Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan Review

ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Final Report

2003









CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning

Essex & Southend-on-Sea
Replacement Structure Plan Review

ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Approved By: Dominic Watkins

Signed: _____

Position: Senior Associate

Date: 2003

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Welcome

This study report is one of a series commissioned by Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council, the Joint Structure Plan Authorities (JSPAs). Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the report is factually accurate, its contents, opinions, conclusions and recommendations are entirely those of the consultant who carried out the study. The content should not be held to represent the views of the JSPAs. It is therefore being made available solely for information purposes as a background technical document.

This CD contains Adobe Acrobat file of the Essex Landscape Character Assessment. For ease of access the contents of the document are split into 3 separate files. Within those files bookmarks have been established to guide the user within the files and to various sections. To show these, click the Show/Hide Navigation Pane button , and then click the Bookmarks tab.

- **Section One** introduces the Landscape Character Assessment, explains its purpose, and describes the general approach and methodology for the study;
- A summary of the physical and cultural evolution of the landscape and an overview of the historic landscape can be found in **Section Two**, which also reviews the current planning policy framework for guiding change in the plan area;
- For those wishing to understand how this assessment fits into the hierarchy of landscape character assessments in England, **Section Three** explains the relationship of the national classification defined by the Character of England Map with the county-scale classification, and its relationship to more detailed District or other local assessments;
- Descriptions of the Landscape Character Areas and their sensitivity are provided in **Section Four;**
- A summary of the key issues for the planning and management of the landscape in the plan area can be found in **Section Five**.

Other Files reproduce
- the Assessment's cover and frontispiece
- the Preface Summary and Contents.
- and a series of better quality image files of the individual character areas

These documents require Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on the users computer. If you do not have this installed you can go to the Adobe Web site (www.adobe.com) for the downloadable Reader software.

Should you have any difficulties using this CD, have any comments about the approach taken, or wish to contact Essex County Council concerning any issues raised please contact the Landscape and Ecology Team, Waste Recycling and Environment, Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford. CM1 1HQ

Updated versions of this document may be published in due course. Please let us know if you would wish to be notified.

February 2003

PREFACE

This study report is one of a series commissioned by Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council, the Joint Structure Plan Authorities (JSPAs). Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the report is factually accurate, its contents, opinions, conclusions and recommendations are entirely those of the consultant who carried out the study. The content should not be held to represent the views of the JSPAs. It is therefore being made available solely for information purposes as a background technical document.

The Steering Group was chaired by Martin Wakelin (Landscape and Ecology Manager, Essex CC) and included:

- Crispin Downs (Landscape Consultancy Manager, Essex CC)
- Roy Lewis (Principal Policy Manager, Essex CC)
- Martin Scott (Principal Planner - Environment, Southend-on-Sea BC)
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The CBA project team comprised:

- Chris Blandford
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- Matthew Bright
- Justine Dowsing
- Andy Jones
- John Alvarez
- Amanda Davey

Chris Blandford Associates
July 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates to prepare an assessment of the character of the landscape within the area covered by the Replacement Structure Plan.

Based on the Countryside Agency's guidance, the Landscape Character Assessment focussed on establishing a 'baseline' of the existing character of the Essex landscape. The assessment involved a broad review of the landscape based on written sources, existing local assessments and an extensive survey in the field. The study identified thirty-five 'Landscape Character Areas' - geographical areas with a recognisable pattern of landscape characteristics, both physical and experiential, that combine to create a distinct sense of place (e.g. the *Brentwood Hills*). The emphasis of current landscape policy is on managing change through guiding necessary development to landscapes where the type and degree of change can best be accommodated without significant effects on the intrinsic character. Following the identification of distinctive Landscape Character Areas, an evaluation of the relative sensitivity of these areas to change was undertaken to inform strategic planning decisions.

It is intended that this study will provide a strategic understanding of the character and sensitivity of landscapes throughout the plan area to underpin landscape policies in the Adopted Replacement Structure Plan (April 2001). For example, the assessment identifies the particular character of the landscape to inform Policy NR1 (Landscape Conservation) and Policies NR2 and NR3 (Dedham Vale AONB and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB). It also provides the framework for the more detailed landscape character assessments of District areas to help inform the preparation of Local Plans encouraged by Policy NR4 (Landscape Character Assessment).

It is expected that this study will be of particular interest to elected members and officers in Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and the District Councils, and other statutory and non-statutory partnership organisations. Representatives of many of these stakeholders participated in the landscape assessment process through discussion workshops.

USER'S GUIDE

The assessment can be read as a whole, or alternatively specific sections can be consulted as required. A general outline of the report is provided below to guide the user to the relevant information:

- **Section One** introduces the Landscape Character Assessment, explains its purpose, and describes the general approach and methodology for the study;
- A summary of the physical and cultural evolution of the landscape and an overview of the historic landscape can be found in **Section Two**, which also reviews the current planning policy framework for guiding change in the plan area;
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- A summary of the key issues for the planning and management of the landscape in the plan area can be found in **Section Five**.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This study is one of a series informing the review of the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan (RSP), leading to a First Alteration to be prepared in 2002 by Essex County Council & Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (the Joint Structure Plan Authorities – JSPAs). Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was commissioned in April 2001 by the JSPAs to undertake this study.

1.1.2 The study area is shown on Figure 1. It comprises the area covered by the Replacement Structure Plan, namely the administrative areas of Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council. For the avoidance of any doubt, this area excludes Thurrock Council.

1.1.3 The study area borders Suffolk and Cambridgeshire to in the north, Hertfordshire to the west and Greater London to the southwest. The Thames estuary marks the boundary with Kent to the south. The coast forms the eastern boundary of the study area, extending from the Thames in the south to the Stour Estuary in the north.

1.2 Study Context

1.2.1 Following the Countryside Agency/English Nature/English Heritage *Character Map of England* produced in 1997, Government policy set out in PPG7 *The Countryside; Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* has supported the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the intrinsic character of the countryside, identifying areas where conservation or restoration of existing character should be given high priority and guiding sustainable development.

1.2.2 The *Character Map of England* identifies five broad character areas in which the study area falls: the Greater Thames Estuary, the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, the Northern Thames Basin, the East Anglian Chalk and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths. The scale of this national study is useful as a regional planning tool but lacks the detail to feed into county-level strategies.

1.2.3 Character studies of parts of the study area have already been produced at a greater level of detail than the *Character Map of England*. These studies do not, however, necessarily use the same methods, nor are they at the same level of detail. This county-wide study provides the framework for future District and single-purpose studies, while providing a landscape character assessment in greater depth than the Countryside Agency's.

Figure 1 Study Area and Context

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 The purpose of the study is to:

- provide a landscape character assessment input into the structure plan process and to provide baseline information for sustainability appraisal;
- clarify issues for a subsequent landscape strategy for the County and Southend-on-Sea, including its enhancement;
- guide landscape management decisions by forming a basis for guidelines that allow the targeting of resources and actions to areas of greatest need;
- provide information for the promotion of public awareness of landscape character;
- provide a consistent landscape character assessment framework for more detailed assessments at the District level.

1.3.2 The key objectives of the study are to:

- provide a description of the landscape character of Essex and Southend-on-Sea, including its historic character, and cultural and local perceptions;
- identify key characteristics and appraise the condition of each character area, including the factors that influenced landscape change in the past, affect it now and that will affect it in the future;
- identify key issues arising from the landscape character assessment and discuss the options for policy development;
- identify and map the landscape's sensitivity to accommodating change by identifying the vectors of change and their potential impact within each landscape character area.

1.4 Approach and Methodology

1.4.1 The assessment methodology is based on that promoted by the Countryside Agency through their *Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance* (1999). It is expected that final guidance will be published by the Agency in 2002. Landscape character assessment usually takes the form of two separate but related stages; c*haracterisation* and *evaluation*.

Landscape Characterisation

1.4.2 Characterisation involves identifying, classifying and describing areas of distinctive character, i.e. what makes one landscape "different" from another. A landscape can be assessed by disassembling and analysing its component parts. Such an assessment makes it easier to subsequently evaluate what is important in a landscape, why it is important and how best to accommodate change and identify enhancement needs for the future.

1.4.3 The landscape includes visible, physical components (e.g. landform, vegetation, land use, settlement), visible, spatial components (e.g. scale, pattern, texture) and non visible components (e.g. sound and cultural associations). Whilst these do not lend themselves to accurate measurement, they can be easily described to give descriptions that are both relatively objective and are meaningful, avoiding value judgements.

1.4.4 From an understanding of the component parts of the landscape, it is possible to identify how particular combinations of these interact to create distinctive character. This then allows the classification of the landscape into areas that share common combinations of components (Landscape Character Types), and single, unique areas which are discrete geographical areas of a landscape type (Landscape Character Areas).

Landscape Evaluation

1.4.5 *Evaluation* of the landscape is associated with making informed judgements about the landscape. For the purposes of this study, this is related to the evaluation of the 'sensitivity' of the landscape to change.

Assessment Methodology

1.4.6 The landscape assessment involved the following elements: desk study, field survey, stakeholder involvement, characterisation and evaluation. In practice, the desk and field survey elements are undertaken iteratively to allow each activity to inform the other.

Desk Study

1.4.7 The desk study took into account existing relevant background reports, data and mapped information. In defining draft Landscape Character Areas, consideration was given to:

- *Physiography*: geology, soils, topography, flora, fauna and climate;
- *Human activity*: land use, settlement patterns, field enclosure type and patterns, landscape history, archaeology, the built heritage, industrial features;

More detailed existing and emerging classifications and descriptions of the landscape within specific District and other specific areas also informed the preliminary classification.

1.4.8 A series of map overlays were prepared to assist in defining areas of common character. The desk study resulted in a draft map of *Landscape Character Types* and *Landscape Character Areas* assessed at a scale of 1:50,000, and produced in a digital format fully compatible with GIS.

Field Survey

1.4.9 Field surveys were undertaken to test, validate and refine the preliminary/draft Landscape Character Areas identified through the initial desk studies. This involved two assessors systematically assessing each draft Landscape Character Area in the field from publicly accessible locations in sufficient detail for the purposes of the County-level assessment. In some areas, it was necessary to observe the landscape from a number of 'checkpoints' prior to the completion of a field survey sheet in order to adequately assess the draft Landscape Character Area. Further desk studies were undertaken as required during this period to inform the ongoing field surveys. As the field survey work was conducted during July and August, the influence of seasonal and meteorological variations on the character of the landscape was limited to references in existing literature.

1.4.10 The field survey information was systematically recorded on structured field survey sheets (included as Appendix B – see separately bound report). The survey sheets were structured to include:

- description of overall character
- checklist of dominant landscape elements
- checklist of characteristic features (landform, land use, field boundaries, historic features, vegetation cover)
- checklist of aesthetic/perceptual factors (views, scale, enclosure, variety, movement, unity)
- description of land use and settlement
- description of tree cover and field pattern
- description of recreation and amenity
- description of sensitivity to change/management issues.

1.4.11 In addition to the survey form, the field surveyors also recorded their observations on a map to show refinements to draft Character Areas, identify key visual relationships within and between areas, and the location of survey points.

Stakeholder Involvement

1.4.12 In accordance with current guidance from the Countryside Agency, stakeholders have been encouraged to become involved in the Landscape Character Assessment. It is expected that this study will be of interest to elected members and officers in Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (the JSPAs), the District Councils, and other partnership organisations. Representatives of many of these stakeholders participated in the landscape assessment process through commenting on draft documentation and participation in two workshops. The purpose of the initial workshop held in June 2001 was to:

- identify key sources of relevant information for informing the study
- develop a common understanding of variations in the character of the landscape
- discuss and comment on the draft classification of landscape divisions/character areas
- identify the key agents of landscape change that are (or are likely to) erode the character, quality and distinctiveness of different landscape units.

1.4.13 A second stakeholder workshop was held to discuss the final draft report. Comments made informed the final report. Further details about the stakeholder involvement can be found in Appendix A. Promotional activities are planned in the future by the JSPAs to raise public awareness of the Landscape Character Assessment.

Characterisation

1.4.14 The desk top analysis, field work and input from the stakeholder workshop were reviewed and combined to produce a final classification and description of the landscape. This is presented in Sections 3.0 and 4.0.

Evaluating Sensitivity of Landscape

1.4.15 Following the characterisation stage, a general assessment of the relative sensitivity of the character areas to the impacts of development/change was carried out. Landscape sensitivity is the degree to which a particular landscape character area can accommodate change without adverse consequences. Sensitivity is not absolute but is likely to vary according to the type/scale of change being considered. The sensitivity analysis was carried out principally to guide and facilitate subsequent work at County level. It is intended to inform:

- the identification of spatial options at a strategic level
- sustainability analysis of the structure plan proposals
- development of strategic design guidelines and initiatives

It also highlights issues that could be considered in greater detail at a local level or in relation to large scale development control issues.

1.4.16 An approach to defining sensitivity levels based upon good practice, adapted to the circumstances of Essex, is set out below. These were then applied in a sensitivity matrix to provide an indication of the sensitivity of each character area to different types/scales of

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL	**SENSITIVITY CRITERIA**	**ABILITY OF THE LANDSCAPE TO ABSORB IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER CHANGE**
HIGH	The landscape is very sensitive to this type/scale of development/change due to the potential for very adverse impacts on: ● Distinctive physical and cultural components or key characteristics ● Strength of character/condition of the landscape. ● AONB Landscape ● Landscape of high intervisibility/visual exposure ● Tranquil area with very limited opportunities for mitigation.	Unlikely to be capable of being absorbed. Presumption against development unless over-riding need.
MODERATE	The landscape is sensitive to this type/scale of development/change due to the potential for some adverse impacts on:· ● Distinctive physical and cultural components, or key characteristics ● Strength of character/condition of the landscape ● Landscape of moderate intervisibility/visual exposure· ● Area of fragmented tranquillity but there may be more opportunities to overcome these through appropriate siting, design and other mitigation measures.	May be capable of being absorbed. Developments to be considered on their individual merits.
LOW	The landscape is less sensitive to this type and scale of development/change due to the potential for only slight, or no damaging impacts on: ● Distinctive physical and cultural components or key characteristics ● Strength of character/condition of the landscape ● Landscape of low intervisibility/visual exposure ● Area with an absence of tranquillity and there are likely to be considerable opportunities for mitigation and/or landscape enhancement.	Likely to be capable in principle of being absorbed.

development/change. In order to make it useful it is necessary to identify, in broad terms, different categories of development pressure and land use change. To analyse sensitivity without such differentiation would have been less meaningful. The levels of sensitivity identified, rather than defining policy for a particular character area, are generalised statements that provide a pointer to issues that would need to be addressed in any development control or landscape planning context in that area. It is expected that further analysis would need to be carried out at a district level, in relation to a specific application with significant landscape or visual effects, or where there are cumulative impacts of several developments. The summary matrix in Appendix B allows the relative sensitivities of the character areas to different types of development/change to be compared.

