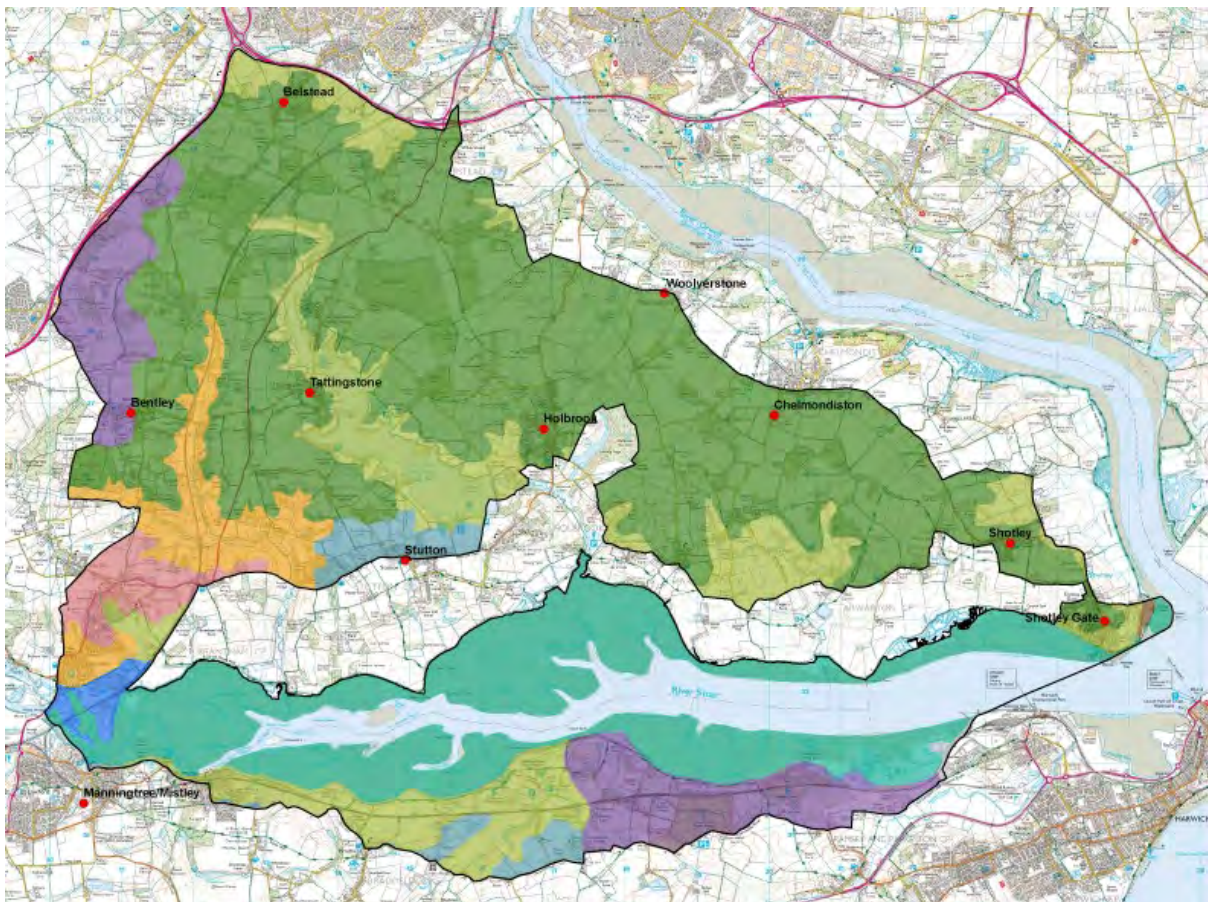




# Valued Landscape Assessment

## Suffolk Coast & Heaths Additional Project Area



March 2020

Final Report



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Appendix 1: Fold out key to settlement maps

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Appointment

Alison Farmer Associates was appointed in July 2019 to undertake a value landscape assessment of the Additional Project Areas (APAs) associated with the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which lie beyond these designation boundaries.

This report sets out the findings of the assessment for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths APA (referred to in this document as the Project Area or SC&H APA), and its key settlements. A separately bound report has also been prepared for the Stour Valley Project Area (Dedham Vale AONB).

### 1.2 The Brief and Scope of Work

The purpose of the study is to:

- Articulate valued aspects of the landscape within the Project Area.
- Develop knowledge and understanding about the area's natural beauty, special qualities, landscape and cultural features which contribute to valued landscapes.
- Identify the sensitivity of the landscape to change.
- Provide evidence which can be used to inform responses to planning applications/appeals in the context of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 170a.
- Better protect Project Areas against inappropriate development.

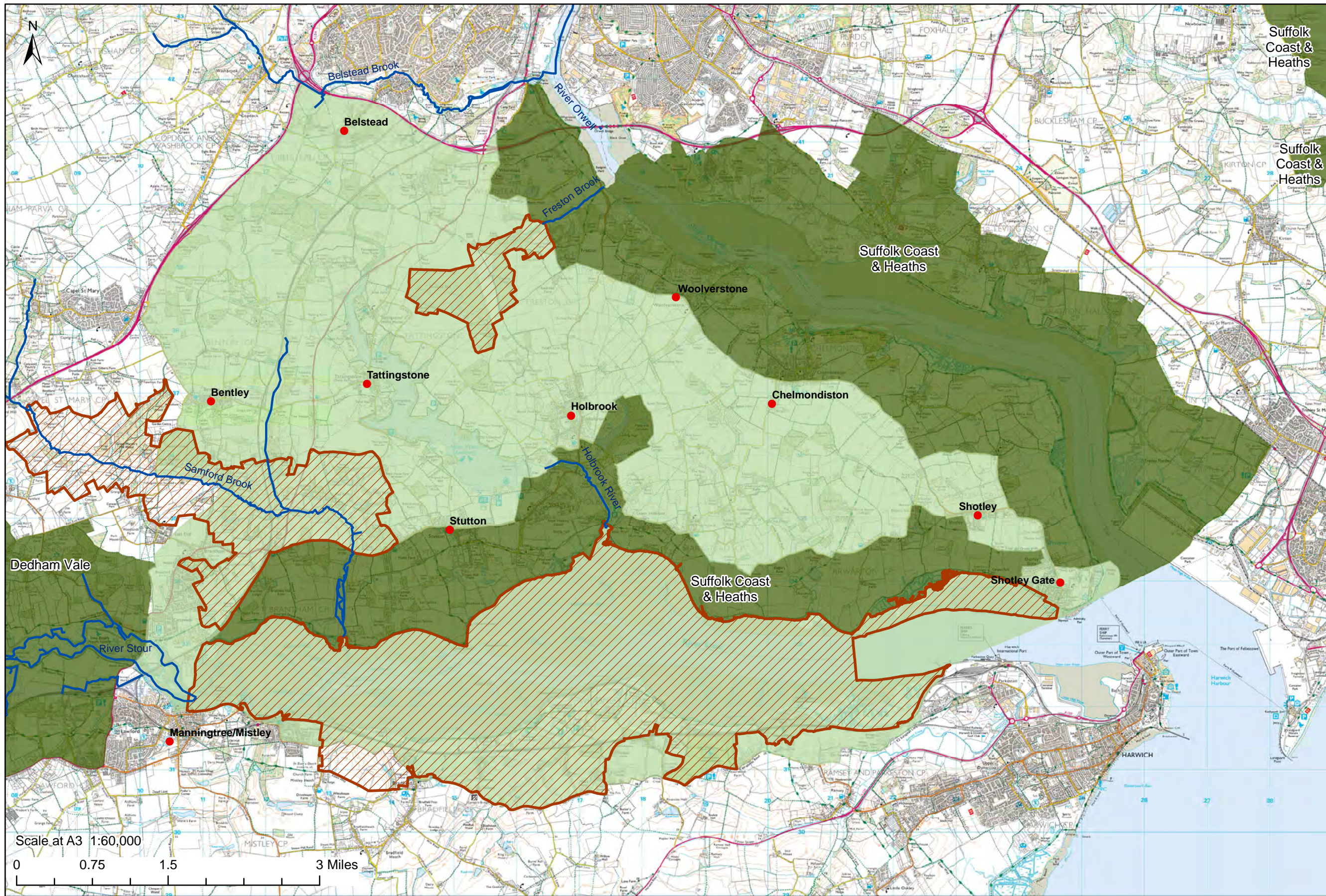
The brief did not require a review of the boundary or extent of the Project Area.

It is anticipated that the outputs from this study will be used to:

- Inform emerging Local Plan policy for the Project Area.
- Ensure that the Project Area is given due consideration in all development proposals.
- Inform future AONB Management Plan reviews (that include reference to the Additional Project Area).

### 1.3 The Additional Project Area

The study area for assessment comprises the SC&H Additional Project Area which covers the Shotley Peninsula, the Stour Estuary and an area of land to the south of the Stour Estuary. This area is defined in the SC&H AONB Management Plan and is illustrated on Figure 1 below.



**Valued Landscapes  
Suffolk Coast & Heaths  
Project Area**

**Figure 1:  
Study Area**

- Proposed Extension to SC&H AONB
- Additional Project Area (APA)
- Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs
- Settlement
- Main tributaries to the Stour and Orwell Estuaries

Source: Natural England

The origins of the SC&H APA stem from a long held aspiration by the AONB (supported by relevant Local Authorities), to extend the area designated as AONB, recognising the inter-relationship of the area with the adjoining Stour and Orwell Estuaries. The APA is clearly embedded within the SC&H Management Plan and the AONB Countryside Management Service regularly operates within the area, beyond the boundary of the existing AONB.

## 1.4 Planning Context and Status of SVPA

Although the SC&H APA is specifically referred to in the AONB Management Plan, and is regarded by the Partnership as a valued landscape, it has no formal landscape status in planning terms.

### National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) refers to valued landscapes in para 170(a) setting out that:

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

*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).*

### Local Planning Context

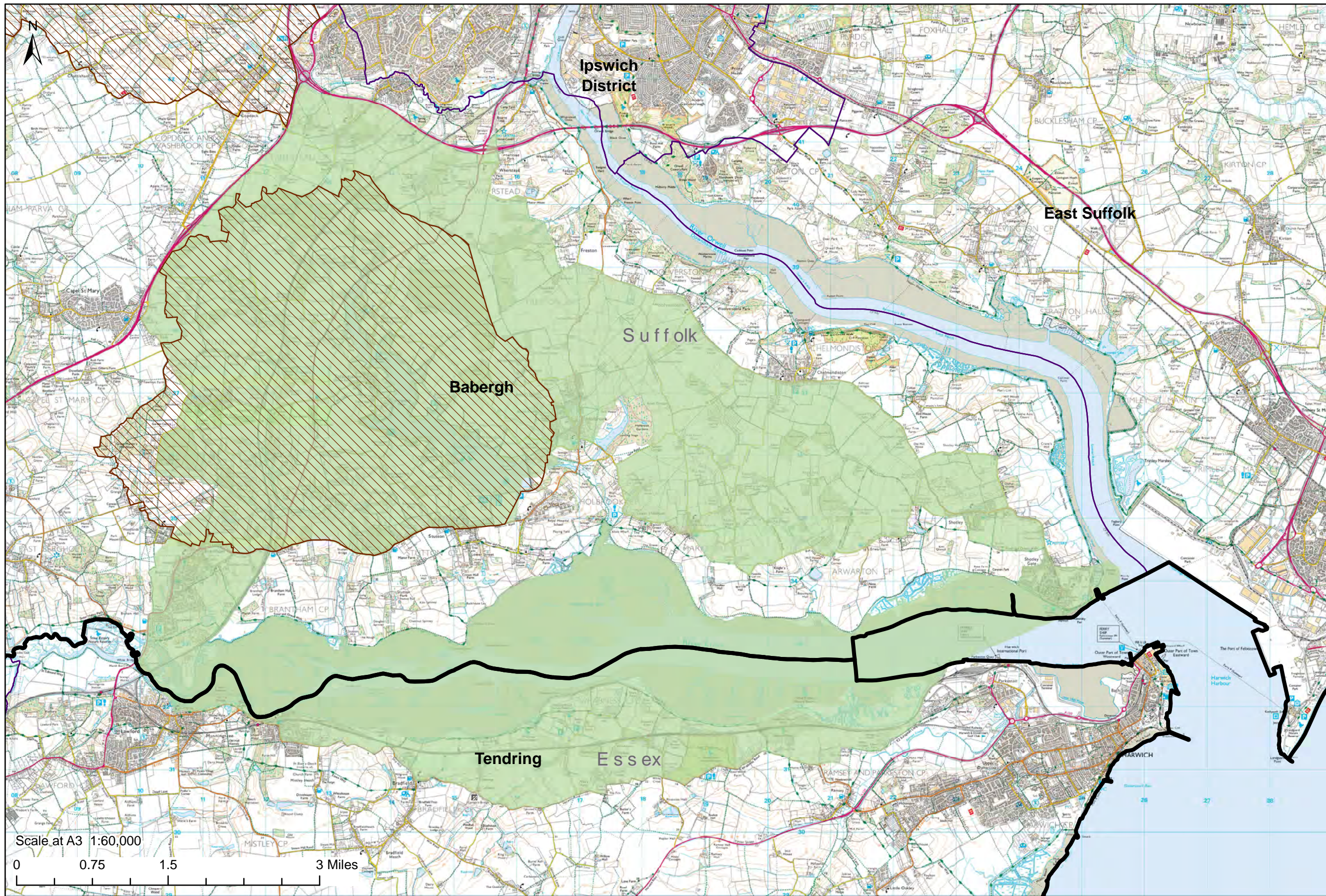
The local authorities which cover the SC&H APA include Essex / Suffolk Counties, Tendring and Babergh Districts. The extent of these administrative areas is illustrated on Figure 2.

Planning policies associated with each administrative area vary, and current landscape policy is set out in the Table 1 below (emphasis has been added for clarity). Although each local plan is at a different stage, they both make reference either to the wider objectives of the SC&H AONB Management Plan, and/or landscape value.

**Table 1: Summary of relevant local plan policy**

<p><b>Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18))<sup>1</sup></b></p> <p><b><i>Policy LP19 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i></b></p> <p>The Councils will support development in or near the AONBs that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Gives great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty;</li> <li>b. Does not adversely affect the character, quality views and distinctiveness</li> </ul>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<sup>1</sup> Note this is emerging policy and subject to change



**Valued Landscapes**

**Sussex Coast & Heaths Project Area**

**Figure 2:**  
Special Landscape Areas  
and Administrative  
Boundaries

- Special Landscape Area
- County boundary
- Sussex Coast & Heaths Project Area (SC&HPA)
- District boundary

Source: Babergh & Mid Sussex and West Suffolk District Council



of the AONB or threaten public enjoyment of these areas; and

**c. Supports the wider environmental, social and economic objectives as set out in the AONB Management Plan<sup>2</sup>**

**Policy LP18 – Landscape**

The Councils will support: -

- a. Development in suitable locations which will not adversely affect the natural environment including; landscape character sensitivity and visual impacts of the proposal on the wider area (including effects on health, living conditions);
- b. New development that integrates positively with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforces the local distinctiveness.
- c. Proposals that are sensitive to their landscape, visual or amenity impacts (including on dark skies); subject to siting, design, lighting, use of materials and colour, along with the mitigation of any adverse impacts;
- d. Development that enhances and protects **landscape value** such as; locally characteristic landscape features, archaeological and historic use patterns of settlement and land and designations; being demonstrably informed by local guidance, in particular the Council's Local Landscape Guidance, the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment.

**Tendring Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond Publication Draft June 2017**

Para 7.3.4 states

*The southern shore of the Stour Estuary is recognised locally for its landscape qualities and the **Council supports its inclusion within the proposed extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.** Until such time as that AONB is extended, development proposals in the area defined on the Policies Maps will be subject to particular scrutiny.*

**Policy PPL3 – The Rural Landscape**

*..... Development proposals affecting protected landscapes must pay particular regard to the conservation and enhancement of the special character and appearance of the Dedham Vale AONB, and its setting, and the setting of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, including any relevant **AONB Management Plan objectives.** New development which would impact upon the **proposed extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, or its setting,** should have specific regard to any special landscape qualities of the area affected.*

## 1.5 Special Landscape Areas

In the 1980's many County Structure Plans highlighted a desire to identify Special Landscape Areas in broad terms and for them to be more specifically defined in District

<sup>2</sup> Management Plans included, but not exclusively, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project Management Plan and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan.

Plans. This was the case for both the Essex and Suffolk Structure Plans. The former recognised areas with *‘distinctive scenic attraction and of great landscape value resulting from a combination of features such as vegetation cover and landform’*, while Suffolk defined SLAs as:

- *‘River valleys which still possess traditional grazing meadows with their hedgerows, dykes, and associated flora and fauna;*
- *Historic parklands and gardens;*
- *Other areas of countryside where undulating topography and natural vegetation, particularly broadleaved woodland, combine to produce an area of special landscape quality and character.’*

These areas were subsequently defined in respective local plans and incorporated into policy. Although there is no record of assessments which justify the extent of SLA areas, reference to former local plans has enabled the SLAs to be mapped in relation to the APA – refer to Figure 2. This demonstrates that the western half of the Shotley Peninsula formed part of the Dodnash Special Landscape Area recognised for its scenic quality and combination of features.

Whilst SLAs, and policy relating to them, are no longer in use, the removal of a local landscape designation does not mean that the qualities of the landscape that led to designation have somehow changed, often they have not. This is borne out by the findings of the AONB extension evaluation which, undertaken by Natural England, identified a substantial part of the Dodnash SLA (principally the Samford Valley) as worthy of designation as part of the AONB (see section 1.6 below).

## 1.6 Past Landscape Evaluation

The evaluation undertaken by Natural England looked at the Stour Estuary and Shotley Peninsula to establish if it was worthy of designation as AONB, as part of an extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths<sup>3</sup>. The results of this assessment defined an extension that included three areas namely the whole of the Stour Estuary (including the southern shores in Essex), The Samford Valley and the Freston Brook (refer to Figure 1). The proposed extension is currently awaiting confirmation by the Secretary of State.

Land defined as suitable for AONB designation has not been assessed further as part of this project. Figure 1 shows that some small areas of the APA are left beyond the southern boundary of the proposed AONB extension. These areas have not been assessed as they will become isolated from the wider APA once the AONB extension is confirmed. An assessment of the land between Manningtree and Mistley has however been undertaken despite it lying outside of the APA (refer to section 4.10). This is because the land forms an important context to the settlements of Manningtree and Mistley and a setting to the AONB extension.

<sup>3</sup> Natural England Board Paper, NEB 73 03, Annex 2, SC&H AONB Boundary Variation Project, Natural Beauty Assessment, September 2017.

## 1.7 Relevant Planning Appeals

There are a number of planning appeals which illustrate how the equivalent Project Area for the Stour Valley is being treated in relation to planning policy and decisions. This provides useful background to this study of the SC&H APA.

