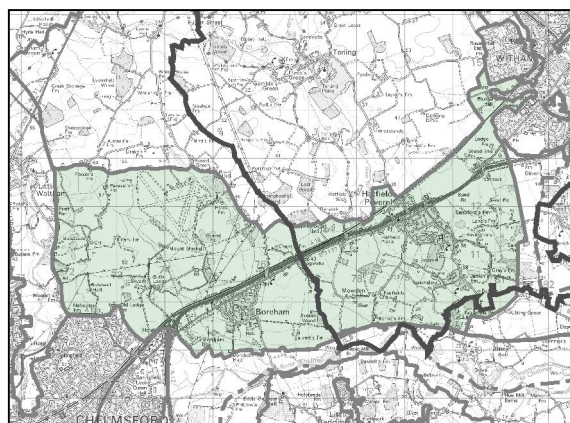
- Consider the introduction of new structure planting to shield/mitigate the visual effects on the A120, A12 and railway line corridor.
- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges and ditches within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

## B21 BOREHAM FARMLAND PLATEAU (shared with Chelmsford Borough and Maldon District)



### Key Characteristics

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable and pastoral fields, marked by hedgerows, banks and ditches.
- Small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small villages.
- A concentration of isolated farmsteads.
- Network of narrow winding lanes.



### Overall Character

Boreham Farmland Plateau is centred on Boreham and the A12 dual carriageway. The gently undulating landscape is fairly densely populated with the large settlements of Hatfield Peverel and Boreham and the scattered smaller villages such as Nounsley. Farmsteads line the roads outside of the main settlements. To the east and north of Boreham there are several disused sand and gravel pits. The pits have predominantly been filled in with water, the surrounding areas landscaped and trees have been planted. Some of these new lakes are used as fisheries and are surrounded by rough grassland and wire fences. Surrounding the settlements pastoral fields tend to be small to medium with their boundaries delineated by gappy and fragmented hedgerows with hedgerow trees. In the south west of the area are large open arable fields separated by banks and ditches providing extensive long distance views across the River Chelmer Valley. In these areas there are a few isolated dwellings and farmsteads and trees scattered across the landscape. Throughout the area outside the built up areas the roads tend to be sunk below the surrounding fields and lined with banks topped with tall hedges and hedgerow trees. The A12 dual carriageway splits the area visually into two with only a few crossing points to join the areas. The road is a very dominant feature as the traffic noise carries across large swathes of the area reducing the sense of tranquillity.

### **Visual Characteristics.**

- The A12 forms the key landmark in the area as it is raised above the surrounding landscape and is visible over a long distance.
- The views in the area are generally short distance and constrained by the tall hedges and small woodlands, however in the south and west of the area, the large arable fields provide very open panoramic views.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a predominance of medium to large fields with straight boundaries, including 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>-century enclosure, with a pocket of small irregular fields to the northeast. Historically there is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, with nucleated settlement at Boreham. The main historic landscape features include:

- The Roman roads of Stane Street and the former A12 which have left their imprint on the modern landscape, influencing field alignment and settlement distribution.
- Modern development that is focussed around Boreham, but also within the Character Area there is also an airfield, the modern arterial route of the A12, and areas of gravel extraction.
- Water meadows along the river valleys.
- Historic park and gardens surrounding Boreham House.

### **Ecological Feature**

This Character Area is dominated by intensive and widespread arable agriculture with small pockets of woodland and narrow lanes. The area contains 9 sites of nature conservation value, including two with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitat. Ecological features also include ditches, reservoirs, streams and rivers and gravel and sand pits.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Potential for pollution of the streams, rivers and ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for erection of new farm buildings in the open agricultural land, which would be conspicuous on the sky line.
- Potential residential expansion of settlements, which would be conspicuous on the surrounding rural landscape.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during rush hour.
- Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include hedgerows, banks and ditches at field boundaries (which are sensitive to changes in land management). There is a sense of historic integrity, with a dispersed historic settlement pattern visible in places and occasional historic features such as New Hall and/or Boreham House and historic park/gardens visible within the landscape. Overall, this character area has low to- moderate sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

**Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings in the surrounding agricultural fields.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Strengthen the recreational role of the water filled sand and gravel pits.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