1.4.17 The following types/scales of development/change were considered:

- Major urban extensions (>5ha) and new settlements
- Small urban extensions (<5 ha)
- Major transportation developments/improvements
- Commercial/warehouse estate/port development
- Developments with individual large/bulky buildings (e.g. large farm buildings, industrial plant)
- Large scale 'open uses' (e.g. golf courses, water bodies, major agricultural change, forestry, marinas, caravan parks)
- Mineral extraction/waste disposal
- Incremental small scale developments (e.g. minor highway improvements, small landform changes, farmstead intensification)
- Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons
- Decline in traditional countryside management.

2.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Since the end of the last ice-age over 10,000 years ago, the processes and patterns of landform, land cover and land use change have combined to create the contemporary appearance of the Essex landscape. Successive phases of human activity and settlement have influenced the development and character of the landscape in different ways. In particular, changes in the landscape since the war reflect the demands placed by society on land for agriculture and forestry, for housing, transport and minerals, and increasingly for recreation and leisure.

2.1.2 This section provides a summary of the physical and cultural influences on the evolution of the Essex landscape. A list of key references suitable for further reading can be found in the bibliography. Of particular relevance is *The Essex Landscape - A Study of its Form and History* (Hunter, 1999).

2.1.3 As this study has not attempted to pre-empt the results of the forthcoming *Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Study,* only a brief overview of the historic landscape is provided in this section. The Historic Landscape Characterisation Study will provide detailed documentation of the influence that patterns of historical land use have had on the present character and development of the entire study area. It is expected that the study will be completed in late 2001/early 2002.

2.1.4 This section also reviews the current planning policy framework for landscape protection, conservation and enhancement within the plan area.

2.2 Physical and Cultural Influences

Topography and Drainage

2.2.1 Essex is a county of low hills and undulating valleys, with extensive areas of low flat land near to the coast (see Figure 2). The altitude rises very gently from the coast towards the north-west, reaching about 30m around Chelmsford and just over 130m to the west of Saffron Walden. This gentle rise is interrupted by a series of low hills and ridges, the highest of which is Danbury Hill at 116m. The county has a large number of rivers, largely as a consequence of the proportion of clay soils. They are an important component of the county's topography, character and identity. The river corridors are frequently of landscape, nature conservation and heritage value, as well as providing public access opportunities and the focus of other recreational activities. The valleys to the north are steeper and more deeply cut.

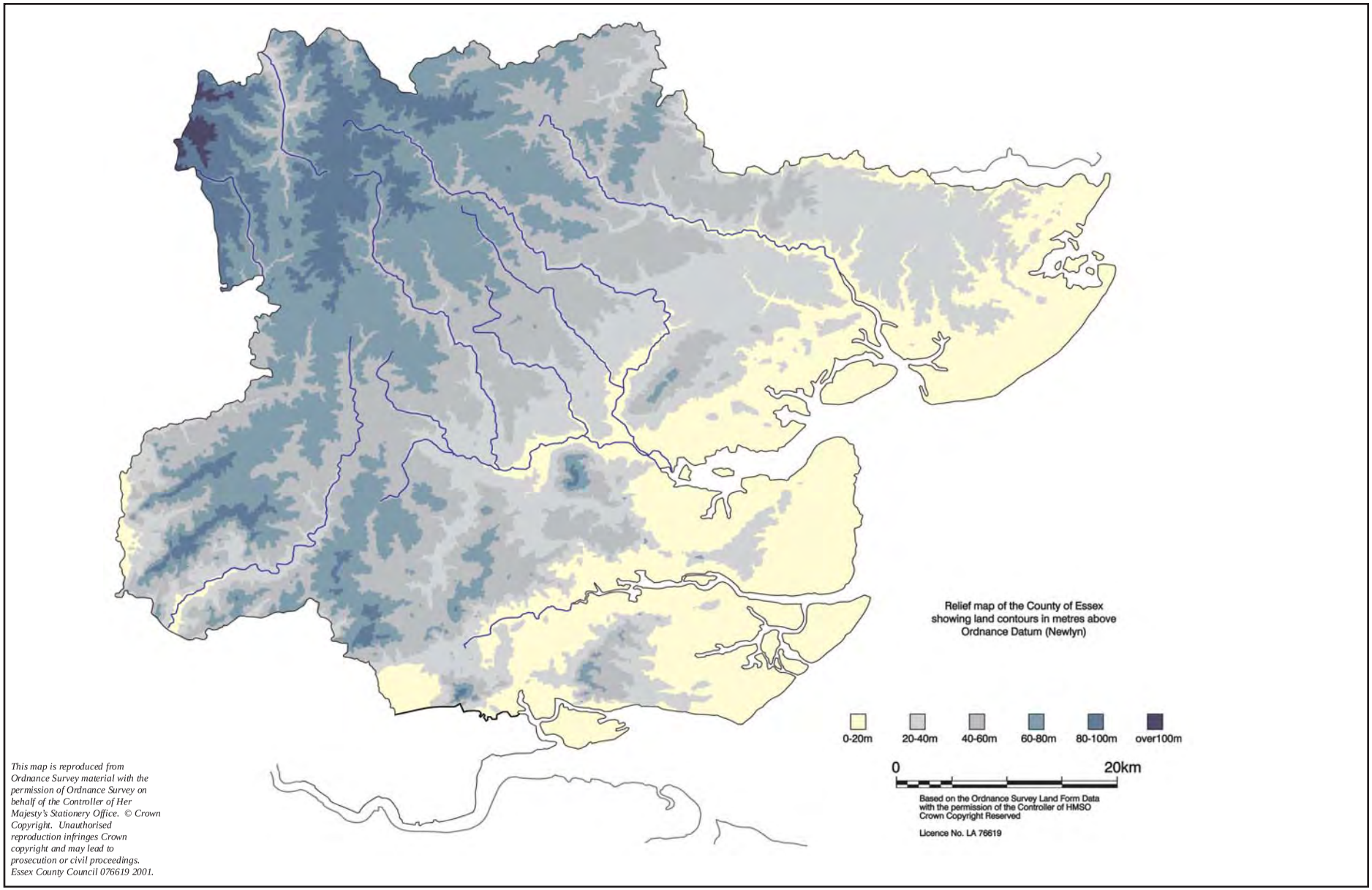


Figure 2 Topography and Drainage

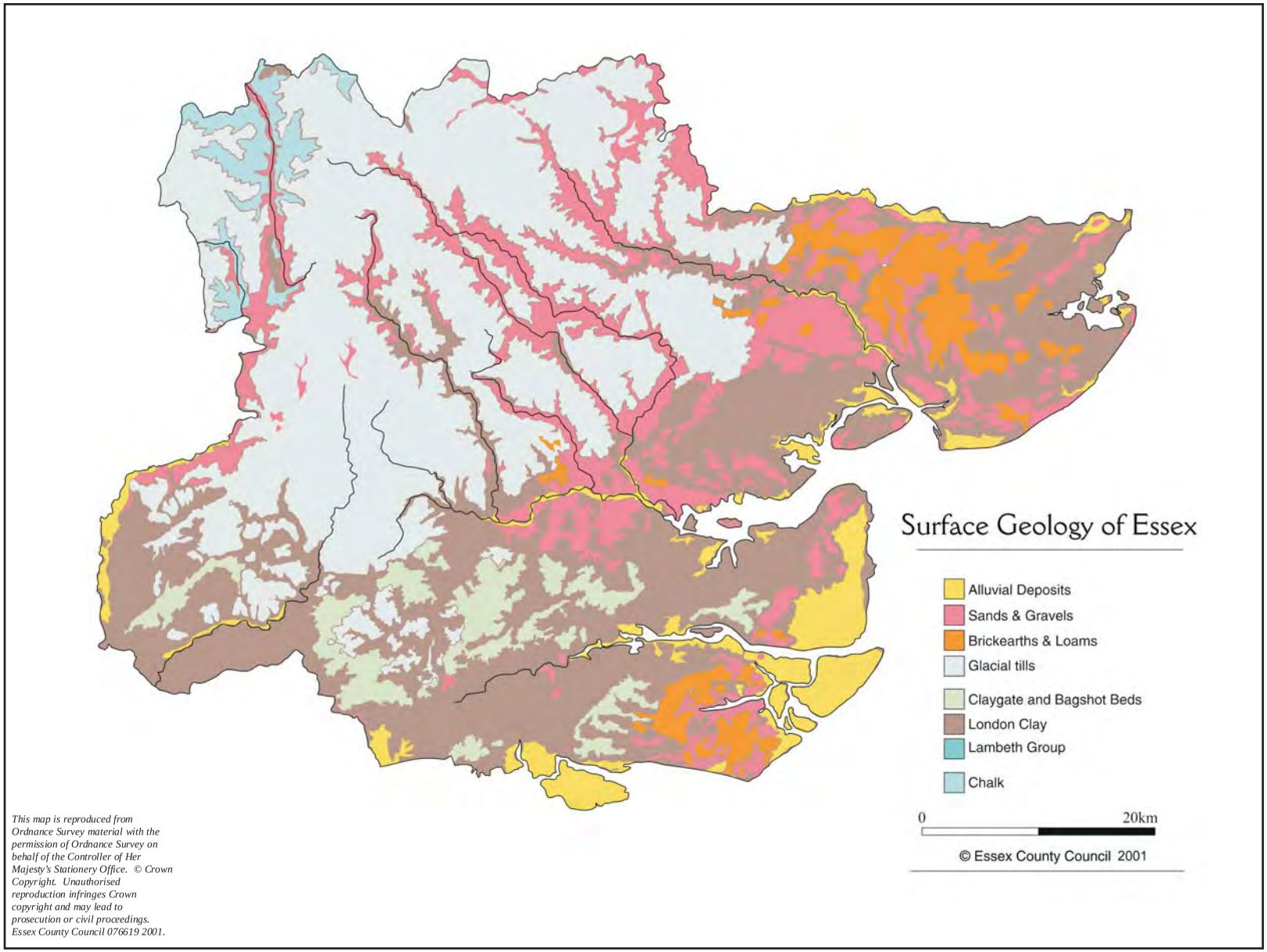


Figure 3 Geology

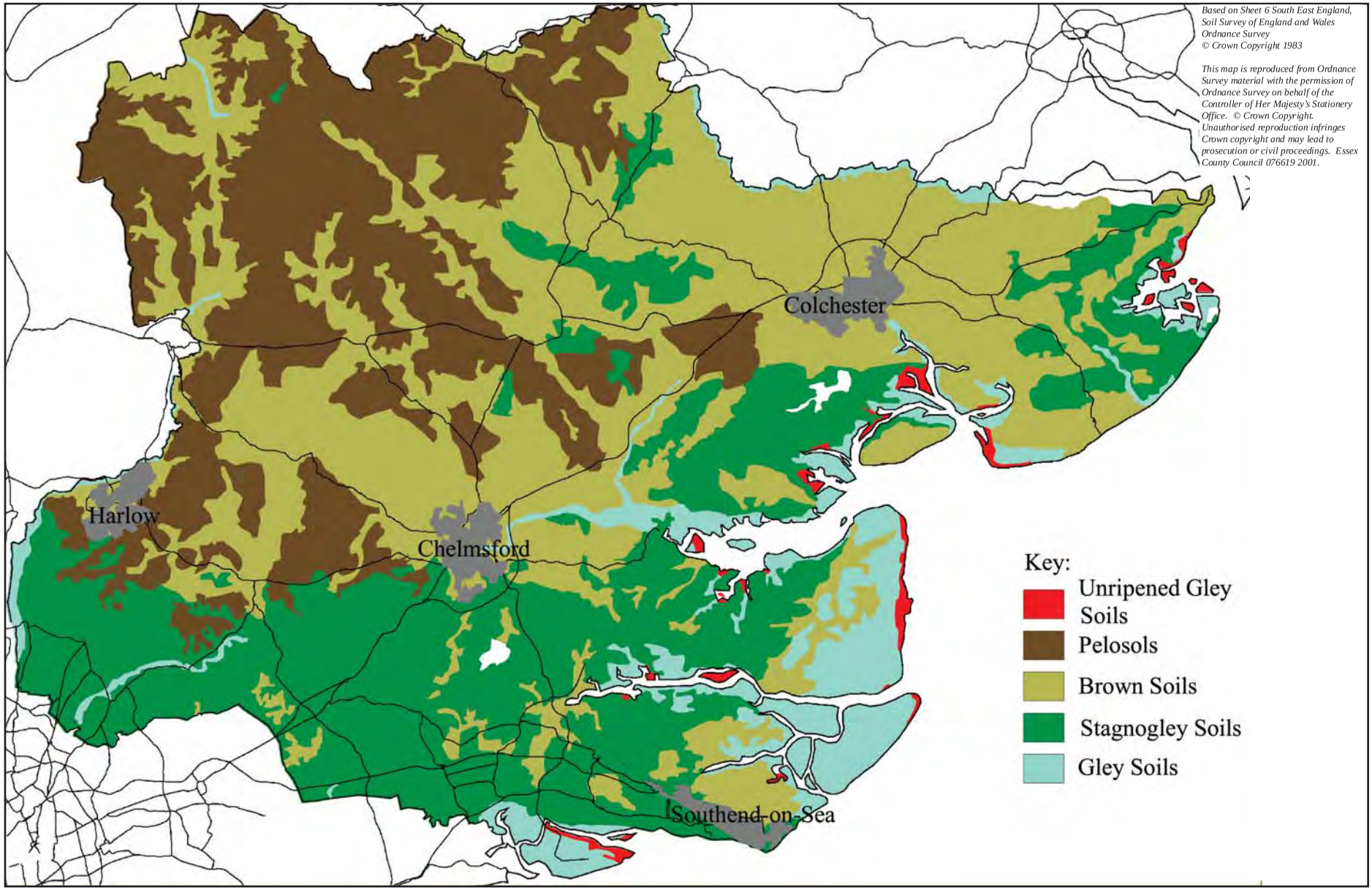


Figure 4 Soils

2.2.8 In the Anglian period, ice from the north covered Essex to a line running from Brentwood to Billericay to Colchester. Upon melting the ice left the vast sheet of Boulder Clay, which contains clay, flints and chalk, over central and northern Essex. The climatic fluctuations that followed led to periods of vegetation establishment, first woodland and then heathland, interrupted by colder periods with sea level falling. The ground has been disturbed by solifluction and windblown silts accumulated to form the brickearths and loam deposits.