### ***Steeple Bumpstead (Braintree District)***

This appeal was in relation to a housing scheme for up to 65 dwellings on the south side of the village of Steeple Bumpstead. The inspector noted that the village and site lay within the SVPA and that while it did not have any planning status within local plan policy or the proposals map, its inclusion in the AONB management plan enabled it to be given significant weight. The Inspector went on to state *'I do appreciate however that the area is extensive and not all parts of it will have equal landscape quality.'*

The Inspector took account of the value placed on the landscape by local people and the sensitivity of these visual receptors engaged in recreation within the wider landscape, the perception of tranquillity in the area, the scenic quality of the surrounding landscape and the position of the village nestling within the valley bottom - the trees within the settlement creating a verdant impression. She concludes that *'having considered all its characteristics and the inclusion of the site within the Stour Valley Project Area, I conclude that it is a valued landscape in terms of paragraph 109 [now 170a] of the Framework.'*

### ***Bures (Colchester District)***

This appeal was in relation to a housing scheme for up to 98 dwellings off Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet. In para 21 the Inspector notes:

*'I consider that recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside would have little practical effect without an assessment of the particular qualities of the countryside and the landscape setting where development is proposed and the effect of that development upon them. Neither, having regard to paragraph 127, do I consider that the exhortation to protect and enhance 'value' landscapes is necessarily limited to landscape that have either a statutory designation or a local designation in the development plan.'*

The Inspector goes on to state in para 22:

*'The Framework does not provide a definition of a valued landscape. However, I consider it improbable that the addition of the words in brackets to paragraph 170(a)...was intended to encourage policy makers to revive the practice of creating local 'Special Landscape Areas' or similar designation in development plans as a means of identifying a valued landscape.'*

And in para 23

*'In any event, whether or not the site qualifies as a 'valued landscape' in terms of the Framework, the Framework at Paragraph 127 requires development to be sympathetic to its landscape setting. Such consideration must necessarily have regard to the sensitivity of that landscape.'*

He concluded in para 24 that *'In this case I consider that there is ample evidence that the landscape around Bures, including the appeal site, is not ordinary countryside of no value but is of high sensitivity and is locally valued.'*

These planning appeals highlight:

- the weight which is given to the inclusion of land within the SVPA and reference to this within the Dedham Vale AONB Management Plan
- that not all land within the SVPA will have equal landscape quality
- that a landscape may be a valued landscape even if it is not defined within policy or a local development proposals map
- that a landscape may be sensitive to a particular development even if it is concluded that it is not a valued landscape

## 2.0 Approach and Methodology

### 2.1 Stages of Work and References

The project comprises four stages of work. Firstly, a desk-based assessment where background information on the area and key settlements was gathered and reviewed. Secondly, site assessment where the SC&H Additional Project Area was visited, and information gathered on special qualities and where individual settlements were assessed in detail. Thirdly, analysis of evidence and assimilation and judgements on landscape value. Finally, the writing up of the findings of the study.

Key sources of information used during the study have included the following:

- 1:25,000 and 1:10,000 OS mapping.
- Historic maps and aerial photography.
- Historic Landscape Characterisation and Historic Settlement Atlas.
- Landscape Character Assessments.
- Landscape designations including Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and former Special Landscape Areas.
- Cultural heritage designations including Conservation Area Appraisals, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens.
- Natural heritage designations including ancient woodland, Tree Preservation Orders, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves, Ramsar, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Local Wildlife Sites.
- Recreational routes including public rights of way, bridleways, CROW/access land, national trails, cycle routes, locally important open space.
- Green Infrastructure Strategies.
- Local Plan Policies and Designations.
- Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Neighbourhood Plans.

The main background documents referred to in this study are set out in appendix 2.

### 2.2 Approach to Assessing Landscape Value

Over the past 30 years techniques for assessing and evaluating landscape, (as oppose to simply describing it in landscape character assessments), have evolved. There are three principle sources of information on landscape evaluation and the factors which should be taken into account when determining value as follows:

***Natural England Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England (2012)***

This guidance relates to defining areas for National Park and AONB designation in England. These are our most treasured landscapes and are designated for their natural

beauty and in the case of National Parks, opportunities for open air recreation. As such they are given the highest level of protection within the NPPF (paras 172). Natural England, as the designating authority, published guidance to inform its work in defining new designations and undertaking boundary reviews. This guidance set out the factors which can be taken into account when determining whether a landscape has sufficient natural beauty and (in the case of National Parks) recreation opportunities to warrant national designation. The techniques and application of the criteria set out in this guidance inform the approach to be adopted to valued landscape assessments and establish a level of transparency and consistency in making judgements.

***Guidance on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)***

The second source of information which informs landscape evaluation and the identification of valued landscape can be found in Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)<sup>4</sup>. This defines landscape value as:

*'The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.*

Box 5.1 on page 84 of GLVIA sets out the criteria used to assist in defining a valued landscape and these are regularly used by the landscape profession when undertaking Landscape and Visual Impact assessments. Importantly GLVIA states in para 5.28 that the criteria listed are not comprehensive.

The criteria listed are similar to those set out in Natural England's guidance for designation as indicated in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Comparison between NE natural beauty factors and those set out in GLVIA**

<b>Natural beauty and recreation factors in Natural England Guidance for evaluating landscapes as National Park or AONB</b>	<b>Criteria in GLVIA for defining valued landscapes (Box 5.1)</b>
Landscape quality	Landscape quality
Scenic quality	Scenic quality
Relative wildness	Perceptual qualities
Relative tranquillity	Perceptual qualities
Natural heritage features	Conservation interest
Cultural heritage features	Conservation interest
	Associations
	Rarity
	Representativeness
Access to high quality landscapes	Recreation Value
Features of interest	Recreation Value
Good recreation provision	Recreation Value

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition).

## **An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management, Natural England (2019)**

The third source of information is the recently published guidance by Natural England which highlights the importance of taking into account an understanding of value when determining the sensitivity of a landscape to a particular type of development/change. It states that:

*'Within the context of the spatial planning and land management, landscape sensitivity is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resources, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the specific development type/development scenario or other change being considered together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resources. Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specific change arising from development types or landscape management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value.'*

It goes on to state that *'Assignments of value will be completely independent of what is being assessed (unlike judgements concerning landscape and visual susceptibility).'* This is important as it indicates that an understanding of value should be made prior to and separately from judgements on sensitivity in relation to specific types of change.

The value(s) of landscape and their component parts can be ascertained qualitatively with reference to, for example:

- a. Designations
- b. Character and sense of place
- c. Valued attributes such as topography, perceptual qualities, cultural and historic features and associations, biodiversity, areas of outstanding beauty, National Park special qualities etc.
- d. Community values
- e. Recreational value
- f. Intrinsic value

### **2.3 Approach to Assessing Settlements**

An important part of this assessment has been the need to consider the value of settlements specifically. This study has therefore sought to establish the historical evolution of settlements and to understand factors which have influenced their siting and form in relation to the landscape. Information regarding opportunities for enhancement, especially where this may enhance special qualities and increase robustness, has been recorded. The results of the settlement assessments can be found in Section 4.0 of this report. Settlements were considered as a whole to reflect the strategic nature of the project brief. Nevertheless, geographical variations in qualities and issues are detailed in the written descriptive narrative for each settlement. Where settlements lie predominately beyond the SC&H APA (i.e. Mistley and Manningtree) focus is concentrated on their fringes which lie adjacent to the SC&H APA / proposed AONB extension area, rather than an assessment of the whole settlement.

The purpose of the settlement assessments is to set out valued characteristics and special qualities of the settlements and their landscape settings and to highlight any vulnerabilities to change. The assessment does not seek to identify specific development sites nor review existing sites which are coming forward for development. Instead the analysis seeks to set out what matters and why (value) and on this basis forms an independent assessment which can be used to inform more detailed sensitivity studies of specific developments. It can therefore assist with decision making as a robust evidence base. The criteria used in the assessment are set out below and have been developed through experience of whole settlement studies, neighbourhood plan landscape appraisals and sensitivity assessments. The criteria form a helpful framework for the assessment of settlements within the brief, ensuring consistency in analysis and descriptive reporting.

**Table 3: Criteria Used to Assess Settlements and Settings**

<b>Criteria Used to Assess Settlements and Settings</b>	
<b>Location and Topographic Context</b>	Includes understanding of the position of the settlement in relation to landform, skylines and landscape elements. It takes account of whether the setting and settlement is representative and typical of the Shotley Peninsula and estuaries, or if it has unique characteristics
<b>Historical Development</b>	Includes an historical account of the evolution of the settlement including the reasons why it may be located where it is and what factors have led to its growth/decline.
<b>Landscape Setting</b>	Considers the juxtaposition of elements and patterns including land use, enclosure and scale in relation to built form. The coherence, condition and intactness of the physical landscape and its character is noted.
<b>Settlement Form and Character</b>	Considers the settlement form relative to the landscape and its predominant character. Aspects of scale and form are noted as is the character of the urban edges.
<b>Views</b>	Takes into account important elements within views e.g. landmarks, and inter-visibility between areas, and the main approaches into and out of the settlement
<b>Natural and Cultural Heritage</b>	The presence of and extent to which natural and cultural heritage contributes to special qualities of the settlement including cultural associations with artists for example.
<b>Relationship to Adjacent Settlements</b>	The position of the settlement relative to other settlements is noted especially if there is a physical distinction/gap or if there has been an amalgamation of smaller settlements.
<b>Scenic Quality and Perceptions</b>	Considers any scenic value, sense of rurality, remoteness and tranquillity in the landscape surrounding a settlement.
<b>Value and Significance</b>	Considers the special qualities of the settlement which are important to conserve and enhance and how these qualities may be vulnerable to change.
<b>Sensitivities</b>	Key changes which may adversely affect the special qualities of the settlement.
<b>Conserving Special Qualities</b>	Considers what environmental initiatives could help to bolster existing special qualities.



## 2.4 Project Methodology

The method adopted in this study is based on recognised approaches to assessing valued landscape and sensitivity studies as noted above. For the purposes of assessing landscape value the SC&H APA has been subdivided into three broad geographical areas namely:

1. Western Wooded Plateau
2. Alton Water
3. Eastern Open Plateau

These areas have been used as a framework for assessment purposes and are illustrated on Figure 4. They were assessed through desk study and field work, in relation to the criteria set out in Table 3. The assessment seeks to describe the special qualities of these areas drawing on existing evidence from landscape character assessment and other studies as well as site work. The assessment sets out the special qualities found in the different areas and goes on to highlight opportunities for conservation and enhancement. The results of this can be found in Section 3.0 of this report.

Land which has already been assessed as worthy of AONB designation e.g. Stour Estuary, Samford Valley and Freston Brook (as noted in Section 1.6 above) has not been assessed again on the basis that its special qualities are already well documented.

Following the broad evaluation of the SC&H APA, the settlements listed within the brief (see table 4 below and Figure 1) were assessed in detail at 1:10,000 scale through desk work and site assessment. Specific criteria were developed to gather and order data and to articulate the special qualities of each settlement and opportunities for conserving and enhancing (see section 4.0 below).

These settlements have been considered in detail in this study with particular attention given to their character and position in the wider peninsula landscape, understanding the relationship between the built area and its setting as well as its contribution to the character of the wider landscape. Reference has also been made to any existing studies such as Conservation Area Appraisals and or Neighbourhood Plans, as listed in the table below.

**Table 4: Settlements Listed in the Brief by Local Authority Area**

Local Authority	Settlement	Neighbourhood Plan Area	Conservation Area
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District	Belstead		
	Bentley	*	
	Chelmondiston		
	Holbrook	*	
	Stutton	*	
	Shottley		
	Tattingstone		
	Woolverstone		*

Tendring District	Manningtree Mistley		* *
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## 3.0 The Shotley Peninsula

### 3.1 Existing Character Assessments

The SC&H APA is described in a number of different character assessments undertaken at a range of different scales). These include:

- National Character Area 82: Suffolk Coast and Heaths (whole area)
- The Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment 2009 and update 2011 (northern part of the Stour Estuary and Shotley Peninsula only)
- The Essex Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (Southern shores of Stour Estuary only)
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths Landscape Assessment 1993 (land within the existing AONB only)
- Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Landscape Character Assessment 2013 Alison Farmer Associates (whole area)
- Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance

The Suffolk Landscape Typology and Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Character Assessment are the most informative assessments for the APA. These assessments have been most relied upon in this evaluation work. The landscape types for the APA are illustrated on Figure 3.

By way of background, extracts from the NCA, Suffolk Typology and Shotley Peninsula Landscape Character Assessment, are set out below.

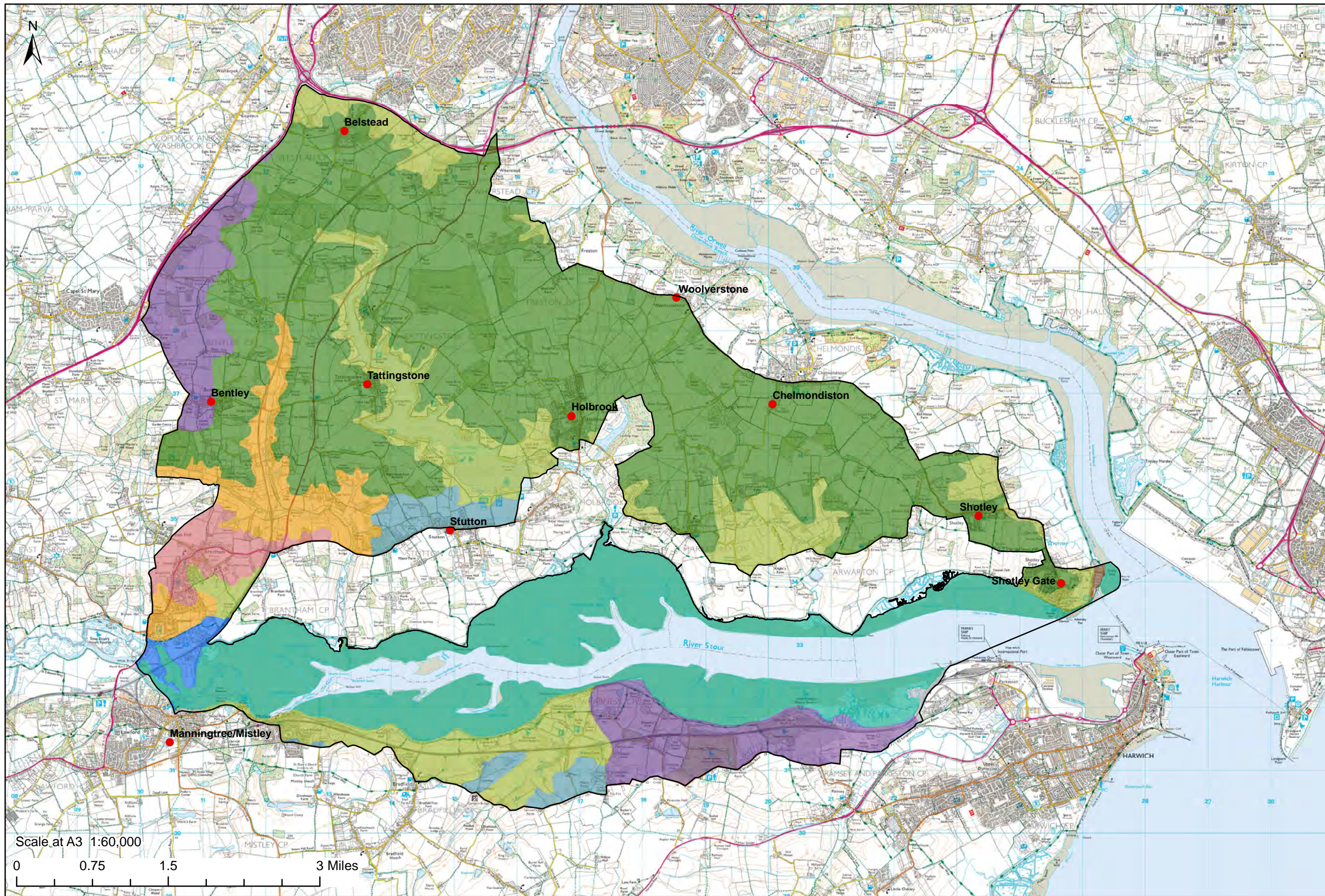
#### **National Character Area 82: Suffolk Coast and Heaths**

The Shotley Peninsula area was specifically picked out as a key landscape attribute of NCA 82 and described as follows:

- *The area's light, generally less impoverished soils, were historically considered to be the best in Suffolk and have had a significant impact of the landscape. These first farms and settlements were established on these soils, evidenced by the 5,000 year old Neolithic ritual enclosure at Freston.*
- *Today its medium sized clusters of farms and large-scale arable blocks, divided into rectilinear fields separated by an enclosed network of winding lanes are distinctive characteristics.*
- *The Shotley peninsula is notable for its field boundary holly hedges. Designed parkland landscapes around large houses built overlooking the Stour and Orwell estuaries include, Orwell Park, Freston Park, Wherstead Park and Woolverstone Park. These quiet and undisturbed landscapes form a key component of the area and include many important ancient trees in a wood pasture setting. They are important for wildlife including hawfinches and barn owl.*

**Valued Landscapes  
Sussex Coast & Heaths  
Project Area**

**Figure 3:  
Landscape Character**



**Landscape Character Types**

**(Project Area)**

- Ancient Estate Claylands
- Ancient Estate Farmlands

- Rolling Estate Farmlands
- Plateau Estate Farmlands
- Valley Meadowlands
- Coastal Levels

- Saltmarsh/Intertidal Flats
- Plateau Farmlands
- Rolling Valley Farmlands

Additional Project Area (APA)

Settlement

- *Historically the country houses portray the past importance and wealth of the area.*
- *Open, wide views from the valley sides across the estuaries are a strong characteristic.*
- *Tranquillity levels are high and disturbance is low, apart from close to the major transport infrastructure routes of the East Coast Main Line and A14 and A12 roads.*
- *Recreation opportunities are supported by the dense network of rights of way on the Shotley peninsula, and both land and water based activities at Alton Water Reservoir.*

### **The Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment 2009 and update 2011**

This assessment defines the APA (beyond the proposed AONB extension) as comprising 5 landscape types namely:

- Rolling Valley Farmlands comprising the valley of the Samford Brook
- Rolling Estate Farmlands which comprise the sides to the estuaries and Alton Water which penetrates the plateau;
- Ancient Estate Claylands which form the highest area of the plateau farmlands in the west of the area;
- Ancient Estate Farmlands which form the majority of the elevated plateau farmland;
- Plateau Estate Farmland which comprise an area of elevated farmland in the vicinity of Stutton and southern fringes of the Stour.

### **Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland LCA**

A more detailed local landscape character assessment was undertaken in 2013 for the Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland. It divided the study area into the following character areas:

- Belstead Brook
- Samford Valley
- Alton Water
- Elevated Plateau

The descriptions for each character area can be found in appendix 2 of this report. These character areas have informed the division of the study area for evaluation purposes (refer to Figure 4).

### 3.2 Special Qualities of the AONB and APA

The SC&H APA shares similar landscape characteristics to the SC&H AONB. The special qualities of the AONB are set out in the publication on Natural Beauty and Special Quality Indicators<sup>5</sup> and are summarised below:

- Repetitive pattern of east west estuaries penetrating the coastal farmlands and heaths;
- Close knit interrelationship of semi-natural and cultural landscapes and built heritage features creating attractive compositions;
- Important areas of heath and acid grassland and coastal habitats highly valued for biodiversity;
- Enigmatic built structures and features including Sizewell and Orford Ness which sit within an open large-scale coastal setting;
- Sea cliffs and shingle beaches contrast with gently rolling sandland heaths and farmland;
- Long distant and panoramic views and large skies;
- Villages and small towns which high concentration of built heritage assets and local vernacular connected by network of hedged rural lanes;
- Designed parkland landscapes overlooking estuaries and high concentration of veteran trees;
- Associations with writers and poets;
- A sense of relative tranquillity.

### 3.3 Shotley Peninsula as a Valued Landscape

This section considers the special qualities of the Shotley Peninsula beyond the AONB and proposed extension area. The evaluation is set out in three separate tables one for each of the areas defined in Figure 4.

### 3.4 Western Wooded Plateau

**Location:** This area lies in the western fringes of the Shotley Peninsula and APA. It comprises predominately open farmland and areas of woodland. It includes a tributary valley to the Samford Valley and the northern slopes of the Belstead Brook valley.