### **3.4 Wooded Farmland Landscapes**

3.4.1 The key characteristics of this Landscape Character Type are:

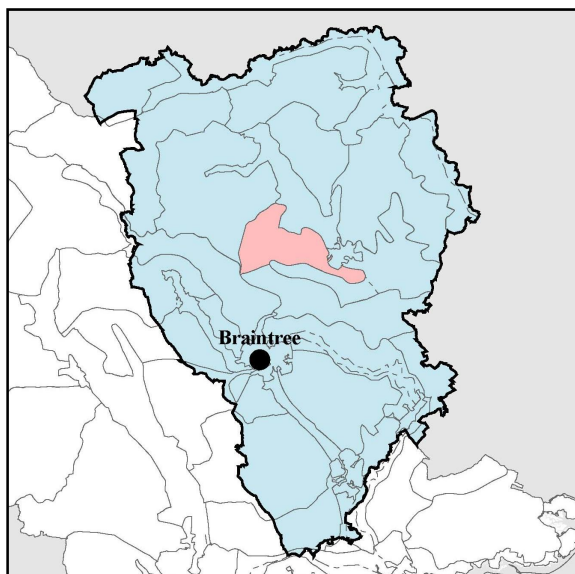
- Elevated undulating hills or ridges and slopes
- Mixture of arable and pasture farmland
- Pockets of common and pasture
- Views to wooded horizons
- Well wooded with blocks of mature mixed and deciduous woodland (including areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland); copses, hedges and mature single trees
- Mature field boundaries
- Framed views to adjacent character areas
- Enclosed character in places
- Network of quiet, often tree-lined narrow lanes

3.4.2 This Landscape Character Type contains the following Landscape Character Areas:

F1 - Gosfield Wooded Farmland  
F2 - High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland  
F3 - Totham Wooded Farmland

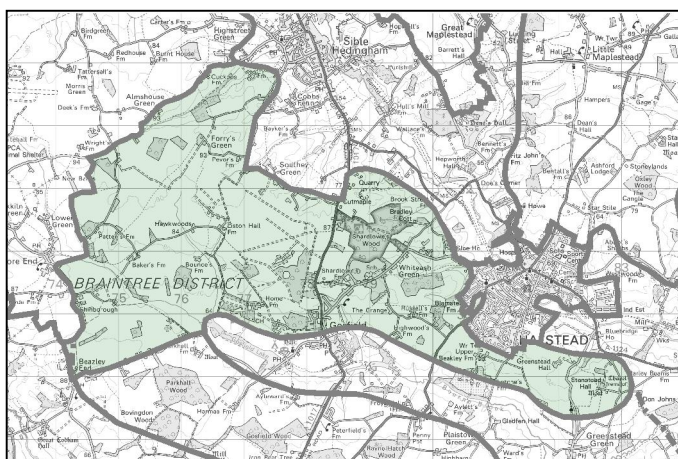


## F1 GOSFIELD WOODED FARMLAND



### Key Characteristics

- Away from the valley slopes of the River Colne the landform gently undulates.
- Strong pattern of large and small woods, including ancient woodland.
- Arable fields are generally medium to large and regularly shaped, bounded by thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees.
- Open character.
- Many small farmsteads and occasional villages.



### Overall Character

The Gosfield wooded farmland is a gentle and well wooded landscape located to the south and west of Halstead between the River Colne and Bourne Brook valleys. Medium to large regular shaped arable fields are set within a strong structure of woodland blocks and thick hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees giving a sense of enclosure in places. The hedgerows are often fragmented and associated with ditches. However, open views are also possible where hedgerows and woodlands such as around the disused airfield south of Southey Green permit. The settlement pattern is particularly characterised by scattered farmsteads in field corners and by woodland edges. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of local vernacular buildings. These may be timber framed, colour washed and thatched, or clad in flint with tiled roofs, which contribute to the character and overall strong sense of place within this area. Away from Braintree there is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the area, with an intricate network of quiet, rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.

### Visual Characteristics

- The spire of Greenstead Green Church forms a key landmark in the eastern end of the character area as it is prominently positioned on a hill above the surrounding farmland.
- The view extents tend to be determined by the topography and woodland distribution. In the valleys and lower areas the views are channelled.

### Historic Land Use

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a belt of ancient woods running along the top the ridge. The field pattern is predominately pre-18<sup>th</sup> century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, with some enclosed meadow along the rivers. The main historic landscape features include:

- A number of large landscaped parks, located along the top of the ridge, these include Gosfield Hall and Gosfield Place, with possible medieval origins.
- Gosfield airfield in the centre of the area that dates to the Second World War.