2.2.9 Following the periods of glacial advance and retreat there have been continuous periods of sea level rising, with the rate fluctuating. Extensive deposits of sand and gravel are known to have come from former courses of the Rivers Thames and Medway. There are eight terraces of these sand and gravel deposits known as the Kesgrave Formations. Three further diversions of these rivers left the high-level East Essex Gravels on the Dengie peninsula, the low-level East Essex Gravels at Rochford and Shoeburyness and the lower Thames Terraces at Orsett Heath, Little Thurrock and Mucking. It is thought that sea levels stabilised in the medieval period.

2.2.10 In general, it is the nature and the quality of the Essex soils that has contributed to the success of the county in agricultural terms. Over half of the agricultural land in Essex is of 'best and most versatile' quality (Grade 1, 2 or 3A).

2.2.11 On the coastal marshes much of the land has been reclaimed. The soils are heavy gleys that undergo periodic waterlogging from fluctuations in the ground water table. Good arable yields have resulted from under-draining, levelling and liming. Grazing has been important on these soils, although problems can arise when the soils are wet in winter.

2.2.12 Inland from the marshes the soils that occur on the river terraces make up some of the best agricultural land in Essex. They are easy to work and naturally free draining brown soils, especially where Brickearth is present.

2.2.13 Soils on the London Clay are seasonally water-logged slowly permeable heavy clay soils. There are some lighter soils on foot slopes. The soils shrink and crack on drying, swelling on rewetting. When they are wet they are very sticky and plastic. They are not easy soils to cultivate; drainage is needed to grow arable crops.

2.2.14 On the hills that rise above the London Clay the capping of the fine sands of the Bagshot Beds by the pebbly clay drifts have led to soils that are easily cultivated, but they are acidic with low natural fertility. The soils on the boulder clay plateau to the north range from wet acidic clay soils to dry neutral/alkaline soils. All of these require under-draining for modern arable farming, making valuable corn land. The valley soils are complex but tend to be better

drained and were popular with early settlers. Those soils that fall on the chalk in the north west of the county are alkaline and free draining and cereal farming is widespread.

Land Use, Farming Pattern and Vegetation

2.2.15 Essex is one of the largest and most densely populated counties in England. In spite of this 75% of the county is farmed and agriculture is the major land use in rural areas. This means that farming practices have considerable influence on landscape character and natural habitats. With over half of the agricultural land being on high-grade soils there is an emphasis on cereal production in favour of livestock farming. Winter wheat is the main crop, but in recent years oil seeds and pulses have grown in importance. Dairy farming has declined to 80 herds with beef and other livestock also in the decline. Sheep farming has however increased by 25%. The change toward arable farming accelerated during the 1950's and 1960's.

2.2.16 The pattern of the Essex landscape is complex and varied. The changes can be subtle, influenced by the changes in soil or geological structure as much as by the land use. There is a rich legacy of ancient woodlands, hedgerows, tracks and archaeological sites, due to early enclosure in Essex. The only substantial area where this was not the case is in the chalk lands to the north west of the county, with its large fields and intermittent hedgerows.

2.2.17 There are rich corn growing areas on the boulder clays, with intersecting river valleys, woodlands and hedgerows. Ancient royal forests are still dominant at Epping, Hatfield and Writtle. The hills of Danbury and Little Baddow Ridge are well wooded.

2.2.18 There are also degraded areas of the county where excessive removal of trees, woodlands and hedgerows has opened the landscape wide. Intrusive man-made features, such as overhead power lines, industrial complexes and oil refineries are a major element in the landscapes of South Essex and the Lee Valley and in between Brightlingsea and Clacton.

2.2.19 There have been several initiatives aimed at encouraging farmers and landowners to plant up small woodlands and tree belts, through grant aid. This is particularly the case in the Thames Chase Community Forest area where the aim is to provide extensive opportunities for forestry and farming activities, outdoor recreation, education, new habitats for wildlife and a visually interesting landscape. So far 115ha of new woodland, 245ha access land, 214ha non woodland habitats have already been created, as well as 14km of new hedgerows.

2.2.2 Most Essex rivers flow towards either the Thames or the North Sea. Only the Cam flows northward. The rivers Stour in the north, Lea and Stort in the west and the Thames to the south, form the county boundary. Principal rivers within the county are the Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer, Crouch, Mardyke and Roding. The Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and tributaries rise in the plateau to the north and flow south where their estuaries are extensive and contribute to the deeply indented coastline. The Crouch flows east across the undulating lowland to the south of the plateau and when joined by the Roach forms an estuary complex that includes the islands of Wallasea, Potton and Foulness. The Mardyke and Roding flow southwards into the River Thames estuary.

2.2.3 The coastline is mainly marshland with short stretches of cliff between the Colne and Stour estuaries and at Southend. Shingle spits and shellbanks are also a feature of the estuaries.

Geology and Soils

2.2.4 The underlying geology of the Essex landscape has been dominated by the events in the Quaternary period, primarily by the Pleistocene Ice Age, but also by the climatic oscillations that have occurred before and since. These have generated deposits that have a strong influence on the landscape and overly much of the area. The geology and soils in the study area are shown on Figures 3 and 4 respectively.

2.2.5 The solid geology of Essex forms part of the eastern sector of the London Basin chalk syncline. Chalk outcrops in the north west of the county, near Saffron Walden. Tertiary deposits such as the Thanet Sands, Woolwich and Reading Beds and the Blackheath Beds (known as the Lambeth Group) are buried by Quaternary deposits. London Clay is the thickest Tertiary deposit, with an extensive outcrop across the centre of the county running east west, capped locally by the loamy Claygate and sandy Bagshot Beds. This is a stiff, dark, bluish-grey clay that weathers, on exposure, to brown and shrinks and cracks in dry weather.

2.2.6 Throughout the Quaternary Essex has been subjected to periodic ice advances and retreats as the climate has cooled and warmed. This has led to a complex mix of glacial, proglacial and periglacial deposits overlying each other.

2.2.7 Extensive sands and gravels were deposited in the Pleistocene ice age. Succeeding deposits have overlaid these, but exposures are common on the valley sides and on the Tendring plateau. Soil forming processes in the succeeding interglacial left the upper part of the sands and gravels reddened and clay enriched. Periglacial structures commonly disturb the layers.

Settlements, Buildings and Communications

2.2.20 The county is primarily characterised by a pattern of dispersed settlement, primarily of medieval origin, with only limited nucleation and urbanisation. The principal towns tend to have identifiable historic cores and in the case of Colchester, and other smaller settlements, these can be traced back to at least the Roman Period. The study area contains many historic buildings and this is reflected in the 14,000 plus listed structures currently identified within the area.

2.2.21 Up until the 19th century, the principal building material in Essex was timber, and timber frame buildings are of great importance in the development of the county's buildings. Timber frames were typically infilled with wattle and daub, and later often coated with limewash plaster. In the south east weatherboarding was more common. The predominant building material today is brick, and London Clay still provides a source of red bricks and tiles. Other important historic building materials include clay lump, puddingstone in coastal areas and clunch and flint from the chalk in the north west of Essex.

2.2.22 The proximity of Essex to London and to the coast, with the natural harbours of Harwich and Ipswich bringing trade and goods to the region has meant that for centuries the communications across the county have been of great importance. The road that runs from London to Ipswich, via Chelmsford and Colchester represents a travel route that dates at least to the roman period and may be earlier. The line of the road has altered, but the communication corridor remains an important one. Other major connections with London include those to Southend and to Cambridge. A number of trunk roads in Essex across the county. The A12 runs past Brentwood, Chelmsford and Colchester and out of the county through Dedham Vale. The A120 runs across the northern centre of the county from Stansted Airport through Colchester to Harwich. The motorways of the M25 and the influence of the M11 cut a band through the western edge. An extensive network of railway lines also crosses the county. This busy network of transport corridors stands in contrast to the more tranquil character of the Essex countryside.

2.3 Historic Landscape

2.3.1 The study area has an extremely rich historic environment, which has revealed evidence for human occupation stretching back nearly 250,000 years. This depth and continuity of occupation has led to the development of a diverse landscape that contains elements of all major periods of British prehistory and history.

2.3.2 The study area contains a diverse and substantial resource of archaeological deposits ranging from 250,000 year old stone and wood tools from Clacton, through extensive prehistoric and roman remains, on to Saxon and Norman settlement and military sites, through numerous deserted medieval and later settlements to the industrial remains from the last 200 years. This diversity reflects the full range of human occupation in the British Isles and is realised in both sub-surface and above ground remains.

2.3.3 Particularly notable elements include the vast cropmark landscapes of the sand and gravel soils in places such as the Stour Valley and Tendring plain; the Roman city of Colchester with its early '*colonia'* and associated pre-roman Iron Age settlement is of international significance, whilst the coastal regions contain buried archaeological evidence relating to human occupation stretching back prior to the end of the last glaciation. Other notable features include the 900 or so medieval moated sites across the Glacial Till aream (chalky boulder clay), the extensive remains of salt making and wildfowl management features in the coastal zone and the numerous roman villa sites found throughout the study area.

2.3.4 The landscape of Essex is best described, for the most part, as 'ancient countryside' characterised by small irregular fields interspersed with commons, woods and a generally dispersed settlement pattern. This a complete contrast to the medieval open field landscapes of the Midlands with their nucleated and centralised village settlement systems. This ancient countryside has been well studied and documented by authors such as Hunter (2001) and Rackham (1976).

2.3.5 Essex contains areas of ancient managed woodland such as Hatfield Forest and Epping Forest. It also contains a diverse range of designed landscapes such as parks and gardens from a range of periods, including the exceptional Audley End. Another, often neglected, element of the historic landscape is the marshland grazing landscapes of the coastal zone. These have severely reduced in extent and it has been estimated that since the 1930's almost 60 per cent of marshes have been lost in Greater London, the Thames Estuary and adjacent coastal areas of Kent and Essex.

2.3.6 Despite the effects of agricultural intensification and urban development over the last 50 years, it is the overall complexity and intricate nature of the ancient countryside that gives the Essex landscape its distinctive character.

2.3.7 Particularly noticeable built elements of the historic landscape within the study area include dispersed rural post-medieval and medieval farmsteads, historic centres of many towns and villages, coastal heritage features including harbours and boatyards, industrial sites such as Waltham Gunpowder Works, and the Second World War defence networks, such as the General Headquarters Defensive line.

2.4 Planning Policy Framework

2.4.1 This section provides an overview of the planning policy framework relevant to the study area and the Landscape Character Assessment. Relevant policy designations within the study area are shown on Figure 5.

Landscape Planning Context

2.4.2 Attractive landscape settings, where a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness is maintained and enhanced, are essential to economic and social development and prosperity. Balancing the demand for land for housing, economic activity, transport infrastructure and recreation with the long term sustainable maintenance of natural resources, including landscape character, is a key role of the planning system.

2.4.3 The Government is committed to the protection of the countryside and sees it as a vital part of our environmental heritage, to be passed down to future generations. This is reflected in the placement of the concept of sustainable development firmly at the heart of the UK approach to planning. The foundations of Britain's approach to sustainable development was set out in 'This Common Inheritance' in 1990, and developed into a clearly defined policy framework in 'Sustainable Development - The UK Strategy' (1994). Practical guidance as to how to implement sustainable development through the planning system is given in 'Planning for Sustainable Development - Towards Better Practice', DETR, 1998.

2.4.4 In 'special areas' of the countryside with valued features of conservation interest, new development is often constrained by land use planning policies within development plans. Conservation and development may be compatible where the potential for conflict can be reduced through policies that encourage sensitive development (in terms of location, scale and design), minimising landscape impacts whilst also maximising countryside benefits. In both urban fringe and rural areas, new development can provide the opportunity to regenerate and enhance severely degraded landscapes through land rehabilitation and the creation of new or improved landscapes and habitats, with access arrangements for public enjoyment where appropriate.