**Relevant Landscape Types:** Ancient Estate Farmlands, Ancient Estate Claylands and Rolling Valley Farmlands.

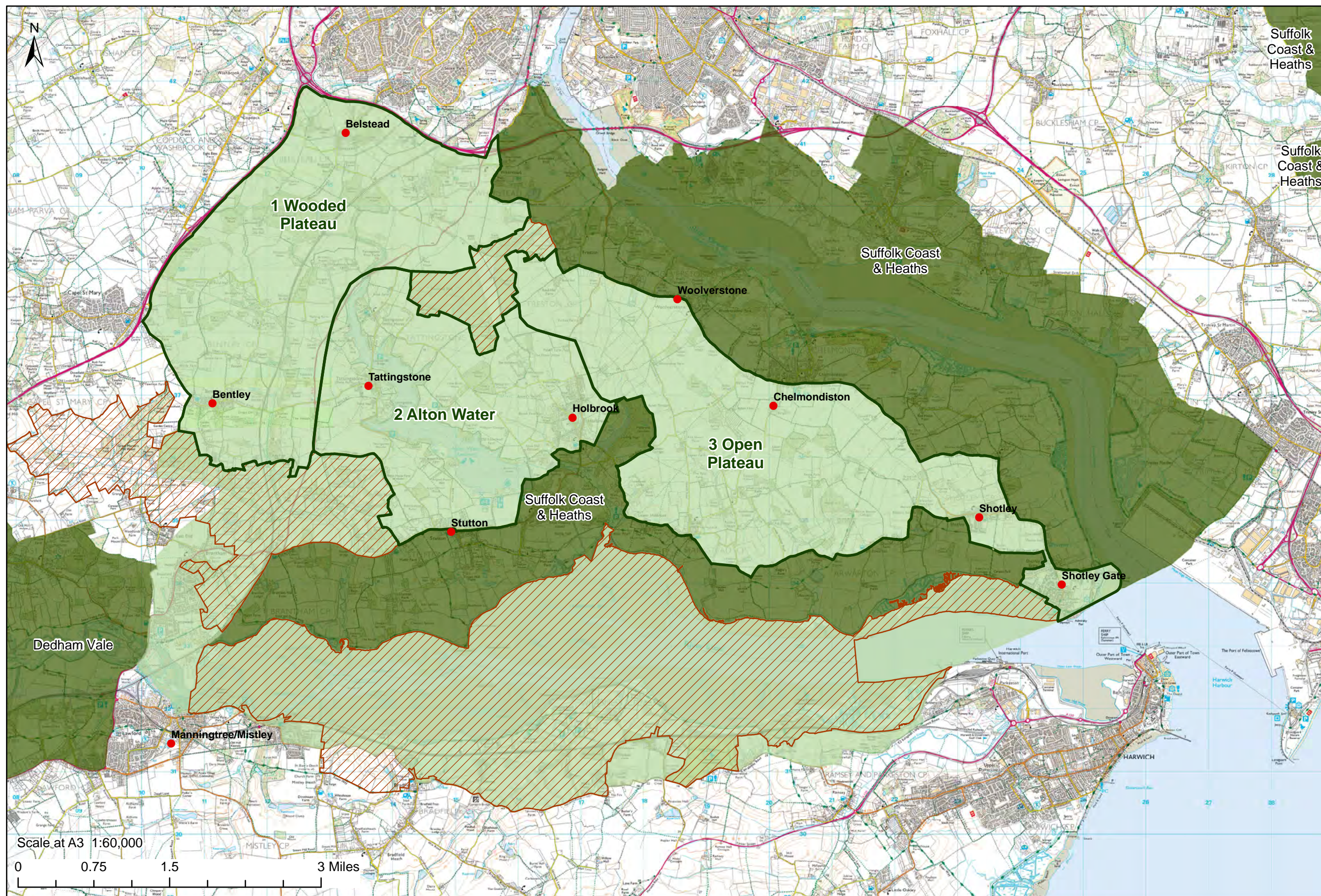
**Key Settlements:** Hamlet of Belstead and village of Bentley.

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<sup>5</sup> Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural Beauty and Special Qualities Indicators, Nov 2016, LDA Design.

**Valued Landscapes  
Suffolk Coast & Heaths  
Project Area**

**Figure 4:  
Broad Assessment Areas**



- Broad Assessment Area
- Proposed Extension to SC&H AONB
- Additional Project Area (APA)
- Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB
- Settlement

**Overview of character:** This area forms the highest land within the Shotley Peninsula rising to c. 45m AOD close to the A12. Its eastern extent broadly follows the A137 and the area is bisected by the mainline railway between Ipswich and Manningtree.

Much of the landscape forms a relatively flat plateau under arable cultivation with notable blocks of ancient woodland. In the south the land drops steeply into the Samford Valley and its tributary while in the north it slopes towards the Belstead Brook valley. Siting on the edge of the plateau above the river valleys area the rural settlements of Bentley and Belstead.

Criteria	Assessment
<p><b>Landscape Quality</b> (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape.</p>	<p>In the northern part of this landscape the field pattern reflects pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures and blocks of ancient woodland has an intact character. Further south the pattern has been disrupted by field boundary loss, post 1950's, although the woodland areas remain intact. In some cases, the ancient woodlands had been replanted or extended with conifer plantation.</p> <p>The historic pattern of church and hall complexes sitting isolated within a wider rural landscape remains intact while the villages of Bentley and Belstead have both experienced housing estate development in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historic lane pattern which connects settlements, halls and farms remains intact either forming the existing road network or fossilised within the public rights of ways and green lanes.</p> <p>The wooded and sinuous boundaries of former parkland landscapes e.g. associated with Bentley are still evident enclosing areas of pasture with veteran trees.</p> <p>In places the effects of sand and gravel extraction has altered landscape patterns and on the fringes of the area infrastructure has caused some visual and perceptual fragmentation e.g. pylons, road and rail.</p> <p>The landscape is most intact in the north of the area and especially around Bentley Hall.</p>
<p><b>Scenic Quality:</b> The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses.</p>	<p>The scenic qualities of this landscape are derived from the sinuous lines and patterns of ancient woodland, rural lanes and former parkland boundaries. Wooded horizons contain views but where land dips into stream valleys, views open up across wider distances. There are notable clusters of vernacular buildings (church, hall and farm complexes) comprise visually attractive groups and local interest, forming isolated built structures within a wider rural scene. When combined with the narrow rural lanes and green ways, often flanked with veteran trees, this landscape imparts a tangible rural and historic character. Topographic variation on the valley slopes adds visual interest but on the margins of this area scenic quality is undermined by visual intrusion from infrastructure and development including railway, pylons, road development and the fringes of Ipswich.</p>



<p><b>Rarity:</b> The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare landscape type.</p>	<p>The cluster of hall and church complexes is rare as are the collection of ancient woodlands and intact pattern of rural lanes/routes reflecting an earlier medieval landscape.</p>
<p><b>Representativeness</b> : Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important.</p>	<p>This landscape reflects the typical characteristics of plateau farmland in Suffolk.</p>
<p><b>Conservation Interest:</b> The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape.</p>	<p>Conservation interest is associated with the ancient woodlands which are designated County Wildlife Sites. These woods contain notable veteran trees and deadwood habitats which support a valued population of stag beetle.</p> <p>The pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure pattern, distribution of woodland, listed buildings and fossilised pattern of historic routes evident in the road network and rights of way, comprise an important collection of historic features.</p>
<p><b>Recreational Value:</b> Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.</p>	<p>Dense network of public rights of way connecting small settlement to the wider countryside.</p>
<p><b>Perceptual aspects:</b> A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and or tranquillity.</p>	<p>Rural tranquillity away from road network. Modern utilitarian agricultural landscape.</p>
<p><b>Associations:</b> Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.</p>	<p>Woodlands are associated with the writings of Oliver Rackham.</p>

Special Qualities:

- **Hall/church complexes** along with ancient woodland and rural lanes reflect patterns of the medieval landscape.
- **Remnant areas of parkland and notable veteran trees throughout area** impart an established character.
- **Sinuuous lanes and patterns** created by wavey edges to ancient woodland, rural winding lanes and old park boundaries and enclosure patterns.
- **Wooded skylines defined by ancient woodlands** and highly valued for biodiversity.
- **Attractive open views across rural farmland** to individual or clusters of vernacular buildings.

These qualities are particularly well expressed in the following geographical areas:

- Around Bentley Hall and Church
- Northern half of the area extending into Belstead Brook Valley.

Opportunities for Conservation and Enhancement:

- Improve landscape structure of arable farmland through improved management of hedgerows with associated field margins.
- Reinststate hedgerows to improve biodiversity networks especially where they can link areas of ancient woodland.
- Avoid development on the edges of settlement where it is visually prominent especially on the margins of river valleys (see detailed settlement assessments).
- Avoid development along major routes especially A12 and A137 where it creates visual clutter and may be visually intrusive across wide areas
- Undertake rural lane assessment to identify quiet lanes and protected lane status where appropriate.
- Selectively fell areas of conifer plantation and restore sinuous boundaries to woodland where they have been lost.

### 3.5 Alton Water

**Location:** This area comprises the valley of Alton Water Reservoir and surrounding plateau farmland.

**Relevant Landscape Types:** Rolling Valley Farmlands and Ancient Estate Farmlands.

**Key Settlements:** Villages of Tattingstone, Holbrook and Stutton

**Overview of character:** This part of the Project Area comprises Alton Water Reservoir, surrounding valley sides and plateau fringe. The focus of this landscape is predominately inward as a result of the subtle valley topography. Valley slopes undulate gently and ancient woodland forms a strong wooded skyline particularly to the north of

the reservoir. Alton Water is narrow and sinuous, its heavily vegetated fringes affording few views across open water from the surrounding landscape. Settlement is dispersed and comprises small rural hamlets such as Tattingstone White House and Tattingstone Heath as well as the larger settlements of Tattingstone and Holbrook.

Criteria	Assessment
<p><b>Landscape Quality</b> (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape.</p>	<p>The historic patterns of this landscape have been altered due to the creation of Alton Water. As a result, areas of former parkland associated with Tattingstone Place have become fragmented, (although remnants are still evident in the pattern of veteran trees). Severed lanes, such as Alton Hall Lane, which once connected Stutton to Alton Mill and Hall on the former valley floor, are also evidence of the past patterns that have been altered. Nevertheless, the pattern of 18<sup>th</sup> century small to medium scale, random or sinuous, field enclosures remains intact over much of the area, with the exception of land to the southwest of Tattingstone where there has been post 1950's alteration.</p> <p>The creation of Alton Water has enabled new wetland, woodland and scrub habitats to establish along its fringes, creating a new vegetated structure to the landscape.</p> <p>Housing development over the 20<sup>th</sup> century has resulted in a more nucleated settlement pattern developing in Stutton and Holbrook although both settlements retain elements of their historic character in the form of lanes and clusters of historic buildings. Tattingstone has seen less dramatic change and is the most intact of all three larger settlements.</p>
<p><b>Scenic Quality:</b> The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses.</p>	<p>Scenic quality is most evident on the valley sides where variations in topography, scattered vernacular timber-framed farmhouses with red tiled roofs, and vegetation around the naturally indented shoreline of the reservoir, create attractive and visually appealing compositions. The tower of the nearby Royal Hospital School forms a distinctive landmark which is visible from much of this area.</p> <p>The ancient woodlands associated with Holbrook Park (within proposed AONB extension) form a distinctive wooded horizon to this landscape while other areas of woodland have scenic qualities at a smaller scale in the form of old woodbanks, coppiced hazel and sweet chestnut stools and carpets of spring flowers revealing evidence of traditional woodland management.</p> <p>There are few views across open water due to the dense vegetation at the margins of the reservoir.</p>
<p><b>Rarity:</b> The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the</p>	<p>This landscape has a number of curiosities and unique land mark features such as Tattingstone Wonder and Tattingstone workhouse building.</p> <p>The woodlands west of Holbrook support a particularly high population of Stag Beetle.</p>

presence of a rare landscape type.	The creation of a reservoir within a stream valley draining the plateau, is unique in the context of the wider Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, forming the largest area of inland water in Suffolk.
<b>Representativeness</b> : Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important.	This landscape shares some characteristics of the inland sandlings which back the wider AONB landscape, although this particular landscape has seen change in relation to the reservoir.
<b>Conservation Interest:</b> The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape.	Alton Water is valued for its nature conservation and is designated a County Wildlife Site for its mosaic of habitats and supports a wide variety of birdlife. Woodley Wood, Hale's Grove and Argent Manor Wood are SSSIs and Hales Grove is a CWS – these designations reflect their ancient woodland status, veteran trees, invertebrate habitat and rich ground flora. There are also a number of small sites valued for their acid grassland and heathy character. None of the settlements in this area are conservation areas although they contain notable concentrations of listed buildings.
<b>Recreational Value:</b> Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.	Alton Water is marketed for outdoor recreation including fishing, quiet water sports, cycling and walking and various small parking areas and a visitor centre/facilities. There is a popular 13km circular recreation path around the reservoir and connections to a wider network of public rights of way. The narrow lanes which traverse this landscape also provide opportunities for open air recreation and the South Suffolk cycle route B runs through the area.
<b>Perceptual aspects:</b> A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and or tranquillity.	The open water of the reservoir and bird life it attracts makes a significant contribution to tranquillity. There are no major roads around Alton Water and away from the A137 to the northwest and B1080 to the south, the area has a quiet backwater quality.  Whilst the margins of the reservoir have a natural character the presence of more engineered features such as the reservoir dam and Lemons Bridge appear intrusive in the otherwise rural context.
<b>Associations:</b> Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the	This landscape is associated with Constable who sketched views of Tattingstone church across open fields.

natural beauty of the area.	
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### Special Qualities:

This area has the following special qualities:

- Notable areas of **ancient woodland** form skyline features, revealing evidence of former traditional management including hazel and sweet chestnut coppice stools and woodbanks.
- Alton Water is valued for its birds offering **breeding bird habitat** for species such as Common Tern in summer and as a refuge/roost for wildfowl during winter months.
- **Strong recreation focus** around Alton Water popular for fishing, cycling, quiet water sports, walking and visitor facilities.
- Important **habitats for stag beetle** to the west of Holbrook.
- **Rural back-water and tranquillity** away from main roads.
- Notable landmarks and historic buildings coupled with rural lanes, veteran trees and historic enclosure pattern, gives rise to **tangible time depth**.

These qualities are particularly well expressed in the following geographical areas:

- Western fringes and valley sides of Alton Water around Tattingstone
- Western fringes of Holbrook
- Land south of Holbrook Park

### Opportunities for Conservation and Enhancement:

- Improve landscape structure of arable farmland through improved management of hedgerows with associated field margins and reinstatement of hedgerows and woodland copses where they emphasise landform and define valley landscapes.
- Manage areas of ancient semi-natural woodland through coppicing and appropriate woodland management regimes.
- Record and survey veteran trees, manage existing trees to prolong life and plant new trees to become future veterans.
- Avoid the expansion of settlements which undermine the current dominance of historic core and settlement integrity.
- Manage recreation pressures in this landscape and avoid new development which detracts from the rural character and tranquillity of the area.
- Avoid the urbanisation of B1080 where it undermines the perceived separation and individual identity of Stutton and Holbrook.
- Improve recreational links from Alton Water to local settlement and the Orwell and Stour Estuaries.
- Enhance views to open water from the valley sides, through vegetation management and removal to create scenic vistas.

### 3.6 Eastern Open Plateau

**Location:** This area lies in the eastern half of the Shotley Peninsula and APA.

**Relevant Landscape Types:** Ancient Estate Farmlands and Rolling Valley Farmlands

**Key Settlements:** Woolverstone, Chelmondiston, Shotley and Shotley Gate

**Overview of character:** This part of the Shotley Peninsula forms an elevated relatively flat shoulder of farmland which can feel relatively open and exposed to the elements. Small streams drain the plateau and create shallow valleys which provide some subtle landform variation especially on the south side of the area. Much of the area is intensively farmed for arable with occasional small woods some of which are ancient e.g. Rence Park/Upper Grove, while others reflect more recent plantations. Settlement tends to occur at the fringes of the area as the land starts to dip and where there are views into the estuaries. Elsewhere views are generally open across arable farmland to woodland blocks on the skyline and occasional farms/cottages. As a result, the central parts of the plateau can feel empty and sparsely populated.

Criteria	Assessment
<b>Landscape Quality</b> (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape.	This landscape retains some pre 18 <sup>th</sup> century enclosure patterns but much of the area has been altered post 1950's with the creation of larger fields and removal of hedgerows. Intensive arable farmland has occurred close to stream valleys such that only small areas of pasture remain along watercourses. Settlements such as Chelmondiston, Shotley, and Shotley Gate have all experienced housing development in the latter half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century resulting in a more nucleated settlement form. In contrast Woolverstone has retained its estate village character with relatively little estate development and limited infill development. Areas of former parkland at Rence Park are substantially lost although the pattern of ancient woodland and hedgerows indicate its past extent.
<b>Scenic Quality:</b> The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses.	The scenic qualities of this landscape arise from the open exposed character and perceptions of being relatively isolated and off the beaten track. There are no major road routes through the area the B1456 being the only significant route connecting all four settlements. Otherwise the pattern of rural lanes is narrow and sinuous. Views across the landscape are generally without strong pattern or features - although the water tower west of Woolverstone and isolated church at Harkstead are visually important. In this context skies are expansive and changing light conditions and cloudscapes make a special contribution to the scenic quality of this area. As the land starts to slope towards the surrounding estuaries, views extend across thin slithers of open water to opposite valley slopes. Intrusion of tall structures, such as the cranes at Felixstowe, highlight the strong inter-visibility of this landscape with the surrounding estuaries.
<b>Rarity:</b> The presence of rare elements or	The general lack of accessibility to this landscape due to its position as a narrow tongue of land, surrounded on three sides by water, give

features in the landscape or the presence of a rare landscape type.	this area a rare isolated quality. This area also has a high concentration of holly hedges which are unusual in the context of the Suffolk Coast.
<b>Representativeness</b> : Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important.	The simplicity and expansive character of this landscape, coupled with views to the tall cranes at Felixstowe are similar to other parts of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths where expansive coastal landscapes afford views to isolated built landmarks such as the Pagodas on Orford Ness or Sizewell B.
<b>Conservation Interest:</b> The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape.	The nature conservation and heritage interest of this part of the Shotley Peninsula is relatively limited and comprises the conservation area associated with Woolverstone (mainly lying within the existing AONB) and a scattering of listed buildings.
<b>Recreational Value:</b> Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.	The Stour and Orwell Walk passes through this landscape and there is a reasonable network of public rights of way. The rural lane network also provides recreational opportunities such as cycling and horse riding.
<b>Perceptual aspects:</b> A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and or tranquillity.	This landscape has an isolated quality feeling remote from centres of population and exposed to the elements with large skies. Views towards the cranes at Felixstowe add interest - their size and activity have an enigmatic quality and play with sense of scale.
<b>Associations:</b> Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.	Erwarton Hall located just beyond this area within the AONB is a late 16 <sup>th</sup> century English county house and farmhouse with historical links to Anne Boleyn.

### Special Qualities:

This area has the following special qualities:

- **Quiet, empty character** with perceptions of isolation and few landmark features.
- **Simplicity of landscape, quality of light and expansive skies** with changing cloudscapes.
- **Patches of ancient woodlands** particularly on upper slopes of shallow valleys that drain the plateau.
- **Notable areas of holly hedges** which are a locally distinctive feature.

These qualities are particularly well expressed in the following geographical areas:

- Area around Harkstead and Rence Park.

### Opportunities for Conservation and Enhancement:

- Improve ecological networks along watercourses through reversion of arable to pasture.
- Restore areas of pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure through new hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting especially in the shallow valleys.
- Manage areas of native woodland using traditional woodland techniques and encourage the replacement of conifer plantations with mixed native planting.
- Maintain and enhance holly hedgerows.
- Improve urban edges where modern housing appears stark and visible over large distances through improved structural planting including woodland copses and hedgerows with hedgerow trees.
- Seek opportunities to create greater variation in land uses to improve biodiversity and visual interest – variations may include pastures along stream valleys and areas of scrub or heath associated with woodland as well as wider field margins along species rich hedgerows and relic lanes which are now footpaths.
- Avoid the urbanisation of lanes and especially the B1456 between key settlements e.g. Shotley and Shotley Gate, Chelmondiston and Woolverstone, and Woolverstone and Holbrook.
- Plant new woodland on the fringes of tributary valleys to enhance landform.



## **4.0 Settlement Assessment**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This section sets out the individual settlement assessments.

## 4.2 Belstead

### Location and Topographic Context

Belstead is a small settlement which sits on the mid to upper, north facing, slopes of the Belstead Brook valley. Located at around the 40m contour it sits at the junction between the sandy soils of the plateau farmland, to the south, and the heavier clay soils of the valley, to the north. Within the valley floor is the A14 and beyond, on the opposite valley sides are the southern fringes of Ipswich.