### Ecological Features

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture with pockets of woodland. The area contains 17 sites of nature conservation value. These include:

- Fourteen CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Lowts Wood and Lowts Wood East, Broom Wood, Runalong Wood, Tregalls Wood, Pattens Wood, Hawks Wood, Edmondsey Wood, Oak Grove, Sandhills Plantation, Broaks Wood West, Broaks Wood, Lower Wood, Great and Little Spansey Wood.
- Three CWSs with unimproved grassland and wetland habitats including Bounces Farm Paddock, Bounces Farm Meadow and part of Chapel Hill Meadow.

### Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Large scale ‘open uses’ of the golf course, waterbody and caravan park at Gosfield Hall.
- Decline in traditional countryside management.

### Sensitivities to Change

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the strong pattern of large and small woodland blocks and thick hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees (which are sensitive to changes in land management). The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a series of large landscaped parks (including Gosfield Hall and Gosfield Place), situated along the top of the ridge and patches of enclosed meadow within the valley floors. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 17 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

### Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

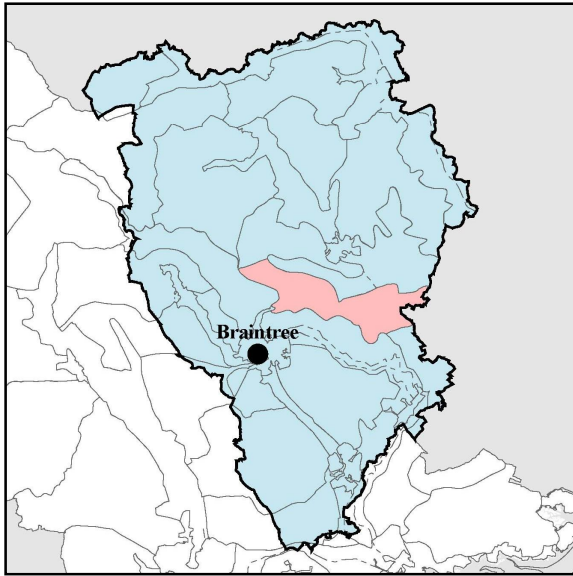
**Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings within the wooded farmland.
- Ensure any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.

**Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

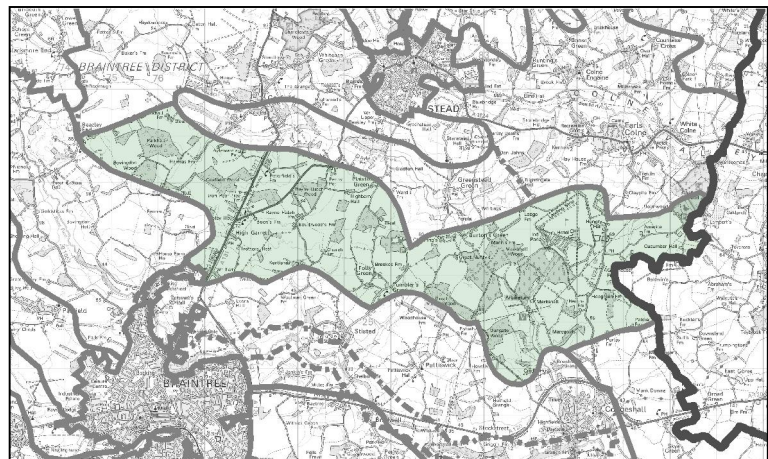
- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting which is appropriate to local landscape character.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.

## F2 HIGH GARRETT/MARKSHALL WOODED FARMLAND



### Key Characteristics

- Flat to gently undulating landform.
- Strong pattern of large and small woods, including distinctive ancient lime woods.
- Regular medium to large arable fields, bounded by low well trimmed thick hedgerows and some mature hedgerow trees.
- Open to enclosed character depending on density of woodlands.
- Many small farmsteads and occasional villages.
- Several Halls and estates.



### Overall Character

High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland is a gentle and well wooded landscape between the valleys of the River Colne and River Blackwater, north of Braintree. Medium to large arable and pastoral fields are set within a mostly strong structure of woodland blocks and low well trimmed hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees giving in places a strong sense of enclosure. However, occasional open views across farmland are possible where hedgerows and woodland permit. The settlement pattern is particularly characterised by scattered farmstead and large Halls with their associated estates. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of cottages with flint clad walls and large red brick halls such as Highbarn Hall and Markshall. In the east of the area the land use becomes more varied with a private airstrip, golf course, large industrial estate and arboretum. Away from the edge of Braintree there is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the wooded farmland, with an intricate network of quiet, rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- Gosfield Hall and Greenstead Green Church form key landmarks from the wooded farmland.
- The views tend to be framed by the hedges and woodland creating a mixture of enclosed and open views.