2.4.5 Designating 'special areas' in development plans in the absence of positive polices for managing change in the wider countryside is increasingly regarded as an unsatisfactory way in which to meet sustainability aims and objectives (see PPG7 below). Local landscape designations may not necessarily ensure the enhancement or restoration of landscape character, and can often lead to the devaluation of other non-designated landscapes elsewhere in the plan area. Increasingly, the challenge is to develop policies that recognise and respect

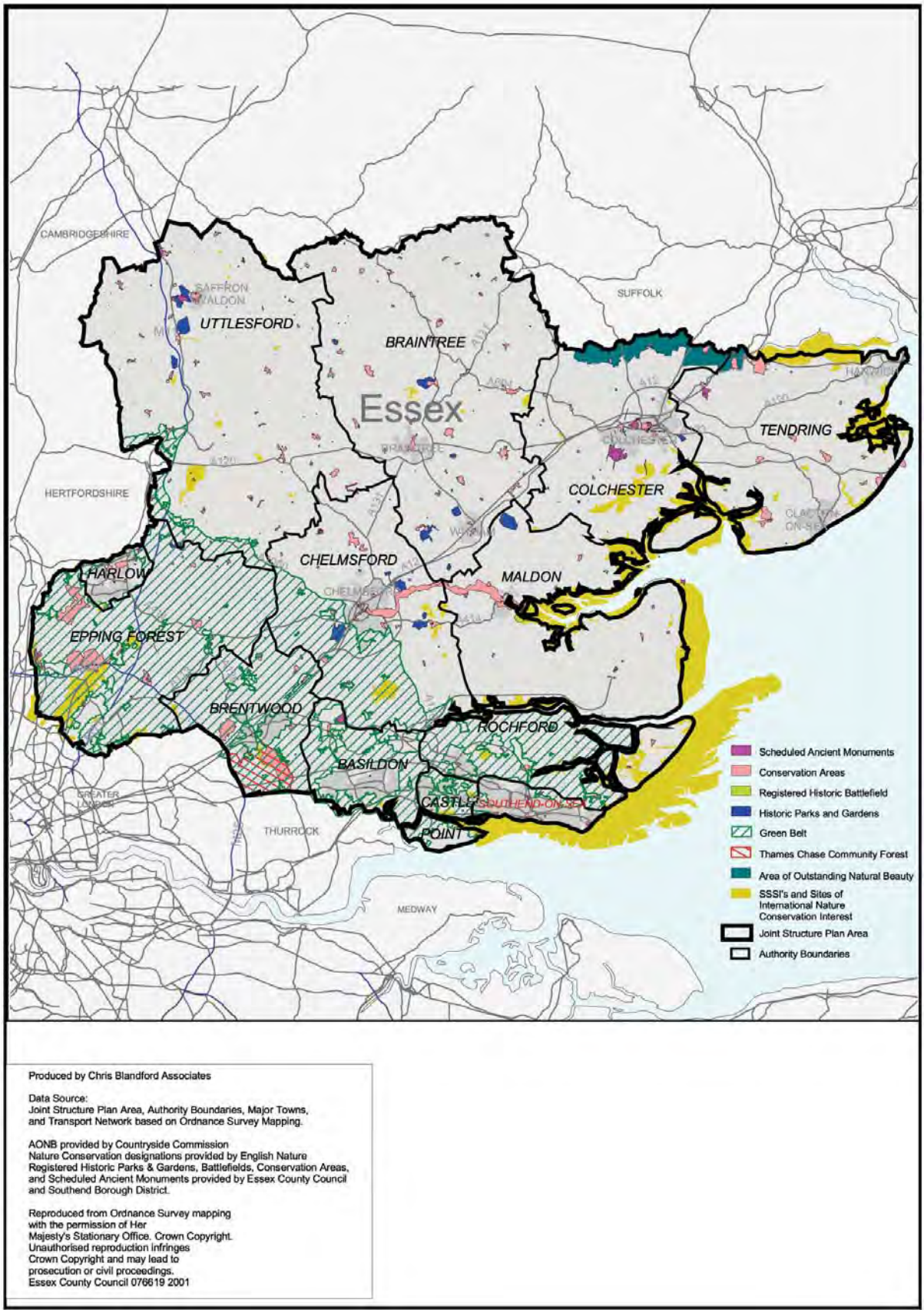


Figure 5 Planning Context

the distinctive character of *all* landscapes, and not just those considered to be 'special'.

PPG 7 The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development

2.4.6 Planning Policy Guidance Notes set out the Government's policies on planning issues and the operation of the planning system. PPG7, *The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (February 1997; as amended March 2001) gives guidance on how the Government's objectives for rural areas should be reflected in development plans and planning decisions. It aims to ensure both rural prosperity, and protection and enhancement of the countryside. PPG7 places emphasis upon safeguarding the countryside for its own sake, and as a national asset, whilst acknowledging that different areas exhibit different characteristics and abilities to accommodate essential change.

2.4.7 PPG7 requires a fundamental reassessment of local countryside designations (such as *Special Landscape Areas*). The guidance indicates that designations should only be maintained or extended where there are good reasons to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. In reviewing development plans, PPG7 advises that the function and justification of existing local countryside designations should be rigorously considered, and where these are retained, planning authorities should ensure that they are soundly based on a formal assessment of the qualities of the countryside or the contribution of such areas to urban form.

2.4.8 The need for planners and other policy makers to be more proactive in managing change, rather than simply trying to prevent it, is reinforced by PPG7, and in Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice (DETR, 1998 para. 4.3.2). This states that the priority now is to find new ways of enriching the quality of the whole countryside whilst accommodating appropriate development, in order to complement the protection that designations offer. This guidance is in line with the 'character approach' to planning advocated by the Countryside Agency (Planning Tomorrow's Countryside, 2000).

RPG9 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (March 2001)

2.4.9 Regional Planning Guidance provides a regional framework for the preparation of local authority development plans, and other regional strategies and programmes. RPG9 is the Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, which includes the Shire County, Unitary and District Councils for Essex. RPG9 covers the period up to 2016.

2.4.10 In its Environmental Strategy and the Countryside, RPG9 states that 'a high quality environment is essential to the future prosperity of the South East'. Furthermore, the Guidance notes that 'the effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources are fundamental aspects of the vision for this Region which is highly urbanised and subject to development pressures.' In this context, RPG9 encourages 'positive planning' for the care and maintenance of the Region's environment.

2.4.11 In addition to nationally and internationally designated areas, RPG9 specifically recognises that 'the wider countryside of the South East is valuable in providing countryside around and between towns, undeveloped coast, extensive open space and river corridors.' Protection and enhancement of the region's landscape, biodiversity and the built and historic heritage is a core principle of the Guidance in this respect.

Structure Plan Policy

2.4.12 The current strategic planning policies of the JSPAs for the development and use of land in Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council are set out in the Adopted Replacement Structure Plan (April 2001). The Written Statement contains specific landscape policies that focus on identifying areas, characteristics and features that are considered to require protection and/or enhancement; other key sectoral and area-based policies elsewhere in the JSP that provide the framework for development also include landscape issues as a key consideration.

2.4.13 The overall approach of the Adopted RSP to landscape protection and enhancement is discussed below.

Statutory Landscape Designations

2.4.14 The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation recognises the national importance of the scenery, and indicates that priority should be given to the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty. Large scale industrial or commercial development is considered to be inconsistent with the objectives of designation, although regard should be given to the economic and social development needs of local communities and rural industries. This is reflected in Policy NR2 (Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) which states:

The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is of national importance and will be subject to the most rigorous protection from inappropriate development. Conservation, enhancement and management measures will be carried out by the local authorities to promote its natural beauty and special character. Within the Area:-

1. *Development will not be allowed unless it is compatible with conserving and enhancing the Area's landscape character and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside;*
2. *Development located outside but near to Dedham Vale AONB will not be permitted if it would seriously detract from views into or out of the Area.*

A similar policy also applies in relation to the proposed extension of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Policy NR3).

2.4.15 Whilst not strictly a landscape designation, the statutory protection afforded by the Green Belt provides a large area in which development on greenfield sites in the countryside outside of existing urban areas is strictly controlled. Two of the principal functions of the Green Belt in Essex are (Policy C1):

- *assist in safeguarding the open countryside surrounding London from encroachment by urban development;*
- *preserve the setting and special character of historic towns located within the Belt.*

2.4.16 Both of these statutory Green Belt functions are of benefit in protecting the character of the countryside in this area.

Landscape Conservation and Enhancement Policies

2.4.17 The Adopted RSP places a strong emphasis on the character of the landscape. This is clearly reflected in the policy framework developed under the heading of 'Natural Resources' which is concerned with the protection and enhancement of the landscape in the round, including nationally designated landscapes, historic landscape features, nature conservation and biodiversity, and the urban fringe. This approach is further supported by the eight objectives for the area's natural and built environment set out in Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy (Protecting the Natural and Built Environment). Policy CS2 seeks to maintain and conserve the quality of the natural and built environment by:

1. *Safeguarding and enhancing the character and townscape of the urban environment;*
2. *Giving priority to protecting and enhancing areas designated as having intrinsic environmental quality at international, national and strategic level;*
3. *Sustaining and enhancing the rural environment, including conserving the countryside character and the protection of the countryside for its own sake;*
4. *Protecting and enhancing the landscape, wildlife and heritage qualities of the coastline;*
5. *Enhancing and managing by appropriate use, land in the Metropolitan Green Belt and urban fringe;*
6. *Retaining the best and most versatile land for agriculture;*
7. *Preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the area;*
8. *Managing the demand for water resources by controlling the location, scale and phasing of development so as to protect environmental and nature conservation interests.*

2.4.18 The Adopted RSP advocates the need for District Authorities to develop a better understanding of their local landscape character to allow essential change to be positively managed and planned for. Formal landscape character assessments are an essential pre-requisite for the identification of the particular landscape characteristics that need to be protected, conserved and enhanced. Policy NR4 (Landscape Character Assessment) states:

Landscape character assessments should be prepared of District areas, identifying the particular character of different areas of the countryside, to help inform the preparation of Local Plans. Development will not be allowed which would detract from the visual quality of these areas. Until such assessments have been completed, Special Landscape Areas, where they are currently defined in adopted local plans, will be taken to identify areas where conservation or restoration of existing character should be given high priority.

2.4.19 Policy NR1 (Landscape Conservation) sets out a general policy which seeks to ensure that:

The natural beauty, amenity and traditional character of the landscape will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Development must respect its landscape setting and will not be permitted if it would cause permanent destruction or damage to the character of the landscape. Development will not be permitted which would have a material adverse impact, even of limited duration, on the character and appearance of the landscape, including specific landscape features of identified importance.

2.4.20 In addition, the Adopted RSP gives specific attention to the historic dimension of the landscape in Policy NR5 (Historic Landscape Features) which states:

> *Development will not be permitted which would have a materially adverse impact upon the historic and archaeological importance, existing landscape character, and physical appearance of Ancient Landscapes, Ancient Woodlands, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Protected Lanes. Conservation, enhancement and management measures will be encouraged and implemented within these defined areas so as to retain and promote their historic and landscape interest. Any proposals which would give rise to a material increase in the amount of traffic using Protected Lanes will not be permitted.*

2.4.21 The importance of protecting and enhancing woods, trees and hedgerows is reflected in Policy NR9 (Woodland and Tree Cover), which states:

> *The landscape will be enhanced by increasing the coverage of woodland and hedgerows using locally native species in ways which are in keeping with the character of the landscape, through such measures as grant-aided schemes and taking opportunities provided by the consideration of new development proposals. Where appropriate existing woods, trees and hedgerows will be protected for their wildlife and historic importance.*

2.4.22 The Adopted RSP also includes two area specific polices which seek strategic landscape improvements. These include:

> *Policy NR10 (Thames Chase Community Forest)*
> *The establishment of a Community Forest at Thames Chase is supported for the purposes of landscape improvement, outdoor recreation, nature conservation, forestry and farming. Any development proposals within the Forest area will be subject to other policies in this Plan for controlling development in the Metropolitan Green Belt.*
>
> *Policy NR11 (The Urban Fringe)*
> *The local planning authorities will work together and with other agencies to provide opportunities for the enhancement and effective management of land in the urban fringe through, for example, such measures as landscape improvement, habitat creation, enhanced public access and improving damaged or degraded land. Any development proposals will be subject to other policies in this Plan for controlling development in the Metropolitan Green Belt and the rural areas beyond the Green Belt.*

2.4.23 The Adopted RSP also contains strategic policies that seek to conserve and enhance features of heritage value in the landscape. These include policies for:

- Historic Settlements (Policy HC1)
- Conservation Areas (Policy HC2)
- Listed Buildings (Policies HC3/HC4)
- Archaeological Sites (Policies HC5/HC6)

2.2.24 Policies CC1 – CC2 provide appropriate protection in relation to the conservation of the natural and heritage values of the undeveloped coast.

2.4.25 Policy NR6 (Nature Conservation Sites) includes reference to the protection, conservation and enhancement of 'natural features' of local value, and encourages the 'appropriate management of all sites and features of the landscape that are of defined importance for nature conservation'. These features are likely to include landscape elements such as hedgerows, trees, stream corridors, woodlands, field ponds, etc. Policy NR6 also includes reference to Policy BE5 (Planning Obligations) in relation to securing management agreements or other compensatory provisions for necessary development adversely impacting on designated sites. There is not currently a similar policy in relation to landscape enhancement and compensatory measures in the RSP.

Summary

2.4.26 When read as a whole, the strategic policies in the Adopted RSP generally provide a robust framework within which District authorities can develop appropriate landscape policies for guiding change and development in the landscape. In addition, the classification and assessment of the county landscapes will provide an essential tool for informing appropriate change and new development within this policy framework.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section explains the relationship of the national classification of 'Regional Character Areas' defined by the Character of England Map with the county-scale classification, and its relationship to more detailed District or other local assessments.

3.2 Regional Character Areas

3.2.1 The Countryside Agency/English Nature/English Heritage *Character Map of England* identifies five broad 'Regional Character Areas' in which the study area falls (see Figure 6):

- Greater Thames Estuary (81);
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths (82).
- South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (86);
- East Anglian Chalk (87);
- Northern Thames Basin (111);

3.2.2 These Regional Character Areas are at the top of the hierarchy used to describe landscape character, and provide the framework for the assessment of more detailed character areas within Essex. The Regional Character Areas are illustrated in Figure 8, and their key characteristics are summarised below:

Greater Thames Estuary

- Extensive open spaces dominated by sky within low-lying landscape. Numerous coastal estuaries extend the maritime influence inland.
- Strong feeling of remoteness. Mudflats populated by a large and varied bird population.
- Traditional unimproved wet pasture grazed with sheep and cattle. Extensive drained and ploughed productive arable land protected from floods by sea walls, with some areas of more mixed agriculture on higher ground.
- Open grazing pastures patterned by a network of ancient and modern reed-fringed ditches and dykes, numerous creeks and few vertical boundaries such as hedges or fences.
- Hedgerows and trees absent from large, rectilinear fields with trees on the higher, drier pockets of ground near farmsteads and dwellings.
- Distinctive military heritage on the coastline.
- Low steep clay cliffs facing towards Essex across the Thames estuary.