### Historical Development

Belstead reflects an early dispersed pattern of rural dwellings comprising farms, cottages and hall/church complex. The location of the settlement on the upper slopes of the Belstead Brook may relate to the naturally occurring springs in the area, which are still evident at Alder Carr wood. Maps dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century show Belstead comprising three loose clusters of dwellings, firstly along Grove Hill and Chapel Lane (Belstead), secondly at the church and hall to the west, and thirdly at Blacksmith Corner to the south (the latter comprising farm buildings and a smithy). This pattern is still evident today, although housing development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century along Chapel Hill and Grove Lane (and extension onto the flatter plateau farmland above the 40m contour) has resulted in a more nucleated settlement form. Belstead Church and Hall and farm dwellings at Blacksmith Corner remain separate and substantially unaltered by more recent development.

### Landscape Setting

Ancient Estate Farmlands form the upper slopes and wider plateau of the Shotley Peninsula, while the Rolling Estate Farmlands form the north facing valley sides to the Belstead Brook. Both are of relevance to the setting of Belstead village. Belstead sits around the 40m contour and natural springs are commonly found on the valley sides around the 25-30m contour. The latter are associated with areas of wet woodland at Alder Carr and Spring Wood to the west. On the higher flatter land to the south, the village landscape setting comprises intensive arable farmland in medium scale fields. Nevertheless, the pattern remains intact and reflects pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures. Blocks of ancient semi natural woodland e.g. Wherstead Wood and Old Hall Wood form a treed horizon.

### Village Form and Character

The village has evolved from a dispersed loose grouping of properties, to a more clustered or nucleated form. Nevertheless, the village lacks any clearly defined centre. The pattern of infill development means that the village displays a range of different housing types and ages. Chapel Lane is a back lane to the village which retains a rural character flanked by dwellings (some historic) on one side and a mature hedge on the other.

### Views

The northern side of the village has open elevated views across the Belstead Brook valley towards Ipswich. The nature of development on the opposite valley slopes (including housing and commercial development at Copdock Interchange), has an urbanising effect on the setting of the village. From the southern and western sides of

the village views are onto the flatter plateau farmland where the character is more rural with glimpsed views to the Church and to farm buildings at Blacksmith Corner.

### **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

There is a concentration of listed buildings at Blacksmith Corner and associated with the church and hall. County Wildlife sites occur at Alder Carr while the ancient woodlands to the south are SSSIs. The Belstead Brook was formerly designated a Special Landscape Area.

### **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Belstead sits physically separate from its church and hall and from Blacksmith Corner, although there is inter-visibility between each of these development clusters. The church, in particular, is a local landmark and contributes to local distinctiveness and identity.

### **Scenic Quality and Perception**

The intact arrangement of the church/hall complex and rural buildings at Blacksmith Corner are important features within the setting of Belstead and give rise to a strong sense of identity. The scenic qualities of the northern slopes of Belstead Brook are affected by the visual intrusion of development within Ipswich as well as noise from the A14 which undermines perception of tranquillity.

### **Value and Significance**

- Notable areas of woodland carr/wet pasture on valley slopes and areas of ancient woodland on plateau which are valued for nature conservation and provide structure to the setting of the village.
- Intact collection of historic buildings associated with Belstead Church and Hall and rural buildings at Blacksmith Corner reflecting early dispersed settlement pattern and contributing to sense of place.
- Narrow, sinuous, hedged lanes connect settlement and remain evident on Chapel Lane within Belstead.

### **Sensitivity**

The sensitivity of Belstead centres around its association with the Belstead Brook Valley and historic pattern of dispersed development which is still evident. Its position on the upper valley slopes overlooking Ipswich make it visually sensitive - development on the open upper slopes may have an urbanising effect over a relatively large area. Belstead is also sensitive to development which erodes the separate identity of the village with Blacksmiths Corner and the Church and which creates edges to the village which are abrupt and urban in form. A low density, loose arrangement of dwellings or 'farm complex' on the edge of the settlement would retain rural characteristics of the area and village. The rural lanes are sensitive to widening and loss of hedgerows.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Improve the character of the lanes through the village, reducing urbanising influences, through the reinstatement of hedgerows and non-ornamental tree planting.

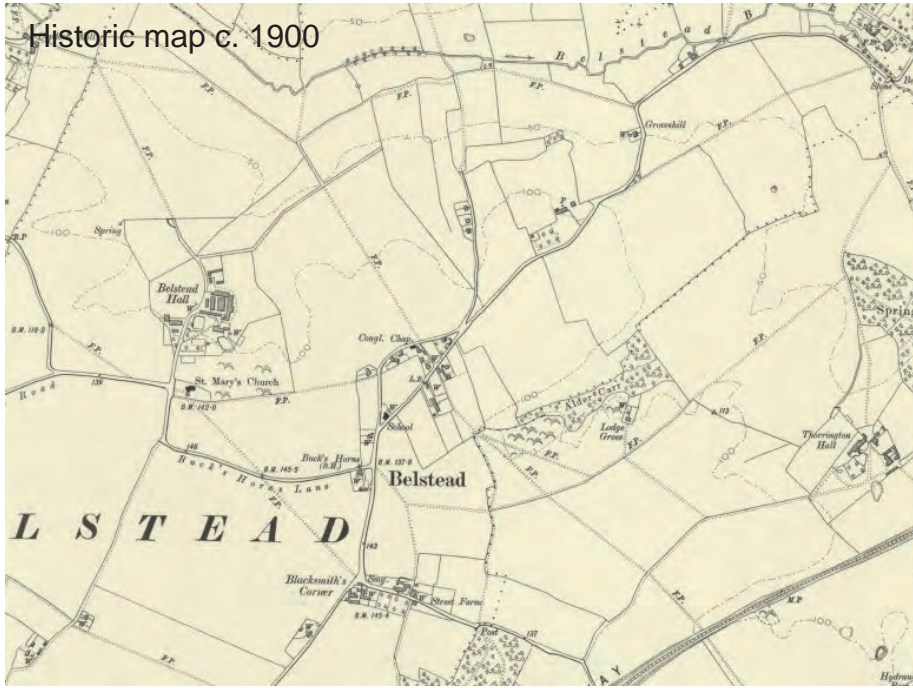
- Soften the edge of the village with new woodland/hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting where new development has created a more visually abrupt edge to the settlement. Retain glimpsed views through to houses.
- Protect open land between development clusters to retain the characteristic and historically intact settlement pattern.
- Avoid development extending into the Belstead Brook where it may appear visually prominent on open slopes.
- Seek opportunities to connect areas of woodland to enhance biodiversity and habitat networks especially on the upper valley slopes, where planting can also reduce urbanising influences in the wider valley.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

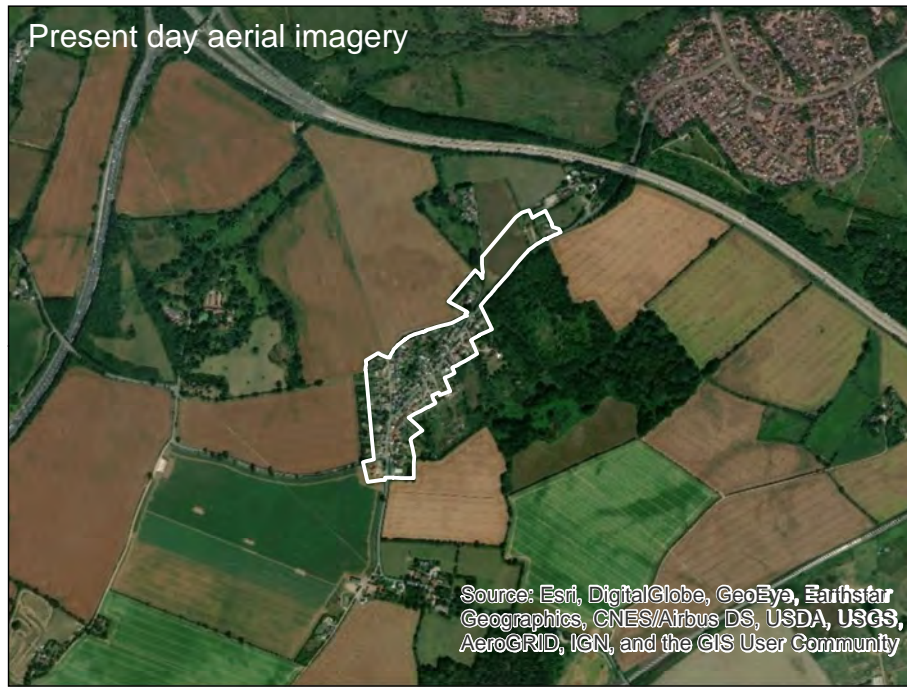
Settlement Sensitivity Assessment, Volume 1: Landscape Fringes of Ipswich, Alison Farmer Associates, July 2018

Babergh Green Infrastructure Study (2012)

Historic map c. 1900



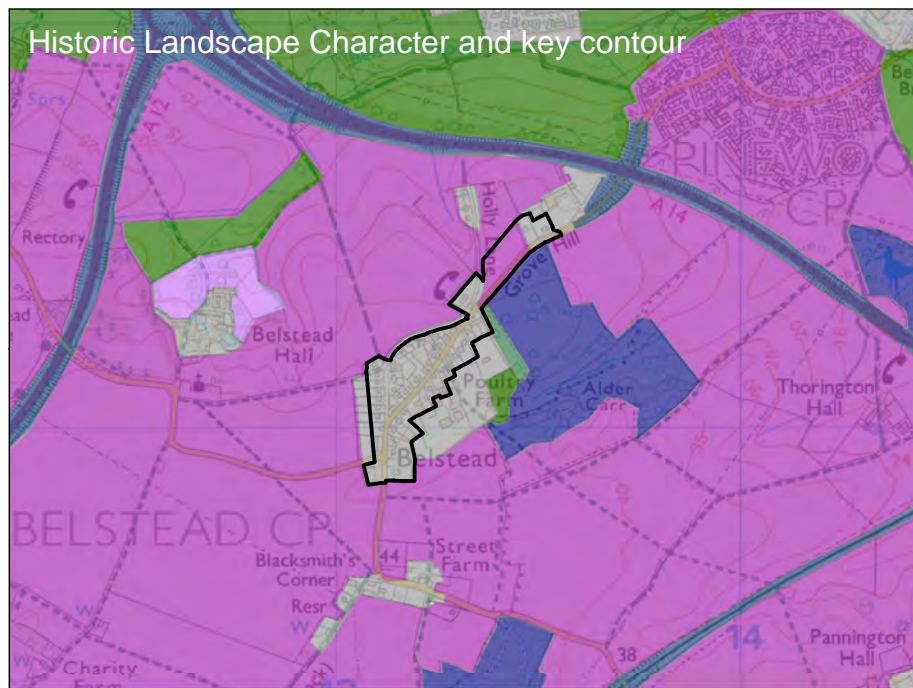
Present day aerial imagery



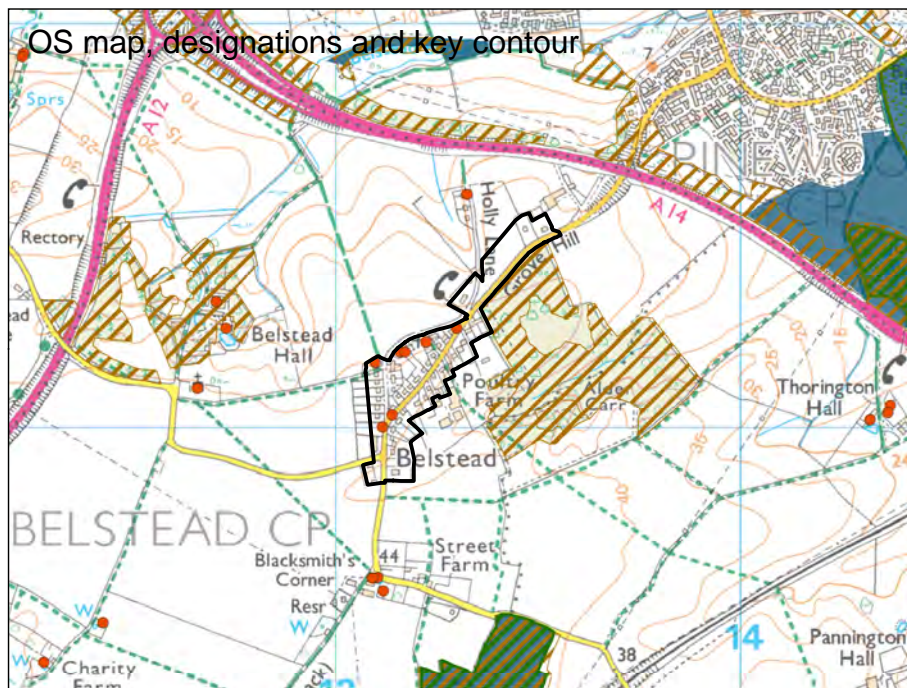
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Belstead

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.3 Bentley

### Location and Topographic Context

Bentley is a rural village located on the higher land above the Samford valley around the 40m contour. The road connecting Capel St Mary's with the A137 passes through the village.

### Historical Development

The early origins of Bentley village are as a dispersed collection of rural dwellings at lane junctions e.g. around the Case Is Altered Public House. The historic place name originally applied to the church hall complex to the north of the current village. When the railway line between Manningtree and Ipswich was introduced to the east, a further cluster of dwellings congregated around the station. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that development focused along Capel and Station Roads through the village, including the introduction of small-scale housing estates accessed off the main road. Over time this has filled in the gaps between dwelling clusters, creating a more nucleated settlement. However, the settlement has no central core but has a number of minor focus points/open spaces e.g. at the Pub and also the War memorial, which form local nodes. The isolated location of the present-day Parish Church and Primary School to the north of the village, is a reminder of the more dispersed origins of the settlement.

### Landscape Setting

The landscape setting comprises the Ancient Estate Claylands and Ancient Estate Farmlands, the latter forming a transitional landscape which slopes towards the Samford valley immediately to the east and south. In this latter landscape there is greater visual interest as minor stream valleys penetrate the wider plateau creating topographic variation and field patterns reflect pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure. The upper slopes of the valley to the south and west of the village support areas of ancient woodland which enclose views, while to the north views are more open across medium scale arable fields. To the south, the pattern of enclosures is smaller scale defining pastures which form an interface between built form and the wider Samford Valley.

### Village Form and Character

The village form reflects its historic origins with an eclectic mix of built development along some of the older lanes and more homogenous housing estates off the main road through the village. The areas around road junctions and around the village pub create focal points within the village which contribute to local identity. Open space penetrates the village in the vicinity of the pub providing an important green corridor into the settlement. Similarly, the small-scale pasture enclosures on the southern side of the village provide an important rural setting.

### Views

The village edges are well vegetated and thus built form is not especially visible from the surrounding landscape. Views out the village are generally possible from the rural lanes especially where they change direction enabling views across open farmland to wooded horizons. Within the setting of the village there are some views across the Samford Valley from the upper valley slopes and edge of plateau.

### **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

Small groups of listed buildings reflect the evolution of the village from a dispersed settlement pattern. Within the immediate setting of the village there are a number of veteran trees, areas of ancient woodland and traditional orchards. The land to the south and west of the village forms part of the proposed extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

### **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Bentley sits physically separate from the cluster of development associated with Bentley Station within the tributary valley of Samford Brook to the east. Bentley also remains distinctly separate from the Parish Church and Hall to the north. Dispersed dwellings, especially to the south of the village (e.g. along Shrub Lane), create a transitional character on the edge of the village.

### **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

The land surrounding Bentley was previously part of the Dodnash Special Landscape Area and to the south of the village the land within the Samford Valley forms part of the proposed extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB reflecting its scenic quality and valued characteristics. The immediate southern fringes of the village form small-scale pastures which are a valued setting to the village.

### **Value and Significance**

- Historic narrow, winding, rural back lanes with an eclectic mix of housing styles within the village.
- Areas of ancient woodland creating wooded horizons and backdrops in the setting of the village.
- Deeply rural, high quality countryside especially to the north of the Parish and in the Samford Valley to the south.
- Mature veteran oaks in hedgerows, along lanes and in remnant parkland add mature character to parts of the village.
- Small scale pastures forming immediate southern fringe to the village.
- Subtle variations in topography on the edge of the settlement reinforce its location on the fringes of the Samford Valley and add interest.
- Soft vegetated edges to village with glimpsed views to properties reinforcing rural character.

### **Sensitivity**

The sensitivity of Bentley is related to its position close to the upper slopes of the Samford Valley. Where the landform starts to dip into the tributary valleys it is often more visually sensitive from the wider landscape. Furthermore, small variations in topography on the fringes of the settlement add to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape setting and are vulnerable to becoming diminished through urban expansion. Areas of open space penetrating the village in the vicinity of the pub are also valued and sensitive to loss, as are the character of the rural back lanes, veteran trees and small-scale pastures to the south.

The extent of uniform housing estates increases sensitivity to further development of this type, which could become defining.

### **Opportunities Checklist**

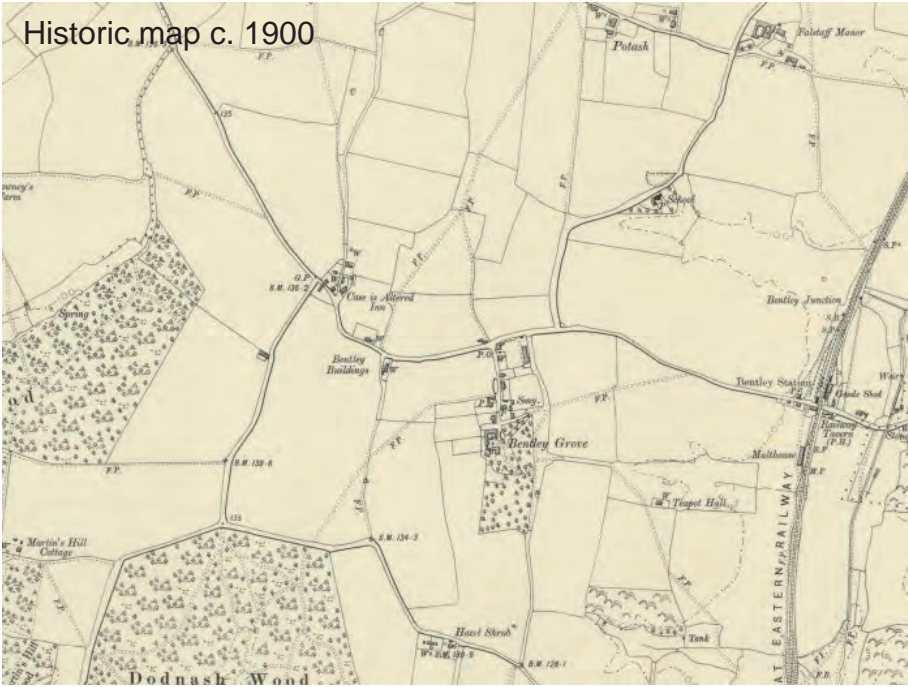
- Seek opportunities to soften existing urban edge at the eastern end of the village through additional planting such as new hedgerow and trees along public rights of way.
- Ensure new development reflects the dispersed and varied vernacular of the existing back lanes that lead off Capel Road.
- Protect the integrity of rural lanes and avoid fragmentation from hedgerow removal and new access routes.
- Seek opportunities to integrate new community orchards on the fringes of the village.
- Seek opportunities to strengthen the gateways into the village through the careful siting of open space and protection of open views to the wider landscape.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