### **Historic Land Use**

Evidence of historic land use within the Character Area is dominated by a belt of ancient woods running along the top the ridge, these include Markshall Woods, Gosfield Wood and Parkhall Wood. The field pattern is predominately pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, with some enclosed meadow along the rivers. The main historic landscape features include:

- A number of large landscaped parks, also located along the top of the ridge, these include Marks Hall Park, with possible medieval origins.
- The Roman road of Stane Street, which has also left their imprint on the modern landscape, influencing field alignment and settlement distribution.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture with pockets of woodland. The area contains 22 sites of nature conservation value and a further three of national nature conservation value. These include:

- Bovingdon Hall Woods SSSI of approximately 70 hectares of ancient or semi-natural woodland habitats.
- Belcher's & Broadfield Woods SSSI (Reding Spring CWS Brookes Reserve (EWT Reserve, part SSSI).
- Chalkney Wood SSSI and CWS (part of).
- Eighteen CWSs with ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats including Kemps Wood, Gosfield Wood, Galleycable Wood, Rayne Hatch Wood, The Slip, Pond Croft/Braintree Wood, Clapgate Wood, Moat Wood, Lower Wood, Coppy Wood, part of Alder Wood, Nuntys/Grange Woods, Crowlands Farm Wood, The Squires Plantation/Stammers Wood, Witch Wood, Raynors Wood, Richards Grove and Willow Wood.
- Four CWSs with unimproved grassland, species-rich hedgerows and wetland habitats including Clapgate Lane, Markshall Park Complex, Bungate Wood and Witch Lane Hedgerows.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Potential for pollution of the streams and ditches from fertiliser and pesticide run-off from agricultural fields.
- Potential for new buildings within the farmland, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
- Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.
- Potential decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include the strong structure of woodland blocks and low, well-trimmed hedgerows, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The overall sense of tranquillity within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. Open views to wooded horizons (where gained) are sensitive to potential new development, which may interrupt or block such views. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a series of large landscaped parks (including Marks Hall Park, with possible medieval origins), a belt of ancient woodlands (including Markshall Woods, Gosfield Wood and Parkhall Wood) situated along the top of the ridge and patches of enclosed meadow within the valley floors. There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 22 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising



ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, species-rich hedgerows and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon the wooded farmland.
- Ensure any new development within the wooded farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.
- Develop strategies to manage increase in traffic during peak tourist periods.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate.
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.
- Conserve and enhance the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve and promote the use of building materials which are in keeping with local vernacular landscape character.



### F3 TOTHAM WOODED FARMLAND (shared with Maldon District)

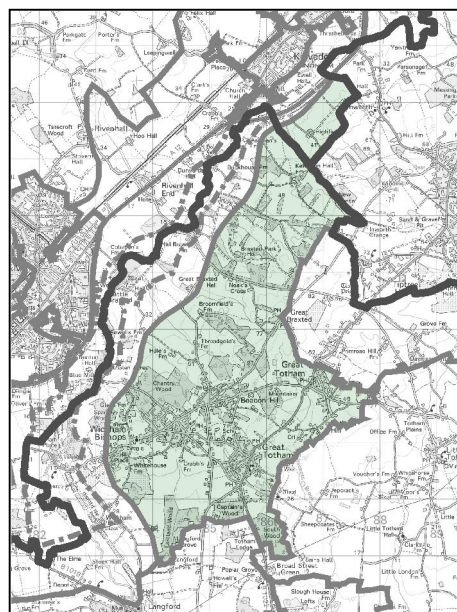


#### Key Characteristics

- Wooded ridges and hillsides to the east of the River Blackwater.
- Predominantly agricultural fields enclosed by woodland patches or hedgerows with mature trees.
- Field boundaries vary; some thickly enclosed, as at Beacon Hill; some more open with gappy hedges.
- Interest created by colour-washed buildings both in villages and scattered in the landscape.