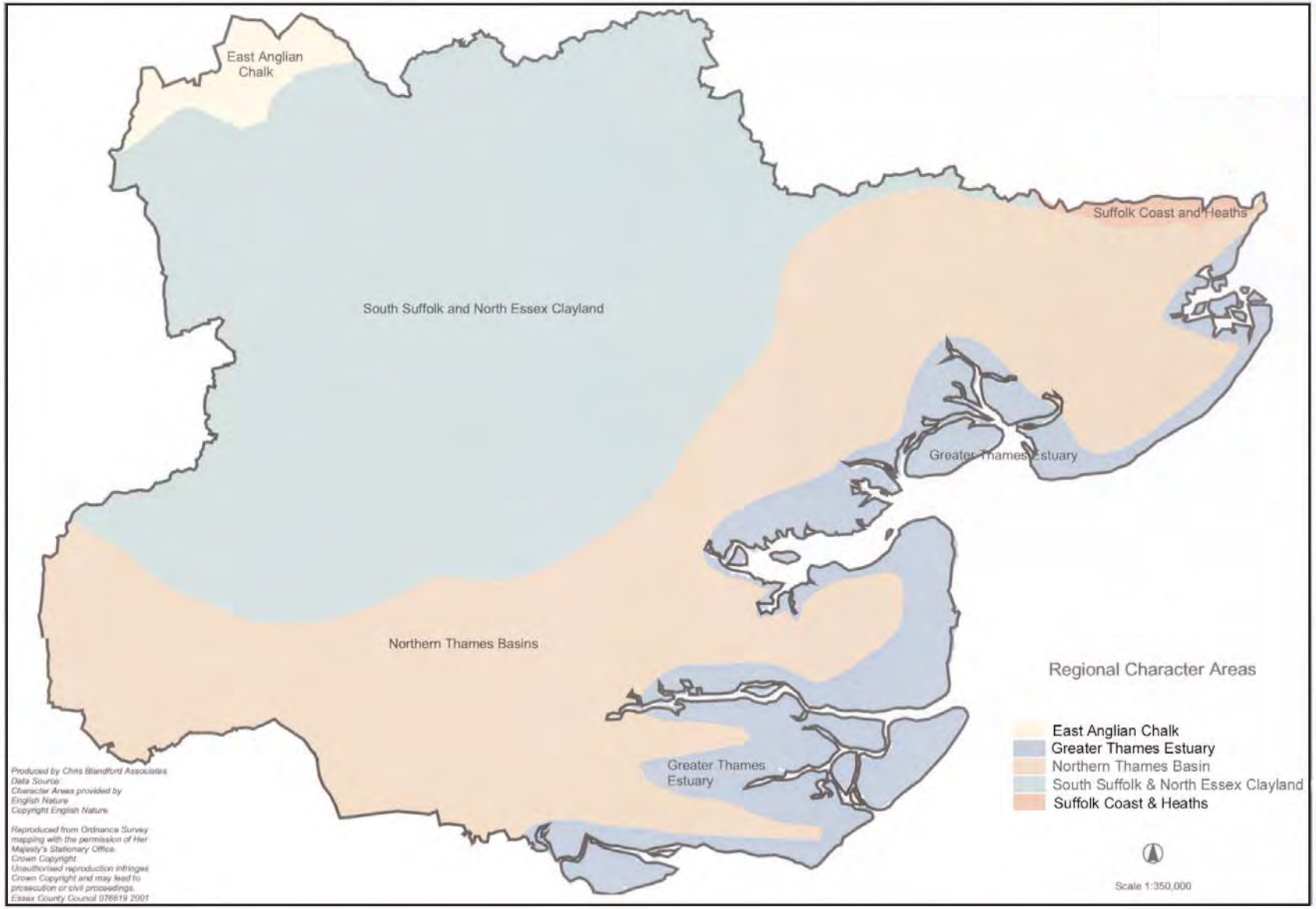


Figure 6 - Regional Character Areas

- Numerous small villages and hamlets related to the coastal economy of fishing (at Mersea), boatbuilding and yachting.
- Pressure on major estuaries, from urban, industrial and recreational developments.
- Thames edge marshes subject to major developments including ports, waste disposal, marine dredging, urbanisation, mineral extraction, prominent power stations and petrochemical complexes.

Suffolk Coast and Heaths

- Distinct topography and land cover caused by crag deposits forming free draining and easily worked acidic sands and gravels.
- Largely unspoilt mosaic of estuaries, saltmarsh, grazing marsh, reedbed, river valleys, arable, heath and woodland with strong coastal influence.
- Large commercial ports including Harwich and seasonal influx of yachts provide interest and a variety of scale along the estuaries.
- Large conifer plantations, closely associated with heathland and birch scrub.
- Small nucleated villages and isolated farmhouses. Brick buildings with colour washed walls and pantiles.
- Coastal towns and villages combined with sailing are a tourist attraction.
- String of landscaped parkland along A12 in the west and along the Stour estuary.

South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland

- Flat, chalky, boulder clay plateau dissected by undulating river valley topography.
- Predominantly arable with wooded appearance. Some pasture in valley floors. Irregular field pattern; remnant Ancient Countryside.
- Scattered farmsteads, deep ditches and moats, parishes with scattered, small settlements around commons with isolated hamlets. Concentration of isolated moated sites.
- Timber-framed and colour-washed houses, sometimes faced with Georgian red brick. Impressive churches. Large villages and frequent towns most with medieval street plans and timber-frame houses. Rich heritage of barns. Fewer settlements and more 20th century development towards coast, with several large estates.
- Cultural association with Constable and tourist attraction of preserved, archetypal, lowland pastoral Dedham Vale with historic vernacular buildings.
- Hedgerow trees are elm with hornbeam. Woods rarely large but some of ancient coppice. Typical pattern of copses connected by hedgerow. Skyline mostly wooded with some bare ridgelines.
- Winding road pattern with wide verges and strong hedgerows although impact of Dutch Elm disease apparent. Sunken hollow lanes a feature.

East Anglian Chalk

- Distinctive, open, variable topography of the Chalk, a continuation of the Chilterns.
- Large-scale rolling downland, mainly arable, with distinctive beech belts along roads and in hilltop clumps and ash-dominated woodland.
- Long straight roads, open grass tracks, isolated 19th century white or yellow brick farmhouses and distinctive nucleated villages, generally within valleys.
- Few large towns and influence of Cambridge on major transport routes; enlarged commuter villages which still retain their rural character.
- Generally muted colour range with distinctive pale soils and building materials.
- Significant linear ancient or Roman earthworks.

Northern Thames Basin

- Diverse plateau landscape divided by a series of broad river valleys and extensive areas of broadleaved woodlands.
- Large towns of Hertfordshire, M25 and M1 motorways, railway line and prominent electricity pylons.
- Arable floodplain land with hedgerow-deficient field boundaries. Open grazing land in certain areas.
- Many river valleys extensively modified by reservoirs, gravel pits, artificial wetlands, river realignment and canals.
- Red brick villages in the smaller valleys contrast with the heavily developed larger valley floodplains. Organic field boundaries defined by water courses and woodland clearances.
- Plateau areas used for arable agriculture with regular field shape of 18th century enclosures.

3.3 Landscape Character Types

3.3.1 Within the framework provided by the Regional Character Areas, the study area has been further classified into 'Landscape Character Types' - broad tracts of landscape with similar characteristics that may re-occur in different parts of the County. These generic landscape divisions have been defined from analysis of geological, soils, topographical and land cover maps, informed by key references such as Hunter (1999).

3.3.2 At it simplest level, the study area comprises three broad zones of landscape. Inland from the coastal plain lies a zone of wooded hills and London Clay, which in turn gives way to the extensive plateau of glacial till that dominates much of the study area. In the extreme northwest of the study area, chalk landscapes more characteristic of Cambridgeshire are

evident. River valleys cut across and dissect these areas, many of which form significant estuaries where they meet the coast. Overlaying this physiographic pattern are large areas dominated by urban land uses to the extent that they create distinct landscape types in their own right.

3.3.3 The distribution of the Landscape Character Types are shown on Figure 7, and described in Section 4.0. The seven Landscape Character Types are:

- Chalk Upland Landscapes
- Glacial Till Plateau Landscapes
- River Valley Landscapes
- Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes
- London Clay Landscapes
- Coastal Landscapes
- Urban Landscapes

3.3.4 As hedgerows make a very important contribution to the character of Essex an indication of the hedgerow species associated with the broad landscape types is provided to accompany the description of their key characteristics. However, it must be emphasised that there may be significant local variations in species depending on the age of hedgerows and local soil types. It is therefore suggested that as and when district character assessments are carried out, that hedgerow species associated with local landscape types are looked at in more detail.

3.4 Landscape Character Areas

3.4.1 The study has identified thirty-five different 'Landscape Character Areas' - geographical areas with a recognisable pattern of landscape characteristics, both physical and experiential, that combine to create a distinct sense of place. The distribution of the Landscape Character Areas are shown on Figure 8, and described in Section 4.0.

3.4.2 As the table below shows, the Landscape Character Areas are sub-divisions of the seven generic divisions of the landscape:

Landscape Character Types	Landscape Character Areas
(A) Chalk Upland Landscapes	North West Essex Chalk Farmlands (A1)
(B) Glacial Till Plateau Landscapes	Central Essex Farmlands (B1) North Essex Farmlands (B2) Blackwater/Stour Farmlands (B3) Gosfield Wooded Farmlands (B4)
(C) River Valley Landscapes	Cam Valley (C1) Stort Valley (C2) Lee Valley (C3) Roding Valley (C4) Chelmer Valley (C5) Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys (C6) Colne Valley (C7) Stour Valley (C8)
(D) Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes	Epping Forest & Ridges (D1) Brentwood Hills (D2) Danbury Hills (D3) Tiptree Ridge (D4)
(E) London Clay Landscapes	South Essex Farmlands (E1) South Colchester Farmlands (E2) Tendring Plain (E3) North Colchester Farmlands (E4)
(F) Coastal Landscapes	Thames Estuary (F1) Crouch & Roach Farmland (F2) Dengie & Foulness Coast (F3) Blackwater Estuary (F4) North Blackwater/Colne Coastal Farmlands (F5) Mersea Island (F6) Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast (F7) Hamford Water (F8) Stour Estuary Slopes (F9) Stour Estuary (F10)
(G) Urban Landscapes	Harlow & Environs (G1) Chelmsford & Environs (G2) South Essex Coastal Towns (G3) Colchester & Environs (G4)