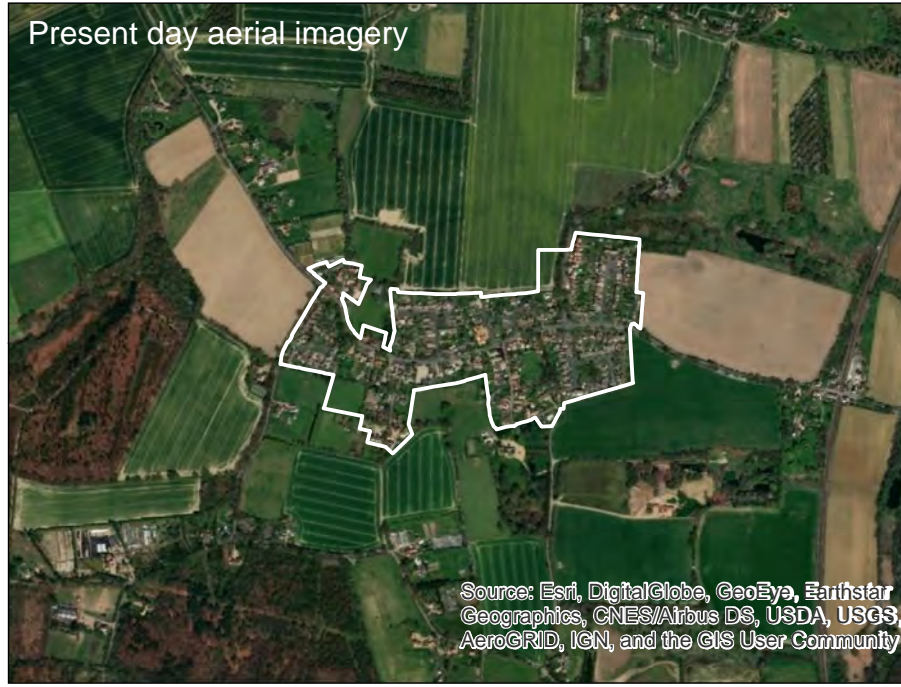
Bentley Parish Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Character Assessment (2019)



Historic map c. 1900



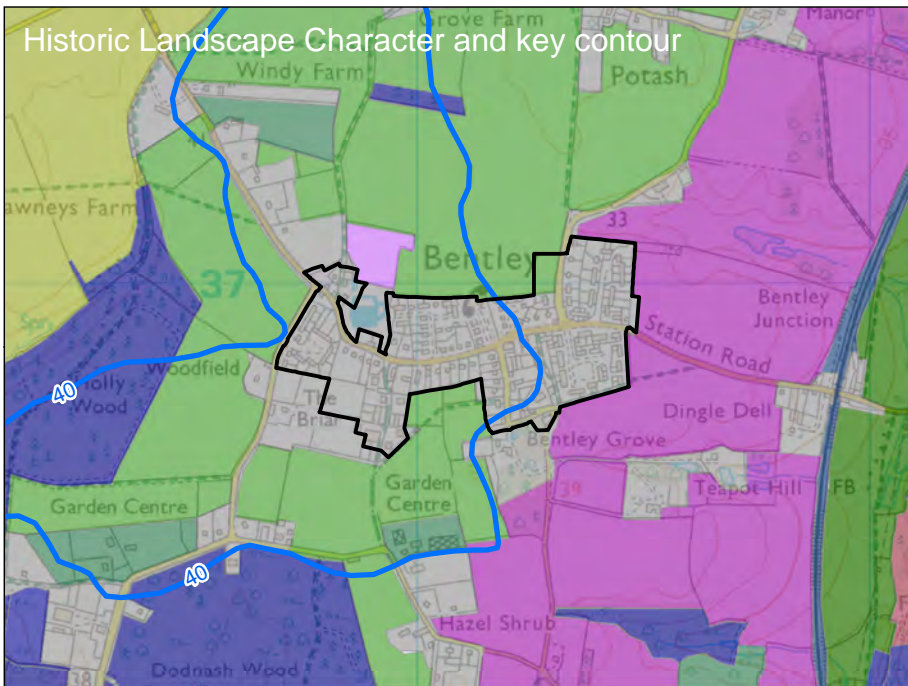
Present day aerial imagery



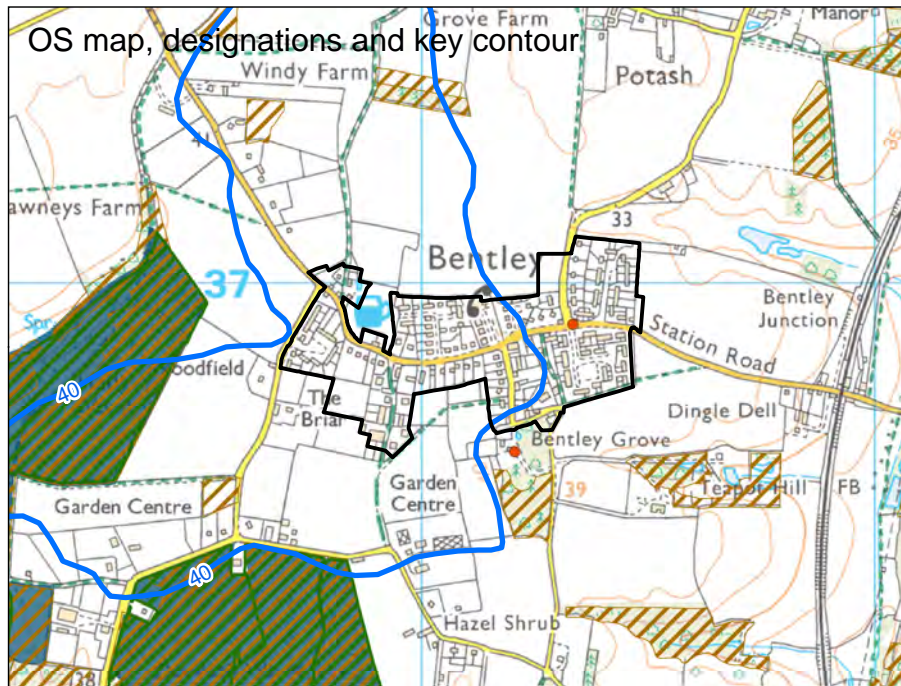
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Bentley

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.4 Chelmondiston

### Location and Topographic Context

Chelmondiston is located on the edge of the Orwell Estuary siting close to the break in slope around the 30m contour. It straddles the B1456 although the majority of the village lies to the north within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

### Historical Development

Chelmondiston established at the junction between the main road and north south routes leading to Pin Mill (to the north), the latter being an historically important landing point for trade on the River Orwell.

At the centre of the village is the church, around which is a distinctive 'square' pattern of lanes, along which development has clustered.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century historic maps indicate that the village had a windmill, smithy and Inn. On the northern part of the village close to the Church was Church Farm. Land to the south of the church remained open and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century comprised allotments. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century new housing established on the western side of the village between Main Road and Church Lane (this route historically connected the church at Chelmondiston with Woolverstone Park). Housing development in this area intensified in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with new roads connecting from Main Road, across Church Lane, and back into the village at Church Road. The result has been the fossilisation of Church Lane as a footpath connection through the housing estates and the increased prominence of modern roads. Some infill development has occurred along the southern side of Main Road and the allotments to the south of the church have also been developed.

### Landscape Setting

The settlement sits within the Ancient Estate Farmlands with the Rolling Estate Farmlands comprising the steeper slopes of the two shallow stream valleys which feed into the Orwell Estuary to the north. Associated with these valleys are small pre 18<sup>th</sup> enclosures supporting pastoral land use. Most of the village falls within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB the boundary of which runs along Main Road.

Both the eastern and western edges of the village comprise a number of historic farms complexes e.g. Walnut Tree Farm/Mill Farm and White House Farm/The Highlands giving rise to a transitional approach to the settlement and rural character. The western fringes of the village are also influenced by the parkland character of Woolverstone Park which lies adjacent.

### Village Form and Character

Where dwellings have occurred on the northern side of the village, close to the break in slope, they appear prominent on the skyline. Similarly, linear development along Main Road, which is exposed to open arable fields to the south, is visible over considerable distances.

Within the settlement the mature trees associated with The Grange at the junction of Main Road and Pin Mill Road are visually prominent. In combination with the small cottages they form a distinctive node within the village.

## Views

The church is a landmark building in the settlement with a relatively squat square tower. Although situated on the break in slope above the Orwell Estuary it is often not visible in the landscape due to intervening vegetation. There are some views up the valley slopes where the church and Church Farm are seen together on the upper slopes with a foreground of open farmland/pasture. In these views the buildings and their landscape setting form an attractive composition and reinforce the historic association of the village with the Orwell and Pin Mill.

Slight changes in the orientation of the Main Road enable views to key spaces and buildings including the Red Lion Pub and holme oaks at The Grange.

## Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

Listed buildings within the village include those associated with Hill Farm, Mill Farm and properties on Richardsons Lane. There are a number of buildings in the village which are also historic and contribute to local character but are not listed.

The network of historic lanes supports diverse hedgerows, and species grass rich verges as well as a number of veteran trees.

## Relationship to Adjacent Settlements

The village lies in relatively close proximity to Woolverstone but is separated from it by open agricultural land and Woolverstone Park. The village also lies close to individual farms which retain a degree of separation from the village due to important gaps in the built form. As a result, these farm complexes and the open farmland form a gradual and transitional approach to the village.

## Scenic Quality and Perceptions

The church coupled with the rural lane network is a special quality of Chelmondiston and helps to give it a central focus. The rural farm buildings on the outskirts of the village and associated pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures help retain a rural character to the settlement despite recent housing growth.

## Value and Significance

- Historic back lanes and fossilized routes within the village.
- Open pastoral slopes to the north which form a setting to the church and reinforce the village's location on the small stream valley that leads to Pin Mill.
- Transitional approach to the village along Main Road created by the farms and landscape gaps.
- Relatively nucleated form of settlement around the church which is rare in the context of settlements on the Shotley Peninsula.

## Sensitivity

The land to the north of the village is sensitive due to falling landform towards the Orwell Estuary making it visually sensitive. It also performs an important function as a setting to the church and Church Farm and to the Conservation Area at Pin Mill and lies within the AONB.

The eastern and western sides of the village are also sensitive due to the isolated farms which are characteristic and transitional nature of development on approaching the village.

To the south landscape sensitivity relates to the open character of the plateau farmland. Nevertheless, this landscape does contain small blocks of woodland which can help define a wooded skyline and setting to the village, and filter views to the built edge.

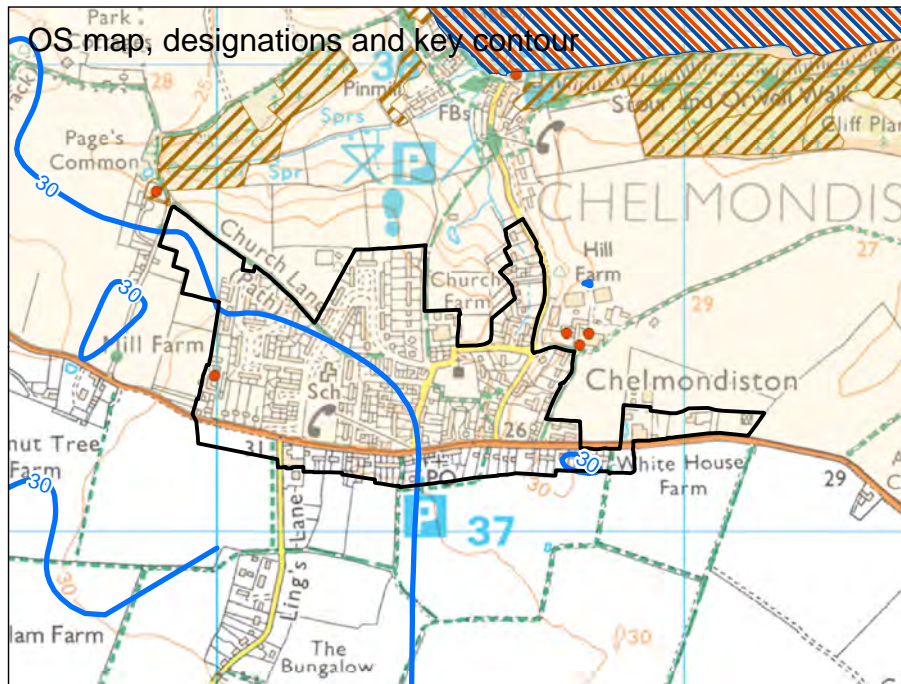
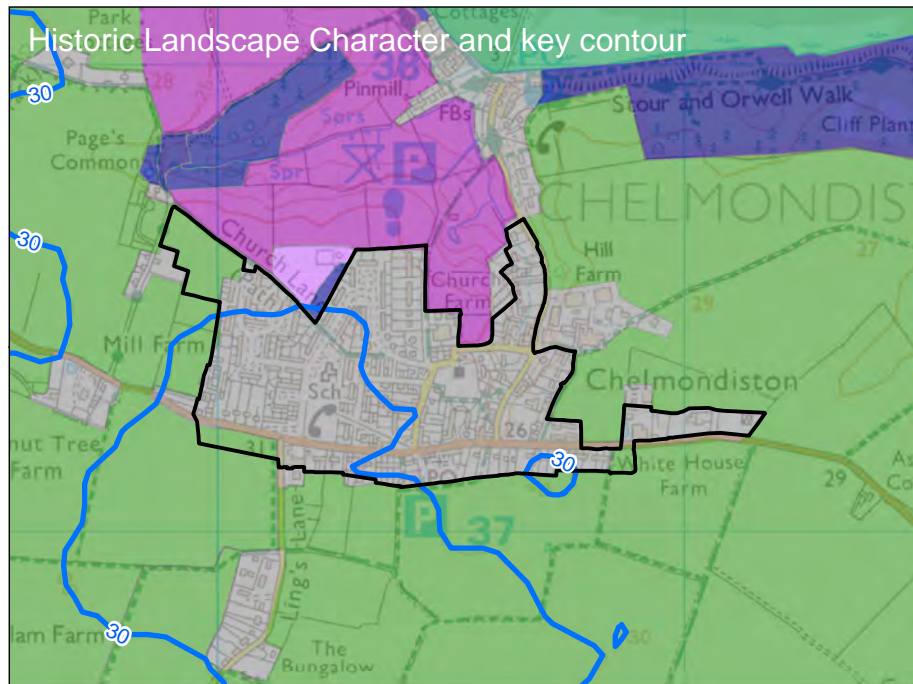
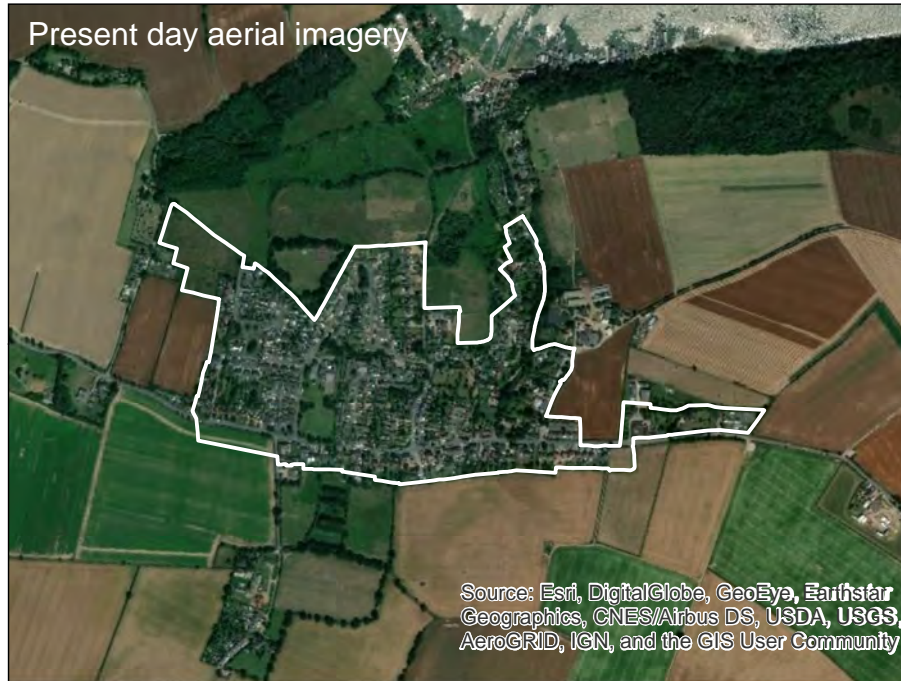
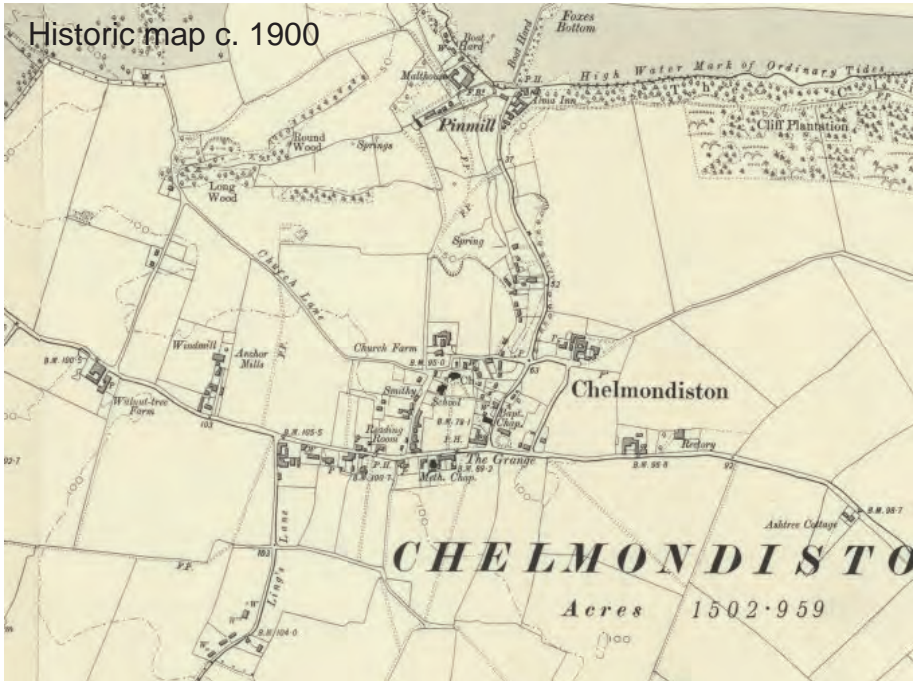
### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Protect the urban form of Chelmondiston including the focus around the church, distinct pattern of lanes within the village and avoid linear development which extends the village along Main Road.
- Plant new hedgerows and woodland copses on the southern side of the village to create a soft and well landscaped setting and connect into areas of existing woodland.
- Seek opportunities to open up views to the church reinforcing sense of identity.
- Protect northern fringes of the settlement which are valued for their heritage assets and pastoral setting – where new development is proposed ensure it is associated with new woodland copses to soften built edges and reinforce local landscape character.
- Protect open spaces and breaks in building line along Main Road which add interest and variety including the green at the junction with Woodlands, the open space in front of the shops and at the pub.
- Seek opportunities to enhance existing streets in housing estates which lack a distinctive character through planting of non-ornamental trees and management of open spaces for nature conservation.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

Pin Mill Conservation Area Statement.

Settlement Assessment:  
Chelmondiston



## 4.5 Holbrook

### Location and Topographic Context

Holbrook is closely associated with Holbrook Stream tributary valley to the Stour Estuary. Set back from the northern shores of the estuary, the village sits on the upper northern slopes of the valley with land sloping away to the west, south and east. The majority of the settlement sits above the 25m contour but below the 30m contour. To the south of the valley, sits the Royal Hospital School which has a distinct and separate character to the main village. To the south and west of the village is the AONB.

### Historical Development

Originally the settlement of Holbrook comprised a hall (Holbrook Hall – demolished in 1928) and church complex centred around Holbrook Stream valley and a dispersed pattern of rural cottages and farms along the main routes north of the valley. However, over the centuries infill development has created a pattern of linear development along the main roads.

The parkland landscape to the east, at Holbrook Gardens, is an extensive post-medieval landscape which contains lakes, fishponds and extensive tree cover on the valley slopes. Maps from the 19<sup>th</sup> century show that the valley sides were used to create extensive areas of designed garden (Holbrook Gardens) associated with Park House on the eastern side the village and a separate area of parkland associated with Holbrook House on the southern valley slopes. There was also an area of parkland in the triangular area between Ipswich Road and The Street, associated with the Rectory (now within the main body of the settlement).