#### Overall Character

Totham Wooded Landscape Character Area covers the wooded eastern hills and slopes above the River Blackwater, which stretches from the sparsely settled Kelvedon Hall Farm area in the north, through Great Braxted and to the Eastern Wood and Captain's Wood in the south. Chantry Wood lies on the western edge of the area, the wooded slopes south of Great Totham and Totham Hill making the eastern boundary of the area. The landform is rolling hills with some steep ridges, particularly along Beacon Hill Ridge, with small to medium-size agricultural fields enclosed by woods and copses. These are quite dense at Great Braxted, and become more open as they descend southwards towards the villages of Great Totham and the fringes of Wickham Bishops. Some of these woods are remnants of ancient woodland. The field pattern is irregular, usually following the topography of the land. There are occasional ditches, streams, and small farmstead reservoirs. A network of many footpaths and tracks cover the area, some of which have become vehicular roads. Vehicular access is good, with several B roads that cross the area. The scale varies from intimate and enclosed on the higher thickly wooded slopes and ridges, to medium scale on the lower southern slopes where hedges and hedgerow trees predominate as field boundaries. The landscape is textured with contrasts of deciduous woods and hedges, undulating fields that are a mixture of arable and grazing, and occasional coniferous tree belts. This is an enclosed landscape, with periodic views through gaps in the trees on the higher ground to the valley below. It is a gentle, subtly varied landscape that has a strong sense of place as it apparent it has long been domesticated by farming and human settlement. Braxted Park and scattered



pre-1800 granges and farmhouses add to this sense of history. The slight sense of isolation on the higher ground comes from these inward-looking views framed by dense woods. The hilltops and lanes are relatively tranquil, with settlement edges and areas near the A12 more disturbed by vehicular noise. The sense of tranquillity thus varies from strong to moderate.

### **Visual Characteristics**

- Long distance views to drained estuarine marshes from Mountain Road leading into Great Braxted.
- Timber church steeples are a feature within the landscape, but few churches are on high ground and are often tucked into the wooded landscape.
- Some open views to the valley below, but more often the views are short distances, over fields and buildings framed by the wooded ridges.
- New residential development on Hall Road, Great Totham is visually out of character with surrounding landscape in terms of colour, style and density of the settlement.

### **Historic Land Use**

Historically this Character Area comprised Tiptree Heath, a huge area of common rough pasture and wood-pasture shared between the neighbouring parishes. Encroachment on this area began in a piecemeal fashion in the medieval period, but extensive open tracts still remained until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was finally enclosed by Enclosure Act. This piecemeal history of enclosure is evident. Some areas of the original heath and wood-pasture survive, these appear as ancient woodland and are largely located on the top of the ridge, the Wickham Bishops area is particularly well-wooded. Historically settlement was very dispersed and sparse, comprising isolated church/hall complexes, manors, farms, cottages and small villages. The main historic landscape features include:

- Enclosed meadow pasture along the Domsey Brook valley floor.
- Braxted Park and a smaller park at Hill House.
- The modern settlement of Wickham Bishops, which largely date to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Moderate to high post-1950s boundary loss, in many cases involving the removal of boundaries introduced in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Ecological Features**

This Character Area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture with large blocks of woodland. The area contains no designated sites of nature conservation. Ecological features include:

- Boundaries of ditches and species-rich hedgerows.
- Approximately 21 areas of Ancient Woodland including: Kelvedon Hall Wood/Tiptree Wood/Westhall Wood/Rond Wood/Criers Wood/Stowling Wood/Chantry Wood/Eastland, and Captain's Wood.

### **Key Planning and Land Management Issues**

- Pressure of increased traffic on rural and minor lanes.
- Potential for more visually intrusive development on the fringes of Witham.
- Potential for visually intrusive development of new farm buildings.
- Potential for visually intrusive development within adjacent character area (around Witham).

### **Sensitivities to Change**

Sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements within this character area include several woodland patches and copses, mature trees within hedgerows and occasional ditches, which are sensitive to changes in land management. The overall sense of tranquillity within parts of the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development. There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a series of ancient woodlands situated on the top of the ridge (comprising areas of original heath and wood pasture), Braxted Park and Hill House and patches of enclosed meadow within the valley floors, which are also

sensitive to changes in land management. The 21 blocks of ancient woodland within the character area provide important habitats for wildlife. Overall, this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change.

### **Proposed Landscape Strategy Objectives**

**Conserve** - seek to protect and enhance positive features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place through effective planning and positive land management measures.

**Enhance** - seek to improve the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features or characteristics are absent.

### **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

- Conserve and protect open views from Mountain Road, Braxted Lane and other rural lanes.
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern and scale, and uses materials and colours that are appropriate to the local landscape character; such development should be well integrated into the surrounding landscape.

### **Suggested Land Management Guidelines**

- Conserve and restore existing hedgerow network where gappy and depleted especially on property boundaries or on field margins.
- Conserve and enhance the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.
- Conserve, manage and enhance areas of semi natural and ancient woodland as important heritage, nature conservation and landscape features.
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges.
- Introduce arable field margins as a means to ensure that ploughing does not disturb mature trees within hedgerows.
- Conserve and promote the use of local building materials which are in keeping with the local vernacular and landscape character.