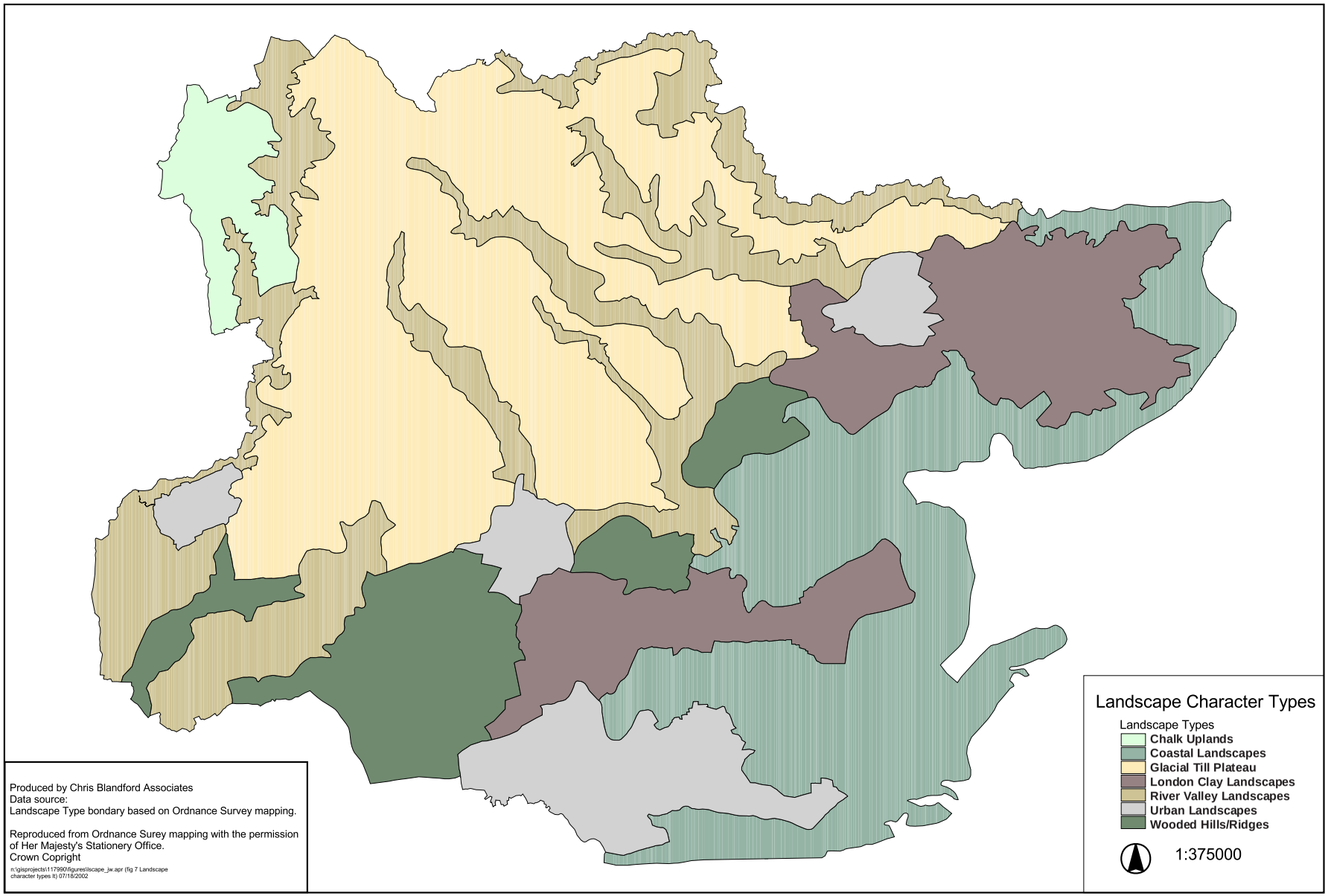


Figure 7 - Landscape Character Types

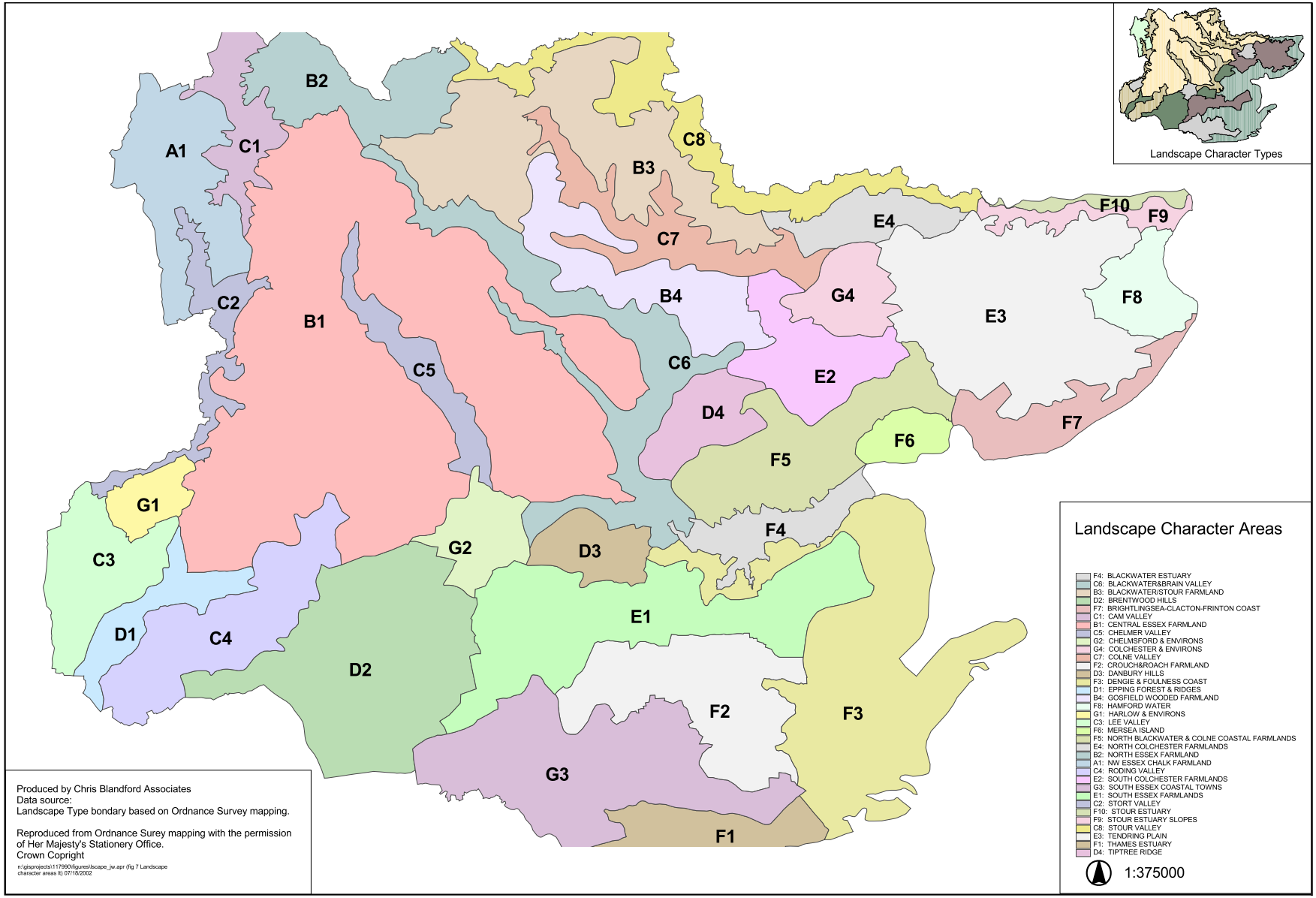


Figure 8 - Landscape Character Areas

3.5 District Level Assessments

3.5.1 This county-level classification of Landscape Types and Landscape Character Areas provides the framework for more detailed landscape character assessments of District areas as required by the Adopted RSP Policy NR4 (Landscape Character Assessment) to help inform the preparation of Local Plans. A district assessment completed is:

- Tendring District Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants for Tendring DC, November 2001);

3.5.2 This study also provides a framework for other 'sub-county' assessments. These include for example:

- The Dedham Vale Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Landscape Design Associates for the Countryside Commission, 1997);
- Thames Chase Landscape Assessment (Landscape Design Associates for the Thames Chase Community Forest Unit, 1995);
- Mid-Essex Coast Landscape Assessment ('SAIL' Project, Draft, 2001);
- Essex Coast Environmentally Sensitive Area Landscape Assessment (ADAS for MAFF, 1994);
- London-Stansted-Cambridge Potential Growth Area Study - Landscape Appraisal (Essex CC Landscape Consultancy, Internal Draft, 2001).

4.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PROFILES

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section describes the character of the Landscape Character Areas identified by the assessment. Following an introduction to the Landscape Character Types within which it is located, each Character Area 'profile' is structured thus:

- key characteristics
- summary of overall character
- landscape condition
- past, present and future trends for change
- sensitivity evaluation.

4.1.2 A selection of photographs are also included to illustrate relevant aspects of the landscape represented by particular Character Areas.

4.1.3 It is important to note that the boundaries between the Landscape Character Areas may not always represent an abrupt change in character. In contrast to the well-defined lines depicted on the maps, the character of an area may be more clear and distinctive in the centre, with transitions at the edges where the influences of land cover, land use, settlement and field pattern may be less consistent. So that the landscape merges with that of adjacent character areas sharing characteristics with them as part of a continuum. This does not imply that the landscape character of transition areas is any less important.

4.1.4 A summary matrix of the sensitivity evaluations for all the character areas is provided in Appendix B. This should be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 - 1.4.17.

4.6 London Clay Landscapes (E)

4.6.1 The London Clay landscapes are found in south Essex and around Colchester and the Tendring Plain.

4.6.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- Mainly gently undulating or flat landform.
- Heavy clay soils and lighter sandy/loamy soils where sand and gravel deposits overly clay.
- Regular and straight hedged field boundaries the result of both ancient planned landscapes, and late enclosure of former heathlands.
- Pasture and arable farmland.
- Mostly enclosed nature of the landscape.

4.6.3 The main hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Elm with occasional Ash, Blackthorn, Field Maple.

4.6.4 The London Clay Plateau landscapes comprise four Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- South Essex Farmlands (E1)
- South Colchester Farmlands (E2)
- Tendring Plain (E3)
- North Colchester Farmlands (E4)

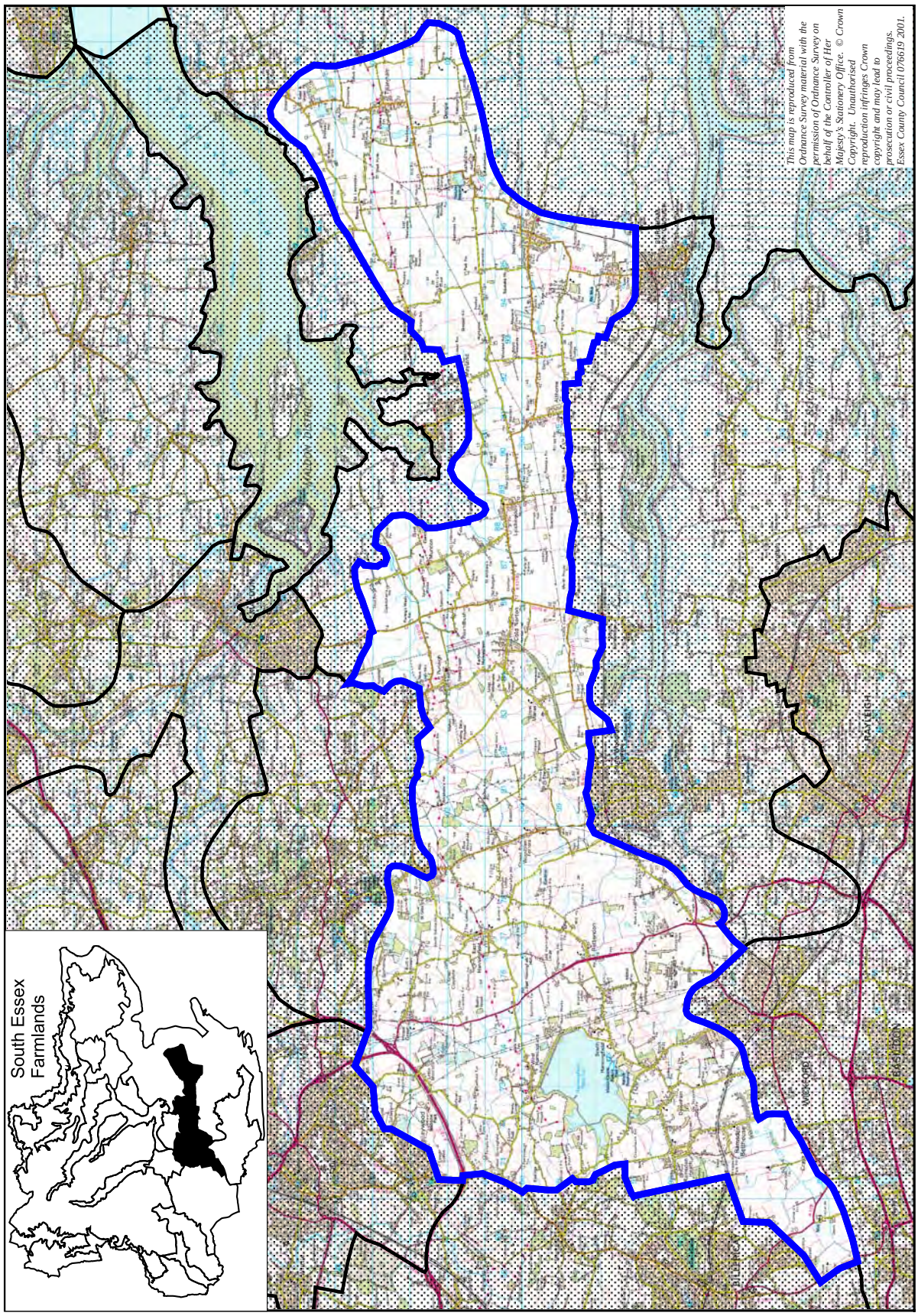
4.6.5 *South Essex Farmlands (E1)*

Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating landform, locally strongly rolling.
- Rectilinear field pattern with tall thick hedgerow boundaries.
- Occasional small woods and copses.
- Sense of enclosure
- Striking large open water expanse of Hanningfield Reservoir surrounded by dense tree belts is a distinctive feature in the west.
- Pylons are a frequent presence.

Overall Character

The South Essex Farmlands have a simple pattern of small to medium size rectangular arable and pasture fields. Distinctive long hedgerow boundaries running on parallel axes are a common feature, thought to be the result of ancient planned enclosure and extend over gently to strongly undulating landform. Despite the large scale loss of elm in the area, the tall thick hedges contribute an enclosed character to the landscape. In the west the large Hanningfield Reservoir and its surrounding mixed treebelts are a dramatic contrast to the surrounding farmland. Overhead pylons and some major roads visually interrupt the landscape.


South Essex Farmlands
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Character Profile

Geology

- Mainly London Clay, some Claygate and Bagshot Beds and Sands and Gravels

Soils

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, small areas of fine or coarse loamy and silty soils.

Landform

- Varied landform.
- Large parts are gently undulating.
- More strongly rolling topography associated with rounded, moderate to steep sided hills/small escarpments between Ramsheath and Woodham Ferrers, extending north to Cold Norton and Purleigh.
- Low broad ridge extends on the Dengie Peninsula.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Oak-hornbeam woodland.
- Neutral meadows.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Predominantly small and medium rectilinear fields, often with long co-axial field boundaries (ancient planned field system).
- A few areas with large fields where field pattern has been lost, e.g. east of Rettendon.
- Predominantly thick hedgerow boundaries.

Farming pattern

- Mix of arable and pasture farmland, arable more dominant in the east.
- Occasional orchards, e.g. near Chelmsford.

Woodland/tree cover

- Scattered small woods and copses in the west, more widely dispersed in the east towards the Dengie Peninsula.
- Mixed tree belts around Hanningfield Reservoir.
- Scattered hedgerow oak trees. Elm was previously the dominant hedgerow tree.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Dispersed settlement pattern.
- Small villages and hamlets generally of strong linear form.
- Farmsteads, cottages and more recent suburban houses along lanes.
- Isolated farmsteads and barns within the farmland.
- Local vernacular of weatherboarding (painted black or white) and brick.

Communications

- Minor roads are quite straight and follow strong north to south, east to west patterns, sometimes with distinctive right angled bends. Narrow grass verges.
- Main A130 runs through the centre of the area and the A12(T) bisects the north west corner.

Other landscape features

- Hanningfield Reservoir - very large expanse of open water.
- Pylon routes running north to south and east to west, interrupt the landscape.
- Masts at Bushy Hill.
- A few sand and gravel pits on the Dengie Peninsula.

Landscape Condition

- In parts, especially in the east of the area, there has been loss of hedgerows due to field rationalisation, or fragmentation due to lack of management.