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new road connection between The Street and Hyams Lane (Heathfield Road) was created and new housing developed along the route. Infill housing was constructed along Church Hill and also to the north of the main village along Ipswich Road onto the higher flatter farmland. By the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century new estate housing was constructed off Heathfield Road to the north and south and a further link road established between Heathfield Road and The Street. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century further housing development has established in the north of the village, off Ipswich Road (Abbot Way).

### Landscape Setting

The settlement sits on the higher land above the Holbrook Stream valley, on the Ancient Estate Farmlands, which extend across the Shotley Peninsula. Above the 30m contour the Ancient Estate Farmlands become open, comprising a flatter plateau. Below this, landform is gently sloping becoming steep around the 20m contour and dropping into the valley. The steeper slopes of the river valley comprise Rolling Estate Farmlands with Valley Meadowlands along the distinctive narrow valley floor.

The majority of the enclosure pattern surrounding the settlement consists of 18<sup>th</sup> century or later enclosures from former common arable or heathland. On the steeper slopes to the south of the village the enclosure pattern is smaller reflecting random fields which are pre 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Land to the west of the village has historically formed part of the Dodnash Special Landscape Area and the southern fringes of the village, where the land drops into the valley, form part of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

## **Village Form and Character**

The form of Holbrook reflects its historical development along the main routes which extended to the river crossing to the south. The core is located along The Street where there is a higher concentration of older buildings and cottages. The older parts of the village have a treed character which contrasts with the more recent housing estates.

## **Views**

Key landmark buildings include the 14<sup>th</sup> century Church located on higher land overlooking the valley and the 19<sup>th</sup> century watermill which is located within the valley next to the river.

On the southern fringes of the village there are elevated views across the Holbrook Stream valley, as the land dips into the steeper valley slopes.

There is inter-visibility between key landmark buildings and across the valley landscape, including between the church and mill, and church and Holbrook Gardens.

## **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

The village contains a number of listed buildings reflecting its origins as a dispersed linear settlement along the roads. To the south and west is the SC&H AONB and Holbrook Gardens which are a County Wildlife Site comprising important habitat mosaic. To the west are notable areas of ancient woodland with distinct stands of former coppiced hazel.

## **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Holbrook Village has a strong connection with Holbrook Royal Hospital School to the south although physically and perceptually they are quite distinct. To the north, and separated by an area of open plateau farmland, is Woolverstone Estate Village.

Historic farm complexes on the periphery of Holbrook are characteristic to the west of the village.

## **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

Holbrook has a high quality landscape setting, reflected in the AONB designation to the south and east, and the former Dodnash Special Landscape Area to the west. The evolution of the village means that it lacks a distinct centre or recognisable/legible form. Nevertheless, its association with the surrounding valley landscape contributes strongly to its sense of place.

## **Value and Significance**

- Strong historic connections to the landscape including the river valley and its tributaries and designed parkland.
- Key landmark buildings which sit and relate strongly to the surrounding landscape e.g. church and mill.
- High quality landscape setting to south and east reflected in AONB boundary.
- High quality landscape to the west comprising undulating topography, woodland/scrub, narrow rural lanes, historic farmsteads, parkland remnants and pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures.

## **Sensitivity**

Holbrook is sensitive to development which extends up onto the more open and flatter plateau farmland to the north. Development here would alter perceptions of the village located on the upper slopes surrounding the river valley and would be visually prominent over significant distances without appropriate mitigation.

Land to the east of the village is sensitive due to elevation and also as a setting to Holbrook Gardens. The land to the south is visually sensitive and forms a setting to the AONB and reinforces the connection of the village with the river valley; it therefore has a particular value in terms of local distinctiveness.

Land to the northwest is less sensitive, although here there are valued heritage assets and the pattern of smaller enclosures forms a transitional edge and setting to the village. The narrow rural lanes in this area also contribute to the historic character of the village.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Improve streetscape in housing estates – create distinctive streets with individual identity especially the link roads of Heathfield Road and Reeds Road through avenue planting using non-ornamental scale trees.
- Restoration of designed landscape features including tree avenues, parkland and waterbodies.
- Improved northern edge and gateway into the settlement which has been undermined by 20/21<sup>st</sup> century development through the planting of new hedgerows and areas of woodland, reducing inter-visibility with Woolverstone.
- Creation of new smaller field enclosures on the northern side of Woodlands Road to create a transitional edge to the settlement

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

Holbrook Parish Neighbourhood Plan – Site Options Assessment, Aecom, Dec 2019.

Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment for Babergh and Mid Suffolk, Place Services.



Settlement Assessment:  
Holbrook

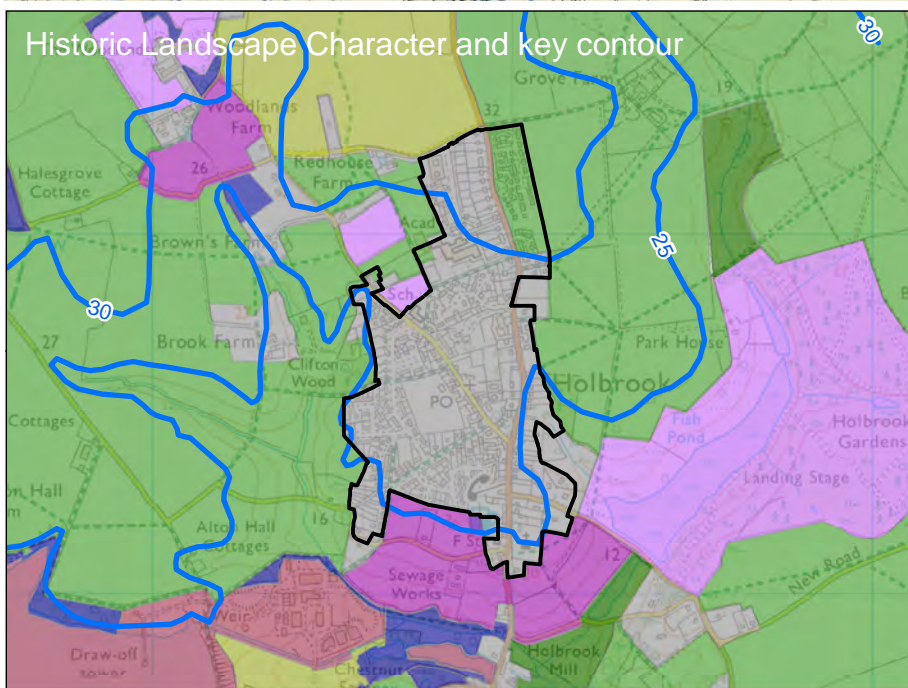
Historic map c. 1900



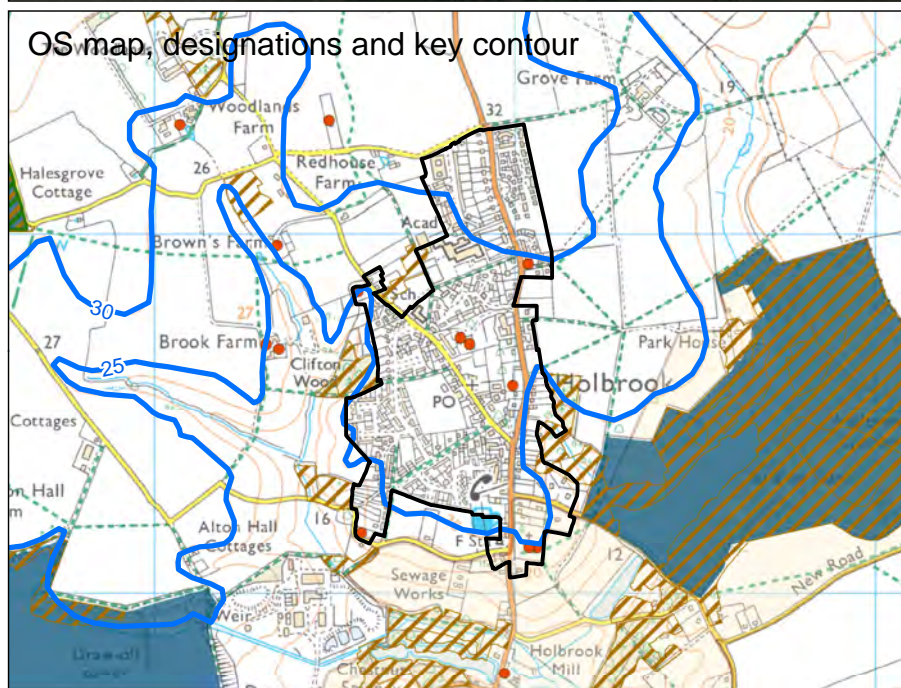
Present day aerial imagery



Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.6 Stutton

### Location and Topographic Context

Stutton village sits on the junction between the upper valley slopes of the Stour Estuary and elevated plateau farmland which forms a distinct area of higher land around 30m AOD. fringed by river valley systems including the Stour to the South, Alton Water to the north and Samford Valley to the west. The majority of the settlement extends along the main road – B1080 between Holbrook Royal Hospital School and the Samford Valley, development south of the B1080 falling within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

### Historical Development

Stutton was mentioned in Domesday as Stuttuna meaning homestead on a hill and consisted of a church and several manors. In the Medieval period there is evidence of the church, Stutton Hall, and Crow Hall. Maps from the 19<sup>th</sup> century show a loose pattern of dwellings along the main road (B1080) forming Upper Street and also dwellings to the north of Crow Hall along Church Lane forming Lower Street. The church, located further to the east, remained isolated from these clusters. Historic maps also show a number of orchards associated with dwellings and a network of small rural lanes, the junction between Church Lane, the B1080 and Alton Hall Lane, forming an important ‘dog-leg’ crossroads.

In the post war period, a number of new houses were built to the east of the village, along the B1080, but also between Church Lane and the main road e.g. Stutton Close. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century additional housing was constructed to the north of the B1080 (e.g. Catsfield and Lakesfield Road) and along Church Lane. In more recent years there has been infill development along Church Lane and the B1080.

### Landscape Setting

Stutton sits between the Stour Estuary and Alton Water with the Samford Valley to the west. Located within the Plateau Estate Farmlands it is surrounded by a predominately arable landscape of medium scale fields reflecting pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures and notable stands of woodland. Below the 30m contour the topography starts to fall away towards the Stour Estuary, Alton Water or Samford Valley. The woodland associated with Stutton Hall to the west forms a strongly vegetated western extent to the village.

### Village Form and Character

The village has an unusual form, reflecting its early origins. Loose development along the main routes historically established two distinct areas - Upper Street and Lower Street. More recent housing estate development has concentrated in the east during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Gaps in the built form along the B1080 provide views out to the wider landscape reinforcing the linear form of the village and its rural character. This is particularly the case between the Methodist Chapel and Bentley Road. Here the juxtaposition of the Methodist Church and 3 Manningtree Road contributes to local distinctiveness. Similarly, the rural character of lanes through the village e.g. Church Lane and Bentley Lane afford a rural, leafy character with strong time-depth that contrasts sharply with more recent housing estate roads e.g. Catefield.

## **Views**

There are important views from the upper valley slopes across the Stour Estuary, especially around the church.

Views out from the B1080 to the wider countryside are important in reinforcing the rural character of the village and perceptions of its rural origins. These gaps also create distinctive spaces within the village.

Bends in the B1080 channel views to key buildings or open spaces/trees which reinforce sense of place.

## **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

There are distinct clusters of listed buildings along Church Lane and around the church, with a more dispersed pattern along the B1080. Within the setting of the village there are notable areas of designed parkland.

## **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Stutton remains distinctly separate from Holbrook Royal Hospital School, even though Stutton church lies in relatively close proximity to the school.

## **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

The scenic qualities of this settlement derive from its historic buildings, parkland landscapes, valley slopes with views across the Stour Estuary as well as from its rural leafy lanes. The church is also associated with George Frost, a 19<sup>th</sup> century artist who sketched Stutton Church from Stutton Green.

## **Value and Significance**

- Views out of the village to the wider landscape setting due to gaps between buildings along the B1080, reinforcing rural character.
- Rural leafy character of lanes leading off the B1080 frequently defined by mature hedgerows and narrow grass verges.
- Close association of the village with parklands and estates on the valley slopes of the Stour to the south.

## **Sensitivity**

The sensitivity of Stutton relates to its high quality landscape setting to the south and rural qualities of the village derived from its narrow lanes, historic buildings and notable areas of distinctive open space. The land to the south of the B1080 falls within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB and is sensitive to development which appears prominent from within the wider Stour Estuary. The settlement is also sensitive to development which causes a loss of the open gaps in the built form, especially where visual and physical connections with the wider landscape may be lost.

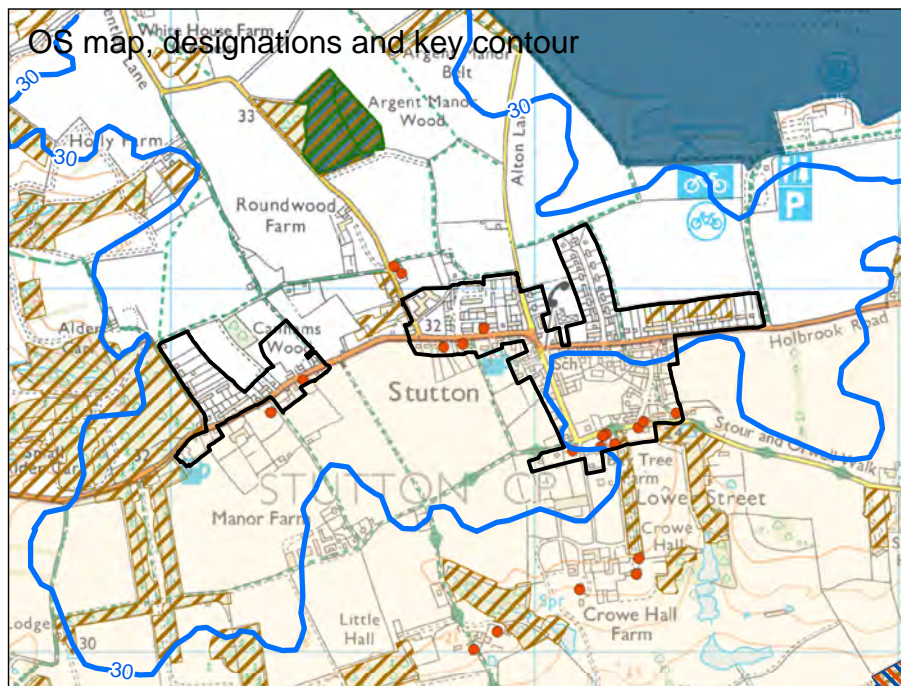
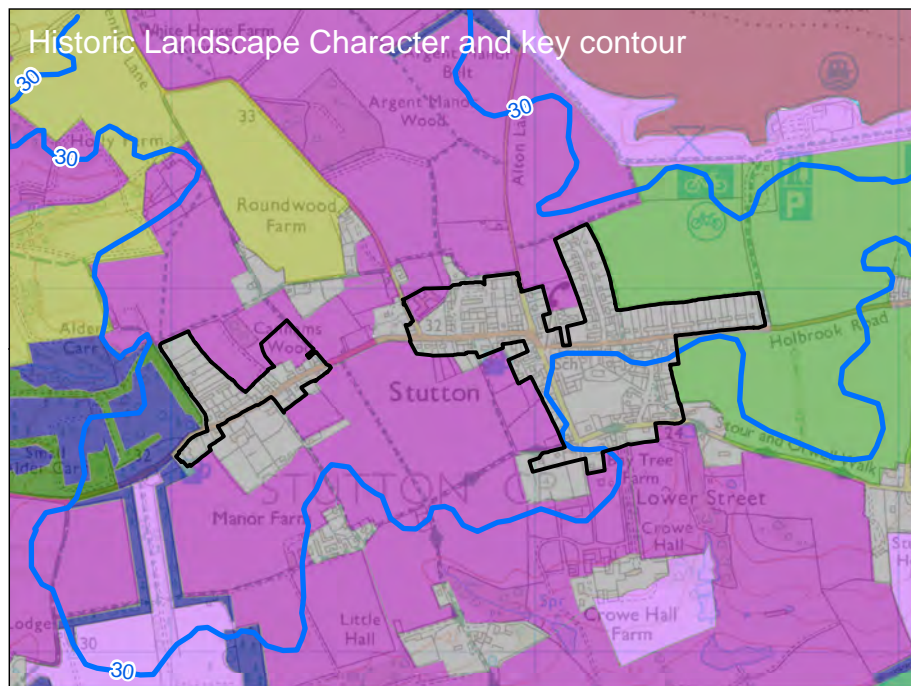
## **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Protect and retain gaps between buildings especially between the Methodist Chapel and Bentley Lane.

- Avoid the urbanisation of the rural lanes as a result of multiple access to individual dwellings, and or alterations to native hedgerows through changes to property curtilage.
- Retain the physical gap between the village and Holbrook and the Church.
- Seek opportunities to increase woodland planting on the margins of the settlement above the 30m contour where this may screen views of existing housing e.g. at Larksfield Road
- Avoid development to the south of the B1080 where it is visually prominent within the AONB.

**Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

Neighbourhood Plan Documents (when available).



## 4.7 Shotley

### Location and Topographic Context

The majority of the settlement is located on elevated land above the 25m contour on a relatively narrow plateau which starts to drop into the estuary landscapes to the north, east and south. Where the urban edge sits close to the 25m contour it is more visually prominent e.g. southeast corner of Rose Close and northern edge of Orwell View Road. Immediately to the southwest and to the east of the settlement is the AONB, associated with the Stour and Orwell Estuaries.

### Historical Development

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Shotley was known as Shotley Street and formed a linear development comprising cottages, farms an inn and smithy along the main road (The Street) between two roads which enter from the north. The settlement sat between Erwarton Hall to the west and Over/Nether Hall to the east. New housing estates were added to the south side of The Street post war, creating a more nucleated settlement form. Further development in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has occurred to the north east of The Street. Within the centre of the village terraced cottages and semi-detached dwellings, with well defined hedged gardens, contribute a strong sense of place and unity.

### Landscape Setting

Shotley sits on the higher and flatter plateau of Ancient Estate Farmlands the field patterns reflecting 18<sup>th</sup> century or later enclosure. The landscape is predominately open with few trees, affording long distant views and wide skies from the edges of the settlement.

### Village Form and Character

The form of Shotley has altered with the introduction of large housing estates, so much so that this type of development now dominates its character. Nevertheless, the pattern of linear development along the road remains strong and areas of open space within the settlement are important. The Street has a gently curving geometry which enables vistas to key buildings and open spaces.

The low-rise built form and surrounding landscape has a strong horizontal character, so much so, the landscape tends to flow into the settlement. Many of the streets are weakly defined and open spaces are simple and uniform, with overhead wires creating visual clutter in places. Other urbanising influences on the street scene include close board fencing and areas of tarmac for car parking.

### Views

There are key views looking east along The Street at the edge of the settlement from where there are views to a slither of water within the Orwell Estuary.

At the western end of the village there are open views across the plateau. There are also views out of the settlement between buildings looking south along Orwell View Road.

## Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

Rose Farm, and its associated farm buildings and smaller scale pastures, form an intact group in a rural setting on the eastern fringes of the village.

Ancient woodland at Oldhall Grove to the northeast and Kiln Queach to the south sit within the slight folds of the landform as it slopes towards the estuaries.

## Relationship to Adjacent Settlements

Shotley sits in close proximity to hall/farm complexes (Erwarton and Nether/Over Halls) but retains a sense of separation from them. Shotley village is physically distinct from Shotley Gate.

## Scenic Quality and Perceptions

Scenic qualities come from Shotley's elevated location and wide views across the plateau or to the hint of the estuaries beyond. The setting of the village has an exposed, elevated character. The village green and mature oak at the western end of the village and Rose Farm and its rural setting in the east, are distinctive elements of the settlement. Along the main street, between The Rose Pub and village shop, are historic cottages and a notable Victorian terrace which contribute positively to the street scene.