- The condition of some settlements is poor due to out of character 1960's and 1970's development.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Traditionally the landscape was dominated by pasture but extensive areas have been converted to arable.

- Future trends for change may include pressure for urban development, masts on high ground and recreational uses given the proximity to urban areas in the east.

SOUTH ESSEX FARMLAND (E1)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern • Low to moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides.	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Low to moderate intervisibility. *Possible opportunities to improve existing urban edges.*	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern. • Low to moderate intervisibility.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides. • Landform character. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides. • Landform character. *Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.*	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern. • Visual exposure of some ridge/hillsides. *Possible opportunities for landscape enhancement ion some parts.*	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of hedgerow field pattern.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Condition of hedgerows. • Character of settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Low to moderate intervisibility. • Limited capacity for further change.	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerow field pattern.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

4.7 Coastal Landscapes (F)

4.7.1 The Coastal landscapes in Essex are extensive areas of open, and largely undeveloped low-lying land adjacent to the coast, much of which is of significant nature conservation value. The very long coastline is deeply indented by major river estuaries including the Stour, Colne, Blackwater, Crouch, and the Thames, and includes distinctive island and peninsula features. Much of the coastal land behind the sea wall has been reclaimed to form wet grazing marshes and, where drained and improved, arable fields. Inland, the land rises and is dominated by arable farmland.

4.7.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- Expansive, sky-dominated, flat, low lying landscapes with water often a feature in views. The estuaries bring the maritime character inland.
- Deeply indent coastline.
- Traditional grazing marshes and drained arable land protected from flooding by sea walls.
- Few hedgerows or fences; numerous creeks, drainage ditches and dykes.
- Tree cover limited to farmsteads and villages on higher ground.
- Extensive evidence of 20th century military activity.
- Many settlements related to fishing or boating industry.

4.7.3 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Elm, with occasional Elderberry, Blackthorn, Dog rose.

4.7.4 The Coastal landscapes comprise ten Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- Thames Estuary (F1)
- Crouch & Roach Farmland (F2)
- Dengie & Foulness Coast (F3)
- Blackwater Estuary (F4)
- North Blackwater Coastal Farmlands (F5)
- Mersea Island (F6)
- Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast (F7)
- Hamford Water (F8)
- Stour Estuary Slopes (F9)
- Stour Estuary (F10)

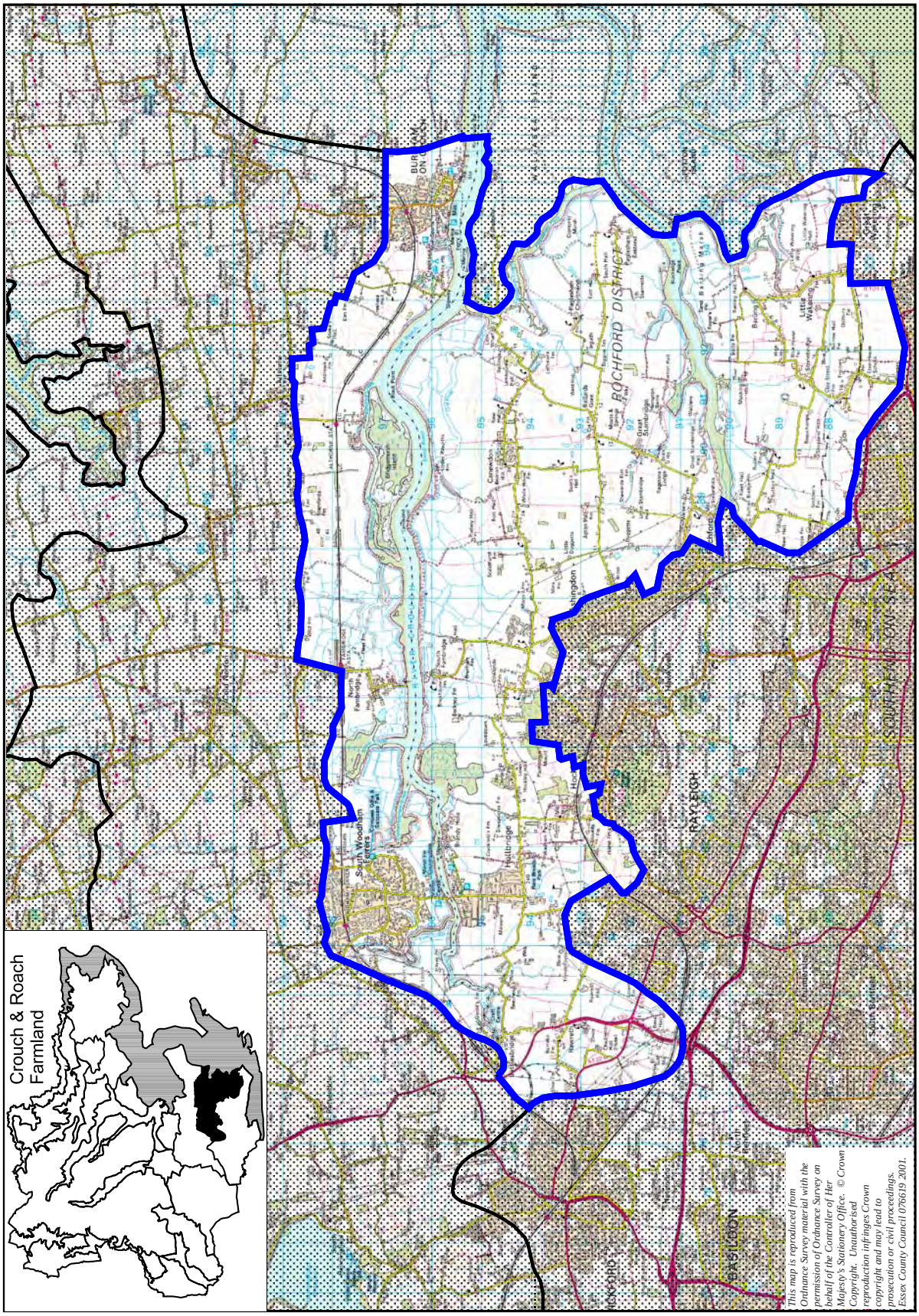
4.7.6 *Crouch & Roach Farmland (F2)*

Key Characteristics

- Long narrow Crouch and Roach river estuaries with bands of flat low lying marshlands.
- Rolling or gently undulating arable farmland between the estuaries. Regular fields of variable size and thick or intermittent hedgerow boundaries.
- Frequent long views across the farmland to the estuaries from higher ground.
- Strongly right angled pattern of lanes.
- Small villages, a scattering of hamlets, farmsteads, and newer suburban properties are concentrated along the lanes on higher ground.

Overall Character

The coastal character of the area is defined by the narrow estuaries which penetrate far inland, with associated mudflats, saltmarsh and reclaimed marshlands, sometimes including grazing marsh. The land between the estuaries and their immediate margins is gently or strongly undulating arable farmland. Moderate to steep sided estuary valleysides are a distinctive backdrop either side of the Crouch. Typically, thick hedgerows dominated by scrub elm follow the rectilinear field boundaries. However, there has been significant loss of hedgerows especially in the south of the area, as well as the general loss of elm the formerly characteristic hedgerow tree, resulting in a fairly open character. The settlement pattern is sparse along the edge of the estuaries, and mostly small settlement tend to hug the slightly higher drier land. Large parts of the area have a tranquil character.


Crouch & Roach Farmland
ROCHFORD DISTRICT
RAYLEIGH
BASILDON
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
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Character Profile

Geology

- London Clay, Sands and Gravels, Brickearths and Loams, Claygate and Bagshot Beds, Sands and Gravels

Soils

- Slowly permeable clayey soils, deep stoneless alluvial and well drained silty/loamy soils.

Landform/coastal form

- Mostly very gently undulating landform.
- Low moderate to steep to estuary/valleysides around Canewdon/near Hockley and to the north of the Crouch estuary between South Woodham Ferrers and Burnham on Crouch.
- Incised narrow estuaries of the Rivers Crouch and Roach.
- Narrow margins of flat low lying marshland and saltmarshes next to the Roach, broader areas adjacent to the Crouch.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Saltmarsh, grazing marsh, ancient woodland.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Regular, mainly small to medium size fields, some large. Distinctive ancient planned coaxial hedgerow boundaries in many parts.
- Regular and irregular fields on the marshlands with straight and sinuous ditch boundaries.

Farming pattern

- Largely arable, but with some significant areas of coastal grazing marsh, e.g. around North Fambridge.

Woodland/tree cover

- Very widely dispersed small copses. Some small woodlands on the ridge near Hockley.
- Scattered hedgerow oak and ash trees. Occasional elms, but these have largely been lost.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Absence of settlement within the marshlands apart from a very small number of isolated farmsteads.
- Small hamlets, farmsteads and early 20th century houses along roads on the higher ground.
- A few small villages, some with a suburban character at the edges.

- Local vernacular of black and white weatherboarding, colour washing and red brick. Occasional examples of dutch gables as an architectural detail on brick houses
- Small town of Burnham on Crouch, historically a fishing settlement now an important yachting centre.
- Larger town of Woodham Ferrers with extensive modern estates.

Communications

- Narrow lanes with right angled bands following the field boundaries.
- Lack of roads within the marshlands other than farm tracks.
- Main A130 crosses the landscape in the west. Otherwise few major roads cross the area.

Other landscape features

- Church towers and spires are often visually prominent in the landscape.
- Some wet gravel pits.
- Scattered ponds and small reservoirs.
- Small caravan/mobile home parks.
- Quays and a marina at Burnham on Crouch.
- Occasional marinas, pontoons and river moorings elsewhere.

Landscape Condition

- Many hedgerows are fragmented.

- The condition of the small settlements is very mixed, often including out of character modern infill.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- There has been significant loss of grazing marsh as a result of agricultural intensification since the Second World War.

- Loss of elm trees from the farmland in the 1960's and 1970's made the character of the area more open.

- Present and likely ongoing trends for change include pressure for urban development around South Woodham Ferrers, transportation developments near Southend, and demand for additional boat moorings, marina facilities along the estuaries. Flood protection measures may also be a likely future issues. There may be some opportunities for managed realignment together with restoration of saltmarshes and grazing marshes, rather than use of visually intrusive higher hard sea walls.

CROUCH AND ROACH FARMLAND (F2)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Visual exposure of some estuary valleysides. • Tranquil character.	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Integrity of hedgerow pattern.	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	• Moderate to high intervisibility.	H
6. Large scale 'open uses'	• Integrity of hedgerow pattern. • Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	• Integrity of hedgerow pattern. • Moderate to high intervisibility.	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Mixed existing character of settlements.	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	• Moderate to high intervisibility. • Tranquil character.	H
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	• Condition of hedgerows. • Condition of saltmarshes.	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

5.0 LANDSCAPE ISSUES IN ESSEX

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 As a result of increased pressures for housing, minerals, transport, recreation, energy generation and other major land uses, there has been a general erosion of the character, quality and diversity of the Essex landscape since the mid-twentieth century. The cumulative effects of small-scale changes have also had a significant impact.

5.1.2 This section identifies and summarises the key issues for the planning and management of the landscape in the plan area, both generic or countywide issues and landscape type/character area specific issues. It is expected that, where appropriate, these issues would be addressed by a future Landscape Strategy for Essex and Southend on Sea. The Strategy would provide land management and planning guidelines, and identify priorities for action in relation to opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape.

5.2 Countywide Landscape Issues

Climate Change

5.2.1 It is widely acknowledged that global climate change is inevitable, and that it is likely to have significant physical impacts on the landscape. The South East region including Essex is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change. The principal implications of global warming are likely to be:

- Sea level rises, threatening important coastal habitats, and increasing the risk of flooding in low-lying areas.
- Warmer year round temperatures, wetter winters and drier summers, which may cause habitat and species displacement, and changes in cropping patterns.
- Increased frequency of extreme weather events – drought conditions, storms and flooding.

5.2.2 The exact climatic changes and their effects on character and condition of the landscape are difficult to predict, so environmental monitoring is essential to inform future planning and land management decisions.

5.2.3 However, key issues may include:

- Replacement of traditional crops with new crops such as sunflowers, maize, soya, as well as renewable energy crops such as willow coppice, with associated changes in agricultural practices.
- Irrigation for summer droughts which may increase the need for farm reservoirs .
- Greater soil erosion, and reduction in productivity of the soils through droughts, high winds, storm runoff, which may affect farm viability and create additional pressure for new uses in the countryside.
- Changing livestock practices and housing, which may affect grazing patterns and require new types of farm building.
- New pests and diseases and/or more stress from drought which may lead to the loss of particular species and species groups that contribute to the individuality of different landscapes.
- Potential greater storm damage to woodlands.
- Erosion of intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh.
- Construction of new larger types of sea defences.
- New renewable energy generation developments, such as wind farms and tidal barrages.

Urban Development and Urban Fringe

5.2.4 Urban development has placed an increasing pressure on all aspects of the landscape over the last fifty years in particular. This is resulting in urban expansion into undeveloped rural areas, redevelopment and intensification of urban areas, increasing urbanisation and development of rural villages and hamlets. Closely associated with urban areas, the urban fringe is often used to locate access roads, sewage works, waste disposal facilities and intensive recreation uses. However, the urban fringe also provides a setting for urban areas, and often contains important landscape features/habitats.

5.2.5 The key issues include:

- Settlement-edge housing and commercial/retail estate development impacts on landscape character and wider visual impacts on the countryside.
- Unsympathetic infill of historic settlement cores.
- Quality of built environment.
- Loss/erosion of urban open spaces and of tree cover.
- Decline in the condition of landscapes in the urban fringe, with problems such as lack of management of hedgerows/trees, poorly managed horse paddocks and flytipping.

Transport

5.2.6 Reflecting the national trend, the county has seen increasing levels of car usage. This is leading to major congestion, pollution problems, and pressures for new road schemes in the countryside between major urban areas, and roads improvements that significantly affect landscape character. New types of pressure may be created by upgrading of the rail network and the building of new multi-modal transport interchanges.

5.2.7 The key issues include:

- The effects of new roads and bypasses and service stations, including the introduction of new structures, lighting, and earthworks into the landscape.
- Road improvements that can have an urbanising effect, especially on rural lanes, by road widening, straightening and introduction of features such as kerbs, lighting and signage.

Tranquil Areas

5.2.8 Nationally, extensive tracts of tranquil and undeveloped countryside are becoming an increasingly limited resource: maintaining extensive areas of tranquil countryside largely free from the influence of urban intrusion and major transport corridors is of critical concern to the protection of the essential character of the county. Figure 9 shows how the pattern of tranquil areas in the county has changed dramatically between the 1960s and 1990s. Only the most remote northwest and eastern parts of the county now contain extensive tranquil areas. The lack of tranquillity associated with the urban landscapes of South Essex has been exacerbated by the effects of traffic along the M25/M11/A12/A13 road corridors.

5.2.9 The key issues include:

- Fragmentation of tranquil areas by major road transport corridors.
- Threats from various developments to existing extensive tranquil areas and remaining ‘islands’ of tranquillity.

Mineral Extraction & Waste

5.2.10 Mineral extraction occurs in many parts of Essex. The county is the largest producer of sand and gravel in the Southeast Region, regularly producing over 20% of the Regions output. Clay, brickearth and small quantities of silica sand are also extracted. The extent to which

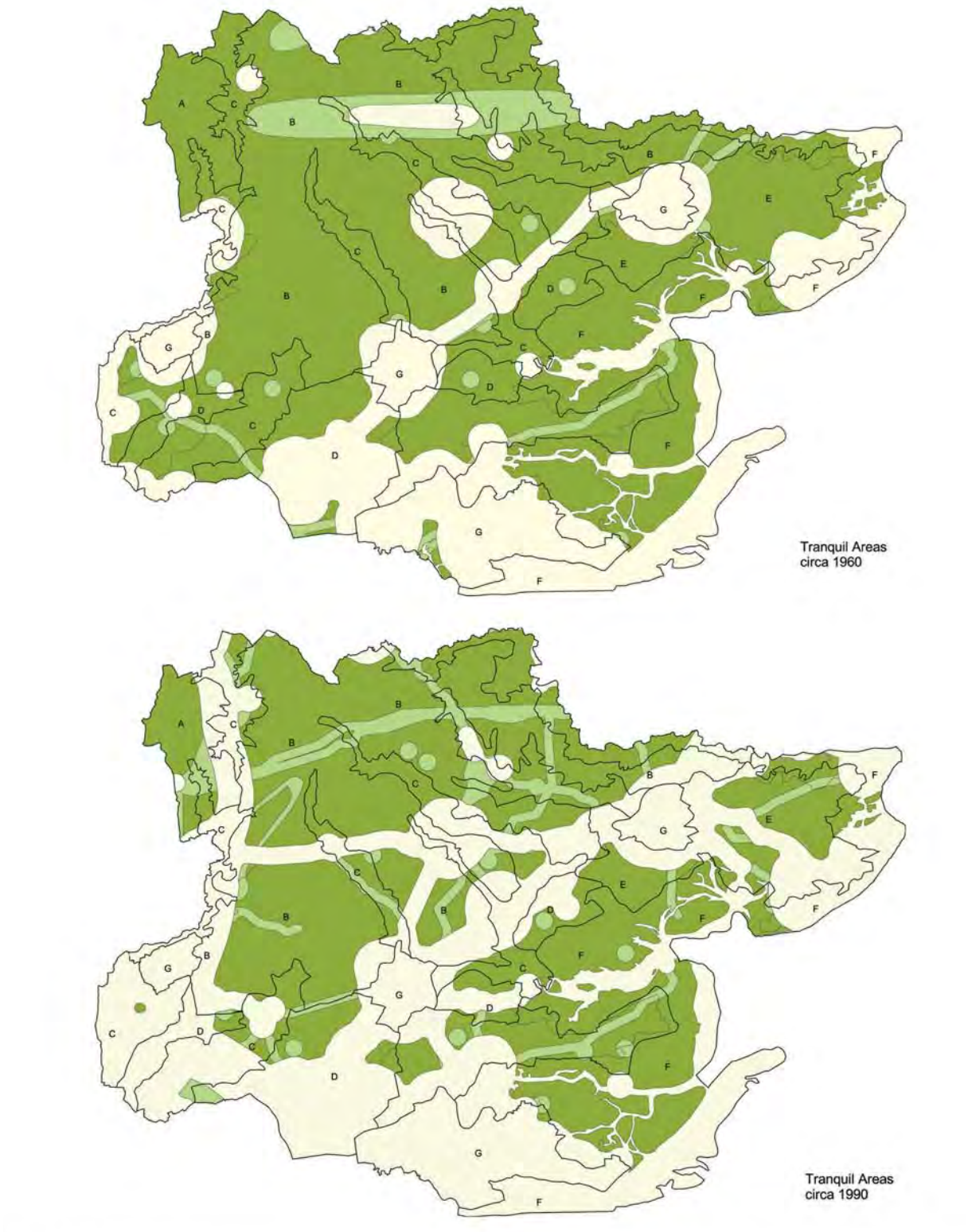

Figure 9 Tranquil Areas

mineral extraction continues to impact on the landscape may depend upon whether more recycled aggregates or alternative sources from outside the area are used. With regard to waste, despite moves away from landfill as the primary means of waste disposal, this is likely to continue for some time and other methods of waste management may create new pressures on the landscape.

5.2.11 The key issues include:

- The effects of minerals/landfill operations including changes to field pattern, loss of landscape features, introduction of alien landforms, landraising, haulage routes, lighting.
- The effects of restoration schemes depending on restoration to agriculture, woodland or other uses, and whether these are sympathetic to landscape character.

Agriculture and Agricultural Diversification

5.2.12 Agricultural activity is a vital aspect of the rural environment and can be considered as the primary factor in shaping the character of the landscape. Agriculture has the ability to substantially enhance and detract from the character of the landscape in a relatively short period of time, primarily due to mechanisation and intensive practices. These have, over the last fifty years, contributed to the changes in the rural environment through intensive cropping, loss of field boundaries, drainage of marshes/wetlands, and the introduction of new farm buildings. Pastures and coastal grazing marshes are dependent on appropriate livestock grazing practices. On some coastal grazing marshes scrub encroachment is becoming a problem due to lack of grazing/management. Changes in farming practice and fluctuations in the agricultural economy have an important impact and this will only increase, as global markets become a major influencing factor.

5.2.13 Farm diversification is also causing changes in the farmland landscape as the pressures to help maintain farm viability culminate in new enterprises and adaption of buildings.

5.2.14 The key issues include:

- Continuing decline/loss of landscape features such as hedgerows, field margins and farm ponds as a result of maximising field size, lack of appropriate management, and spray drift.
- Soil erosion as a result of autumn cultivation of arable crops.
- Introduction of large, new farm buildings in the landscape as a result of new EU standards.

- Farm diversification such as the adoption or reuse of farm buildings for commercial, industrial and storage uses which may conflict with historical/architectural character and the introduction of new industrial crops.
- The effects of agri-environmental schemes such as countryside stewardship.
- Impact of events such as foot and mouth disease on livestock grazing practices.

Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows

5.2.15 The varying patterns of the trees, woodlands and hedgerows within Essex are very important elements of its landscape character. They are also significant in historic and wildlife terms.

5.2.16 The key issues include:

- Decline of traditional woodland management practices such as coppicing, pollarding.
- Decline of grazing in wood pasture woods.
- Continuing loss of hedgerows/lack of management of hedgerows.
- Lack of management of shelterbelts.

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

5.2.17 There is a strong relationship between landscape character and nature conservation/ biodiversity. Particular habitats and groups of species are an essential part of the character of the Essex landscape. Essex remains rich and diverse in wildlife despite significant losses of landscape features and habitats, but continuing threats from changing land management practices and from development remain.

5.2.18 The key issues include:

- Agricultural intensification, urban development, mineral extraction, waste disposal resulting in direct loss of habitats and species, or indirect losses due to associated pollution, changes to the water table.
- Introduction of genetically modified crops and possible effects on native fauna and flora.
- Introduction of non-native species, or native species not of local provenance.

Historic Landscapes

5.2.19 Essex was enclosed early. The tapestry of ancient woodland, hedgerows and trackways is a major part of the historic landscape, which is therefore very sensitive to the loss of these features, or to changes to them. There has been loss of/a decline in the structure and condition of surviving historic landscape features.

5.2.20 The key issues include:

- Vulnerability to neglect of features such as historic buildings and structures, earthworks, hedgerows, areas of ancient woodland and historic parks and gardens.
- Erosion of historic lanes and tracks by traffic/road improvements.
- Introduction of new uses such as golf courses into historic parks and gardens.
- Vulnerability of historic coastal landscape features to sea level rise and development.

Recreation and Tourism

5.2.21 The Essex landscape is important as an attraction for recreation and tourism. 'Honeypot' areas include Dedham Vale, parts of the coast, some historic parklands, and major wooded areas such as Epping Forest. In the largely arable county of Essex footpaths and bridleways are very important for countryside access. Informal recreation is the most popular, and usually least intrusive form of recreation. Problems arise when overuse and overcrowding damage/disturb the landscape and the quality of the experience. New formal recreational activities can introduce urbanising effects.

5.2.22 The key issues include:

- Effects of formal recreational activities such as golf courses, including possible loss of landscape features, new buildings, car parks, modifications to landform, lighting.
- Effects of noisy water and motor sports on tranquil areas.
- Effects of horseculture including sub division of fields, new stables, overgrazing and construction of menages/jumps.
- Effects of tourism related developments, e.g. caravan parks and management of visitors in 'honeypot' areas.

5.3 Landscape Character Type Issues

Coastal Landscapes

5.3.1 The key issues for the coastal landscapes include:

- Development issues (ports, dredging, energy related developments, marinas and other tourism related developments).
- Flood protection and managed retreat issues.
- Access and recreation (management of visitors).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (changes in the traditional management of grazing marsh).

Glacial Till and London Clay Plateau Landscapes

5.3.2 The key issues for the clay plateau landscapes include:

- Development issues (road developments, historic village infill, telecommunication masts, proliferation of small agricultural reservoirs).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (changing grazing regimes of pastures, increase in farm size/subdivision of farmland for non-farm uses, lack of appropriate woodland management, decline in hedgerow management).

River Valley Landscapes

5.3.3 The key issues for the river valley landscapes include:

- Development issues (sand and gravel extraction).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (changing grazing regimes).

Urban Landscapes

5.3.4 The key issues for the urban dominated landscapes include:

- Development issues (settlement extensions, urban infill, commercial warehousing, landfill, waste incinerators, green open space networks, tree cover).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (encapsulated countryside, ecologically sensitive previously used urban land).

Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes

5.3.5 The key issues for the wooded hill and ridge landscapes include:

- Development issues (settlement extensions, historic village infill).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (common land management; management of mature trees and pollards; lack of continuity of management).

Chalk Upland Landscapes

5.3.6 The key issues for the chalk upland landscapes include:

- Development issues (telecommunication masts, new agricultural buildings).
- Land management/biological diversity issues (management of woodlands and of remnant chalk grassland).

5.4 Landscape Character Area Issues

5.4.1 Specific issues relating to individual character areas are highlighted under past, present and future trends for change.

APPENDIX B - SUMMARY MATRIX OF CHARACTER AREA SENSITIVITY EVALUATIONS

To be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 - 1.4.17

CHARACTER AREAS		1 Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	2 Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	3 Major transportation developments/ improvements	4 Commercial/ warehouse estate/port development	5 Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	6 Large scale 'open uses'	7 Mineral extraction/ waste disposal	8 Incremental small scale developments	9 Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	10 Decline in traditional countryside management
A1	North West Essex Chalk Farmlands	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	M	M
B1	Central Essex Farmlands	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
B2	North Essex Farmlands	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	H	M
B3	Blackwater/Stour Farmlands	M	M	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	L
B4	Gosfield Wooded Farmlands	H	L	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	M
C1	Cam Valley	H	M	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	M
C2	Stort Valley	H	M	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	M
C3	Lee Valley	H	L	M	M	M	L	M	M	M	M
C4	Roding Valley	H	M	M	H	H	M	M	M	M	M
C5	Chelmer Valley	H	M	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	M
C6	Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys	H	L	M	H	M	M	M	M	M	M
C7	Colne Valley	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	M
C8	Stour Valley	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	H
D1	Epping Forest & Ridges	H	M	H	H	M	H	H	M	M	H
D2	Brentwood Hills	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	H	M	H
D3	Danbury Hills	H	L	H	H	H	M	M	M	M	H
D4	Tiptree Ridge	H	L	H	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E1	South Essex Farmlands	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E2	South Colchester Farmlands	M	L	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
E3	Tendring Plain	M	L	M	H	H	L	M	H	H	M
E4	North Colchester Farmlands	M	M	M	H	M	M	M	M	H	M
F1	Thames Estuary	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
F2	Crouch & Roach Farmland	H	M	M	H	H	M	M	M	H	M
F3	Dengie & Foulness Coast	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	H
F4	Blackwater Estuary	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
F5	North Blackwater/Colne Coastal Farmlands	H	M	H	H	M	M	H	M	H	M
F6	Mersea Island	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	M
F7	Brightlingsea-Clacton-Frinton Coast	H	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	H	L
F8	Hamford Water	H	M	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	M
F9	Stour Estuary Slopes	H	M	H	H	M	M	H	M	M	M
F10	Stour Estuary	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
G1	Harlow & Environs	M	L	M	M	L	L	H	L	L	L
G2	Chelmsford & Environs	M	L	M	M	M	M	H	L	M	L
G3	South Essex Coastal Towns	M	L	M	M	L	M	M	L	H	H
G4	Colchester & Environs	M	L	M	M	M	M	H	L	M	M