## Value and Significance

- Rural plateau settlement – linear character still evident at the western end
- Well clipped hedged front gardens along Kingsland create a strong unified street scene.
- Rose Farm reflects the agricultural origins of the settlement and retains its setting of small-scale paddocks.

## Sensitivity

Shotley is sensitive due to its open and exposed landscape setting and elevation on the upper slopes of the estuaries which surround it on three sides. New development can create abrupt urban edges which are poorly integrated. Village edges are sensitive to mitigation planting which comprise linear shelter belts as these can create visually harsh lines and are uncharacteristic. The settlement is sensitive to development which blocks valued views, especially where these views are to the estuaries. The settlement is sensitive to further sub-urban housing estate development. Current issues with parking, open space management, curtilage treatment and street clutter undermines the character of the settlement.

## Conserving Special Qualities

- Creation of more varied open spaces and character within the village through re-design of parking areas and new grassland management regimes which seek to deliver enhanced biodiversity and visual variation.
- Definition of stronger street scene through variations in landscape management and planting of new street trees at key locations to emphasise and frame views to landmark buildings and open spaces.
- Screening of urban edges where they are abrupt through wider environmental improvements such as new native hedgerow planting

- Planting of hedgerows to improve streetscape and screen/remove close board fencing.
- Creation of new woodland on southern side of the village to enhance landscape setting, improve the landscape context of the Stour and Orwell Walk, and link areas of ancient woodland.
- Opportunity to create stronger recreational links and landscape enhancement between Shotley, Shotley Gate and the Stour and Orwell Walk.

**Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

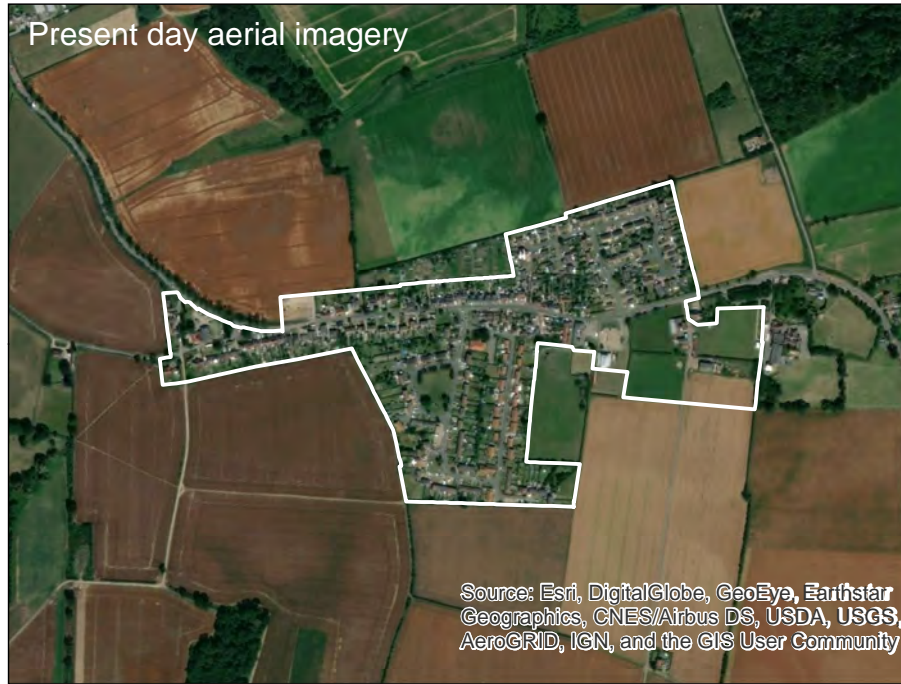
Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Landscape Character Assessment.



Historic map c. 1900



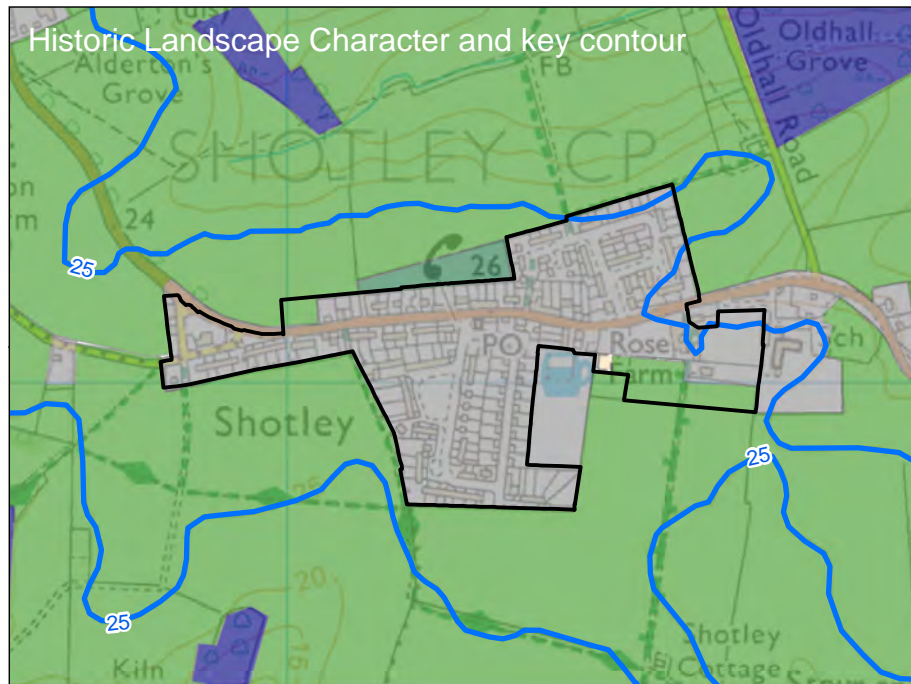
Present day aerial imagery



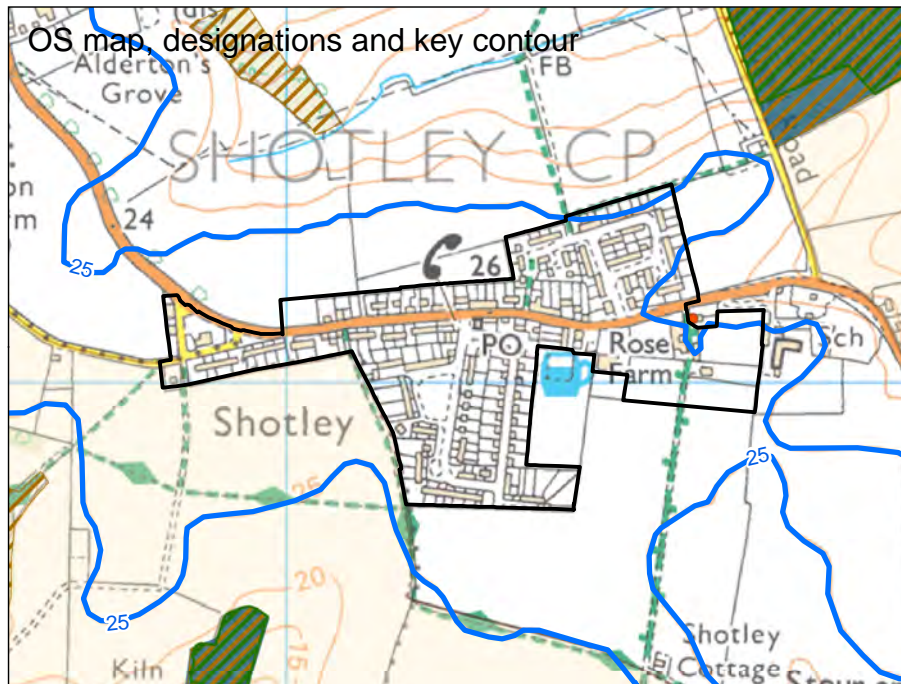
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Shotley

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.8 Tattingstone

### Location and Topographic Context

Tattingstone is a small hamlet located on elevated land around the 35m contour overlooking the Alton Water reservoir. The topography and sinuous edges of the reservoir mean that Tattingstone is flanked by the gentle sloping valley sides to the north, east and south.

### Historical Development

Tattingstone Hall was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. On early OS maps it sits within the river valley and is likely to have been a medieval moated site. The church at Tattingstone also dates from around 1250 indicating that the origins of Tattingstone may have been as a hall/church complex.

Historic maps from the 19<sup>th</sup> century show an extensive area of parkland had established associated with Tattingstone Place which was located on the valley slopes. The parkland extended across the valley floor on to both side of the valley slopes. The church is shown located on higher land to the west, surrounded by a 'square' of lanes around which clustered a loose arrangement of dwellings. A workhouse was established on the northern side of the village in 1766, the building remains extant and has been redeveloped for housing. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century new houses were developed along the lane to the west of the church (Green Lane) and in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a small housing estate was added along The Close to the northeast of the village and The Glebe to the west. There has also been some small-scale infill housing but otherwise the form of the village has altered little. The most significant change affecting the village came in the 1960's when the valley was flooded to create Alton Reservoir. This resulted in a loss of Tattingstone Hall moated site and farm and the severance of the parkland associated with Tattingstone Place.

### Landscape Setting

Tattingstone sits with the Ancient Estate Farmlands landscape type, which is characterised as elevated, relatively flat farmland above the 35m contour comprising pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures and areas of post 1950's boundary loss. The valley slopes to the north, east and south, comprise Rolling Valley farmlands which slope gently from the 35m contour to the edge of Alton Water. Remnants of the parkland associated with Tattingstone Place are still evident to the south east of the village. Planting associated with the margins of the reservoir has resulted in a strongly vegetated landscape to the east which contrasts with the more open arable farmland character to the west.

### Village Form and Character

The character and form of the village has altered little, with only small-scale housing estates added in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, this development and infill development has resulted in an eclectic mix of housing styles and an organic feel to the village. Its form around the 'square' of lanes which surround the church, is still evident, and the open space to the south of the Church is a valued asset. The right-angled bends in the lanes afford views to key buildings and vistas to the surrounding countryside. There are a number of key buildings within the village that make a significant contribution to the character of the settlement including the workhouse, church, Tattingstone Place, Lodge Cottages at the corner of Church Road, and the Rectory.

## Views

Views which have a historical value include those between Tattingsstone Place and Tattingsstone Wonder (a church folly built in about 1790 and to be viewed from Tattingsstone Place).

Constable is known to have visited Tattingsstone. He made four sketches of St Mary's Church in his sketchbooks as seen from the south east. Although the exact location of his sketches is unknown it is likely to have been within the grounds of Tattingsstone Place looking across the fields.

There are also views of the church from the opposite valley sides of Alton Water e.g. from Coxhall Lane.

## Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

Alton water is valued for its birdlife and is designated a County Wildlife Site for its habitat mosaics and is a County Wildlife Site.

There is a small area of remnant lowland heath habitat to the northeast of the village on the edge of Alton Water.

Although Tattingsstone is not a Conservation Area, the collection of listed buildings within the village make a positive contribution to street scenes and overall sense of place.

## Relationship to Adjacent Settlements

Tattingsstone is associated with Tattingsstone White Horse to the north on the other side of Alton Water and to Tattingsstone Heath which is located along the A135 to the west. All three settlements, or clusters of development, are physically separate and retain a sense of individual identity.

## Scenic Quality and Perceptions

Tattingsstone has a strong sense of history and although Alton Water has resulted in significant change to the setting, the time depth imparted by narrow sinuous lanes, key buildings, remnant parkland trees and views is apparent. The village has a strongly rural character centred around the church.

## Value and Significance

- Collection of varied historic buildings that express the historical development of the village over time.
- Intact pattern of rural leafy historic lanes and road layout within the village.
- Central focus of the village around the church and associated open space; the importance of the church in key views within the village and from surrounding landscape, including those associated with Constable
- High quality landscape setting derived from valley slopes and areas of remnant parkland.

## Sensitivity

Tattingsstone is sensitive to development which extends onto the upper slopes of the valley where it is likely to be visually prominent from the wider valley slopes to the east. It is also

sensitive to development which extends onto the wider farmed plateau where it may undermine perceptions of development clustered around the church.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Open up and retain views to local landmarks such as Tattingstone Church/Tattingstone Wonder and Tattingstone Place through management of vegetation.
- Seek to retain remnant parkland character associated with Tattingstone Place through management of veteran trees and planting of new trees to be future veterans.
- Avoid development on the eastern side of the village where it may impinge on the remnant parkland landscape or be visible from opposite valley slopes.
- Conserve the distinctive character and form of narrow rural lanes through the village. Avoid development which alters the hierarchy and pattern of these routes.
- Avoid the domestication of rural lanes through the village due to introduction of urban curtilage treatment and loss of hedgerows.
- Retain the central open space associated with the church which forms part of its setting and makes an important contribution to the form and character of the village.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

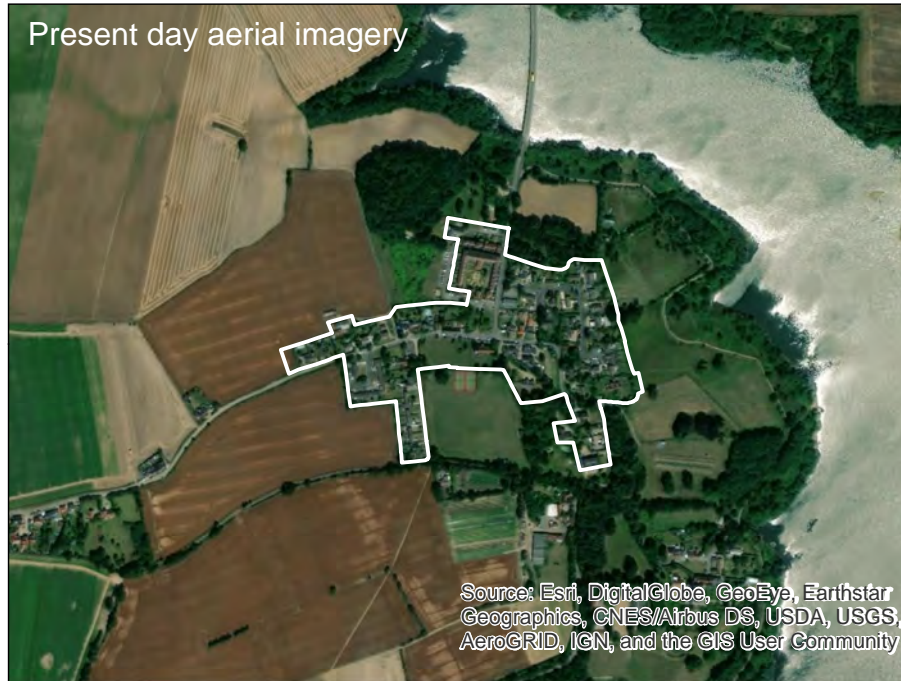
Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Boundary Variation Project, Natural Beauty Assessment, Sept 2017, Natural England.

Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Landscape Character Assessment, 2012, Alison Farmer Associates.

Historic map c. 1900



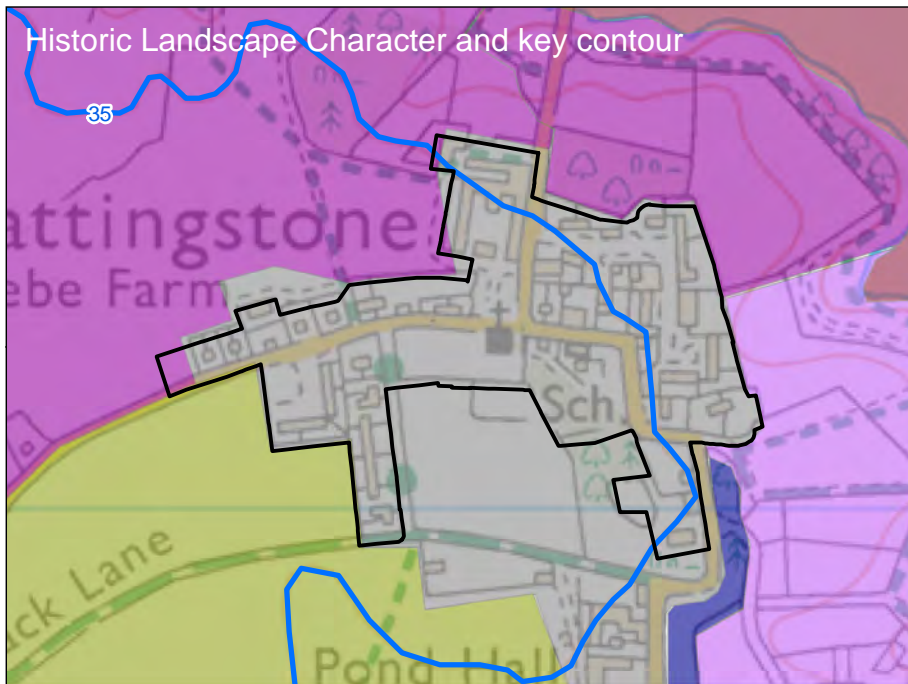
Present day aerial imagery



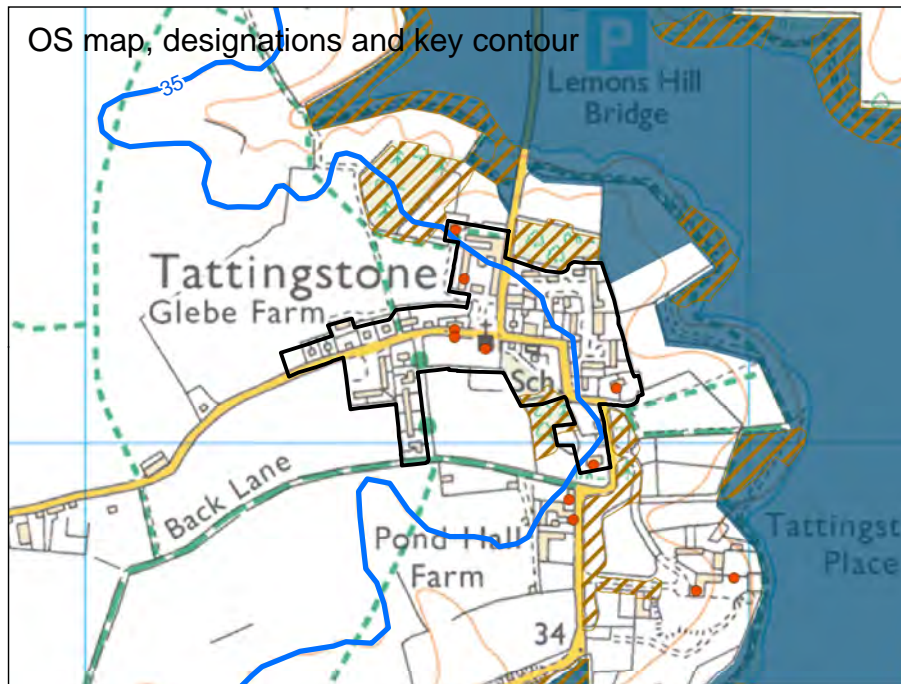
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Tattingsstone

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.9 Woolverstone

### Location and Topographic Context

Woolverstone is located c. 1.5km from Holbrook and c.3km from Ipswich and straddles the B1456 which forms the main street. It is located at the junction between the Orwell Estuary and wider Shotley plateau farmland.

### Historical Development

Woolverstone was known to exist as a village in Anglo Saxon times when Viking raiding parties are known to have travelled up the Orwell. However, Woolverstone's history has largely been shaped by the ownership and development of Woolverstone Hall, the seat of the Berners family from 1773 to 1937.

Historic maps dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century show the large extent of parkland landscape on the valley slopes overlooking the Orwell Estuary. The hall and church were located centrally within the park with a small cluster of development at the entrance to the park and dispersed along the main road including Widows Homes, Bernes Hall (reading room) and estate cottages.

In the later 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been some small patches of infill housing development compromising individual dwellings along the main road. Otherwise the village form and character has changed little over the years.

### Landscape Setting

The boundary of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB runs down the northern side of main street resulting in the northern half of the village falling within the designation and the southern half outside.

The landscape surrounding the village comprises the Ancient Estate Farmlands landscape type. North of the main road the land starts to slope towards the Orwell Estuary and has a strong parkland character associated with Woolverstone Hall.

Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the field pattern beyond the parkland area as 18<sup>th</sup> century and later enclosure from former common arable or heathland. Field shapes are frequently rectangular with straight boundaries. Woodland on the wider farmland plateau to the south forms wooded skylines, and gives structure to the landscape.

### Village Form and Character

Many of the village properties exhibit a strong 'estate' character sharing similar detailing and style, and exhibit a sense of order, often appearing carefully placed. The gaps between dwellings are an important characteristic of the village.

Today the village retains a strong estate character and is predominately linear in form with a concentration of buildings to the east adjacent to Woolverstone Hall and the church, while in the west the village has a looser arrangement of dwellings. The hall to the east and the distinctive cluster of agricultural buildings at Home Farm to the west define each end of the village.

The Conservation Area Appraisal described the village as a small but extended village which lacks a clear centre. The informality of the main road, bending right and left, was contrasted with the formality of the main lime avenue associated with Woolverstone Hall. Properties along the main road are noted as being one plot deep with the wider agricultural landscape forming the rear backdrop and context to the village. Development along the main road was described as *'well-spaced pairs of semi-detached cottages often with vegetable plots between and with some areas of visual or recreation amenity which are protected from infill development'*. The Conservation Area Appraisal identified the occurrence of some modern infill development which uses inappropriate buildings material and the proliferation of traffic on the main road and signage as key issues.

### **Views**

The Conservation Area Appraisal identified a number of key views along the main street and also to Woolverstone Hall and church. Views out of the settlement to the wider landscape, especially the wider plateau and Orwell Estuary, are an important component of the village character. Similarly, the church is a key landmark from the wider landscape and in the area around Woolverstone Hall and Park. Along Main Road intermittent views across gaps in the building line to the gable ends of key estate cottages establishes a rhythm and unity which contributes to the local distinctiveness of the village.

### **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

The whole of the village is a Conservation Area, designated in 1989. The boundary of the Conservation Area incorporates Woolverstone Hall, its parkland setting and estate workers cottages and small areas of more modern infill which comprise the village and which are strung out along the B1456. Woolverstone has an exceptional concentration of listed buildings and non-designated historic buildings which collectively contribute to its local distinctiveness and unity of character. The parkland associated with Woolverstone Park contains an important collection of veteran trees.

### **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Woolverstone lies within relatively close proximity to the settlements of Chelmondiston and Holbrook but physically distinct from both, separated by areas of open arable farmland. In places there is some inter-visibility between each settlement, but their separate identities remain well defined.

### **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

Woolverstone's estate character and visual unity are key characteristics which contribute to its overall high scenic quality and distinctiveness. The landscape is perceived as washing over and through the village, reinforcing the rural qualities of the village, such that its built form and landscape setting are seen as closely intertwined.

### **Value and Significance**

- Woolverstone is one of the most intact and distinctive villages on the Shotley Peninsula, lying predominately within the AONB.
- The village retains its strong estate character and linear form along Main Road.
- The valley slopes of the Orwell Estuary and parkland of Woolverstone Hall provide a high-quality setting to the village.

- The open, rural plateau farmland to the south of the village is framed by wooded skylines, reinforces the rural context of the village.

### **Sensitivity**

The sensitivity of Woolverstone lies in its distinct village estate character and high-quality landscape setting on the upper slopes of the Orwell Estuary within the AONB. The loose pattern of cottages through the village and areas of open space which penetrate the fabric of the village, and afford views to the wider rural landscape beyond, are important qualities which are sensitive to infill development. These open spaces also enable views to the gable ends of buildings when travelling along Main Road. This reinforces the distinctive unity of the village architecture.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Retain areas of open space within the village where these perform a valued function in reinforcing the rural character of the settlement, setting to listed buildings and views out to the wider landscape.
- Retain the open rural character of landscape between Woolverstone and Chelmondiston.
- Avoid cul-de-sac housing development which would adversely affect the linear form of the village and its pattern of estate buildings and cottages.
- Conserve and enhance the parkland character of the eastern setting of the village through appropriate management especially of pasture and veteran trees.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

Woolverstone Conservation Area Appraisal.



Historic map c. 1900



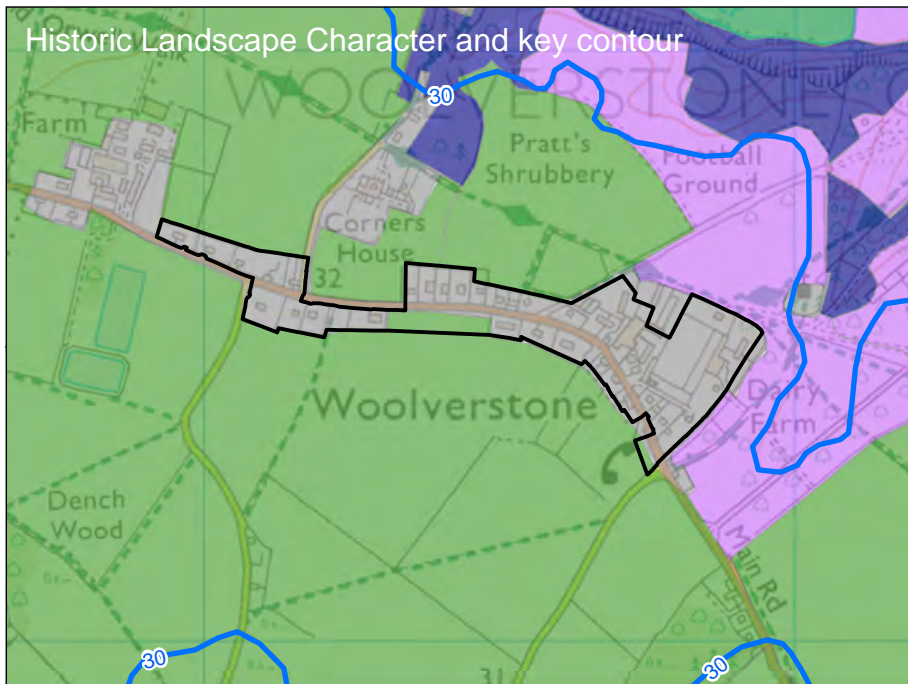
Present day aerial imagery



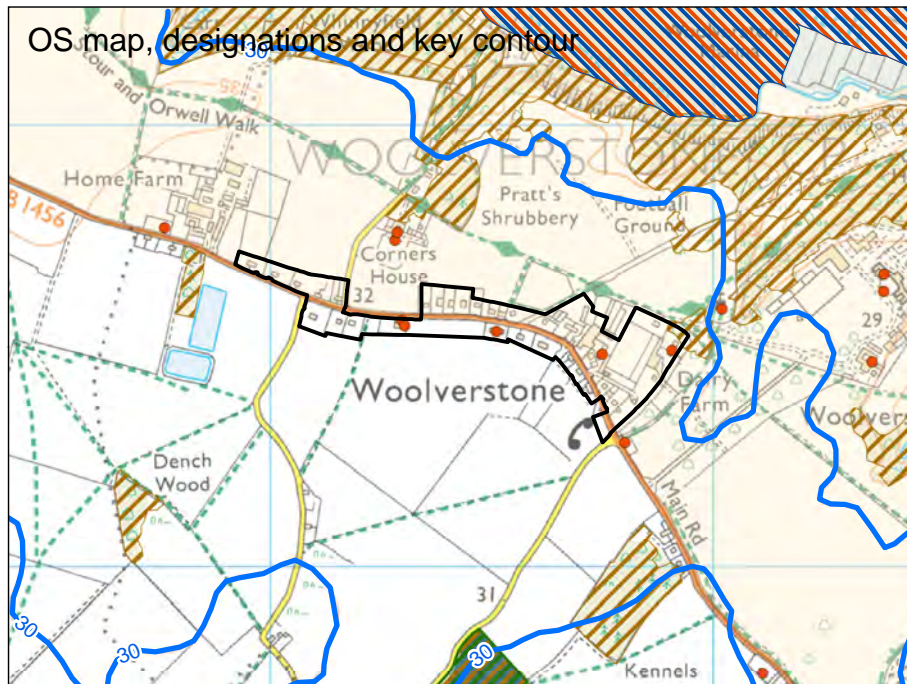
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Woolverstone

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



#### 4.10 Conurbations Adjacent to APA

There are two conurbations – Manningtree and Mistley which lie on the margins of the Additional Project Area. As noted in para 1.6 above and illustrated on Figure 1 much of the APA, where it covers the Stour Estuary, has been included in the proposed extension to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB. However, the proposed extension has excluded a notable area of landscape between the settlements of Manningtree and Mistley – an area formerly associated with Mistley Hall Estate. This area is considered in more detail here with specific attention given to the relationship between Manningtree and Mistley and their role within the setting of the proposed AONB extension.

##### **Manningtree and Mistley**

Manningtree and Mistley are located on the southern slopes of the Stour Estuary close to the head of the estuary. Their historic development is closely associated with trade and their strategic location at the head of the Stour Estuary.

The historic cores of Manningtree and Mistley, as well as part of the estuary and foreshore and former Mistley Hall estate, are included in the Manningtree and Mistley Conservation Area for reasons of heritage interest and distinctive character. The historic port of Manningtree (which received its charter in 1238) has fine Georgian buildings and historic pubs, many of which are listed.

The Mistley area is closely associated with three generations of the Rigby Family who were instrumental in the establishment of new wharfs and maltings at Mistley and with the later Norman Family who created Mistley Place Park. The village of Mistley contains many characterful vernacular buildings, including the 18th century quay, wharves, warehouses, granaries, maltings and large steam mill (many of which are listed). Mistley has a strong sense of place particularly when viewed from the water or northern shores. The extant features from the Mistley Hall estate and a spa town planned by Richard Rigby (most of which was never constructed) make a positive contribution to natural beauty. These include the Swan Fountain, the Hopping Bridge, a gatehouse and Mistley Towers (the latter also a Scheduled Monument), all of which were designed by Robert Adam.

Both Manningtree and Mistley have undergone significant expansion in the 20th century with more recent development extending onto the plateau landscapes above the estuary. The more recent development now dominates their historic cores and often lacks distinction.

The wider Stour Estuary is a highly valued setting to both settlements as are the open valley slopes which lie between them.

##### **Value and Significance of the APA Between Manningtree and Mistley**

The land between Manningtree and Mistley comprises a tributary valley to the Stour Estuary which historically formed part of the Mistley Hall Estate. In the assessment of Natural Beauty associated with the proposed extension to the SC&H AONB the area

was found to have varied landscape quality with some areas closest to the Stour Estuary having become fragmented and more urban in character.

Although excluded from the proposed designation, it was noted that the open slopes between the settlements, and land to the east of Mistley form an important component of views from the northern slopes of the Stour Estuary. In these views the land between Manningtree and Mistley was noted as comprising visually pleasing patterns of woodland and pasture which extend down to the waterfront with mature trees (including European Black Pine and oaks) along the northern boundary of Mistley Place Park making a particular contribution to views of the waterfront.

Other qualities associated with this area are set out below:

- ***Distinctive valley morphology*** reflecting small tributary of the Stour Estuary, providing visual variation and interest.
- ***Strong parkland character*** comprising open rough grazing, veteran parkland trees (oak, lime, ash), water features (Gamekeepers Pond and a more recent water feature at the confluence of tributary streams to the east of The Dairy), and woodland (Furze Wood) all of which contribute to landscape quality.
- ***Varied grassland types*** including dry acid grassland on the higher ground with swards of tussocky rush near the streams giving rise to a variety of texture and colours, while areas of arable on upper slopes add to landscape compositions reflecting the transition to the more productive plateau land.
- ***Furze Wood*** (formerly an area of open land containing dispersed oak trees) has, over the last century, been in-filled with plantation and secondary woodland. Large ancient oak trees remain within the woods (e.g. Old Knobbly voted second in the Woodlands Trust Tree of the Year 2014 and possibly 800 years old) contribute to landscape quality and tangible time depth.
- ***Mosaic of habitat types***, and dead wood associated with veteran trees is valued for invertebrate habitat and roosting sites for bats.
- ***Landmark buildings*** such as St Mary and St Michael Church, Mistley Towers and the quayside buildings/maltings.
- ***Listed buildings*** which relate to the former park estate impart a unified character and visually link the area together, contributing positively to scenic quality and creating attractive focal points.
- ***Significant views*** can be obtained across areas of former parkland from Clacton Road and Green Lane. Views of the Maltings, and to the upper northern estuary slopes from more elevated locations, act as a reminder of the proximity to the estuary and association of this parkland landscape with estuary trade and the Rigby family.
- ***Recreational value*** both in terms of organised recreation and network of public rights of way.
- ***Tranquillity*** is most readily experienced along Green Lane and on the footpaths to the south which pass through the remaining former parkland landscape and broadleaved woodland.
- ***Group value*** of former parkland features including veteran trees, woodland blocks, two small lakes and historic buildings including the stables, dairy, and gatehouse which add to perceptions of time depth.

## **Sensitivity**

The inherent qualities of the landscape between Manningtree and Mistley indicate that this area is sensitive to change. There are three principle types of change that this area is sensitive to, namely:

1. Expansion of the urban edge of Manningtree and Mistley into the area, causing visual intrusion and loss of openness.
2. Fragmentation of the landscape as a result of land use change or ad hoc development, reducing perceptions of unity of the area as a tract of landscape.
3. Loss of valued characteristics as a result of lack of appropriate management, resulting in a loss of character and time depth.

## **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Seek opportunities to reduce visual clutter and fragmentation of the landscape in the northern part of the area, especially around the Animal Sanctuary.
- Restore historic features which have become damaged or deteriorated e.g. Hopping Bridge.
- Manage designed parkland features such as the lake and woodland associated with Mistley Place Park.
- Revert arable land use to pasture in order to reinstatement and reinforce parkland character.
- Avoid the extension of new urban development into this area where it reduces sense of scale and openness.
- Improve management of landscape on the fringes of New Mistley, reducing the effects of the urban fringe including proliferation of signage, car parking, fencing etc.
- Manage woodland and waterside vegetation surrounding Gamekeepers Pond including the removal of scrub.
- Manage parkland trees and plant new trees to retain parkland character.

## **Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

Manningtree and Mistley Conservation Area Appraisal.

Proposed Extension to Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, Natural Beauty Assessment, Natural England, Evaluation Area E4.

## 5.0 Future Application

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study has highlighted the special qualities of the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Additional Project Area and the reasons why it is of particular landscape value. Importantly the assessment has demonstrated that the value attached to the area varies– those qualities in the west are not the same as those around Alton Water for example. Furthermore, the quality and condition of the landscape also varies with some areas being especially valued and other areas requiring enhancement.

This study has demonstrated the inextricable link between settlements and their landscape settings and the unique and close physical and visual association of the Shotley Peninsula with the estuary landscapes which lie adjacent. It has highlighted that many of the settlements on the Peninsula share similar origins (dispersed pattern of church/hall complexes), and locations (at the interface of the plateau farmland and the valley slopes). It has also highlighted the individual identity of the settlements and how their current form is a reflection of their subsequent patterns of growth.

### 5.2 Issues

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths APA shares many of the special qualities of the AONB as defined in section 3.2 above. It also experiences a number of pressures and changes which equally affect the AONB such as:

- Loss of field boundaries and habitat networks with the creation of larger scale simple landscapes.
- Loss of meadowland along streams reducing landscape variation along small tributary valleys that drain the elevated farmland.
- Lack of woodland management and introduction of new straight edged plantations which contrast with older sinuous woodland boundaries.
- Road improvements, traffic noise and night light intrusion resulting in a loss of tranquillity.
- Loss of views to key landmarks e.g. church towers due to vegetation growth or new development.
- Introduction of housing estate development which subsumes the older more dispersed pattern of settlement.
- Urban extensions and housing estates with abrupt urban edges and high visibility across wide areas.
- Infrastructure development including roads, rail, telecommunications and renewables.

However, it differs from SC&H AONB in that:

- It is the narrowest stretch of farmland flanked on three sides by estuaries which fall within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.
- The valley extending inland from Holbrook has undergone dramatic change as a result of the creation of Alton Water.

### 5.3 The Future

The special qualities of the Shotley Peninsula landscape lie not in dramatic scenery or arresting views but rather in its remoteness and backwater qualities and its position in relation to the estuary landscapes which surround it. Like the Sandlings landscapes which back the estuaries elsewhere in the AONB, the Shotley Peninsula performs an important function as an immediate setting to the Orwell and Stour estuaries. Whilst much of it is farmed intensively, the relatively simple patterns of field enclosures, woodland and elevation, coupled with its 'coastal' location, gives rise to dramatic skies and quality of light. Settlement has congregated along the main routes into and out of the peninsula and at the interface between the higher farmland and estuary slopes. Each settlement has its own distinctive identity although the introduction of modern housing estates has undermined local identity to some degree.

The Shotley Peninsula has always been important for arable cultivation forming some of the most fertile soils in Suffolk. Trends in agriculture have resulted in a loss of biodiversity and landscape character as a result of field boundary removal and introduction of patches of plantation woodland. Nevertheless, this landscape retains important remnants of ancient woodland and rural sinuous lanes and is uniquely placed geographically to deliver enhanced biodiversity networks which connect these habitats with those within the Orwell and Stour Estuaries - improving landscape structure and resilience to climate change.

Conserving and enhancing the special qualities articulated in this report is a key aspiration of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Management Plan. This assessment has revealed that whilst much of the Shotley Peninsula has a weight of evidence to demonstrate it is a valued landscape in terms of para 170a of the NPPF, there are also areas which have suffered some loss of special qualities. The evidence base provided here should therefore be used to target resources and develop and implement enhancement initiatives.

In terms of development, the evidence base presented in this report can inform the AONB's response to planning applications, and more widely, be used by local authorities in reaching planning decisions and by developers and their consultants in identifying and designing appropriate developments which achieve a good degree of fit. The evidence in this report should also help to ensure that, where change occurs, it delivers net environmental gain that demonstrably enhances the area's special qualities.

Due to the position of the Shotley Peninsula as a narrow tongue of elevated land between the Orwell and Stour estuaries, it should be considered holistically and not in

isolation. Where change is proposed either on the plateau or in relation to the estuaries it will be important to consider the wider effects on both areas.

**Appendix 1:**

**Fold Out Key to Settlement Maps**



### Historic map

Maps taken from Ordnance Survey 6-inch, 1888-1913 series.

### Present day aerial imagery

Aerial imagery source: ESRI, Digital Globe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, Aerogrid, IGN and the GIS User Community.

### Historic Landscape Character and key contour

Suffolk HLC	Essex HLC
<b>Category</b>	<b>Category</b>
No category	19TH-20TH CENTURY PLANTATION
18th-century and later enclosure	19TH-20TH CENTURY WOODLAND PLANTATION
Ancient monument	ANCIENT WOODLAND
Built up area	BOUNDARY LOSS - POST 1950 WITH RELICT ELEMENTS
Common pasture	BUILT-UP AREAS
Communications	ENCLOSED MEADOW PASTURE
Horticulture	INDUSTRIAL
Industrial	INFORMAL MEDIEVAL PARKLAND
Meadow or managed wetland	LATER ENCLOSURE - 18TH C OR LATER
Post-1950 agricultural landscape	POST 1950 BOUNDARY LOSS
Post-medieval military	POST 1950 BOUNDARY LOSS - WITH RELICT ELEMENTS
Post-medieval park and leisure	POST 1950'S ENCLOSURE
Pre-18th-century enclosure	PRE-18TH CENTURY 'IRREGULAR' ENCLOSURE
Unimproved land	
Woodland	
built up area	
Settlement	
Key contour(s)	
County boundary	

### OS map, designations and key contour

Listed Building	Settlement
Special Protection Areas	Key contour(s)
Special Areas of Conservation	
AONB	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
County Wildlife Sites	
Local Nature Reserves	
Roadside Nature Reserves	
Ancient Woodland	
Woodland	
Scheduled Monument	
Parks And Gardens	
County GeoSites	

Source: Natural England; Historic England; Suffolk County Council, Essex County Council.

**Appendix 2:**

Extract from Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Landscape Character Assessment

Stour and Orwell Society



# Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Landscape Character Assessment

Final Report

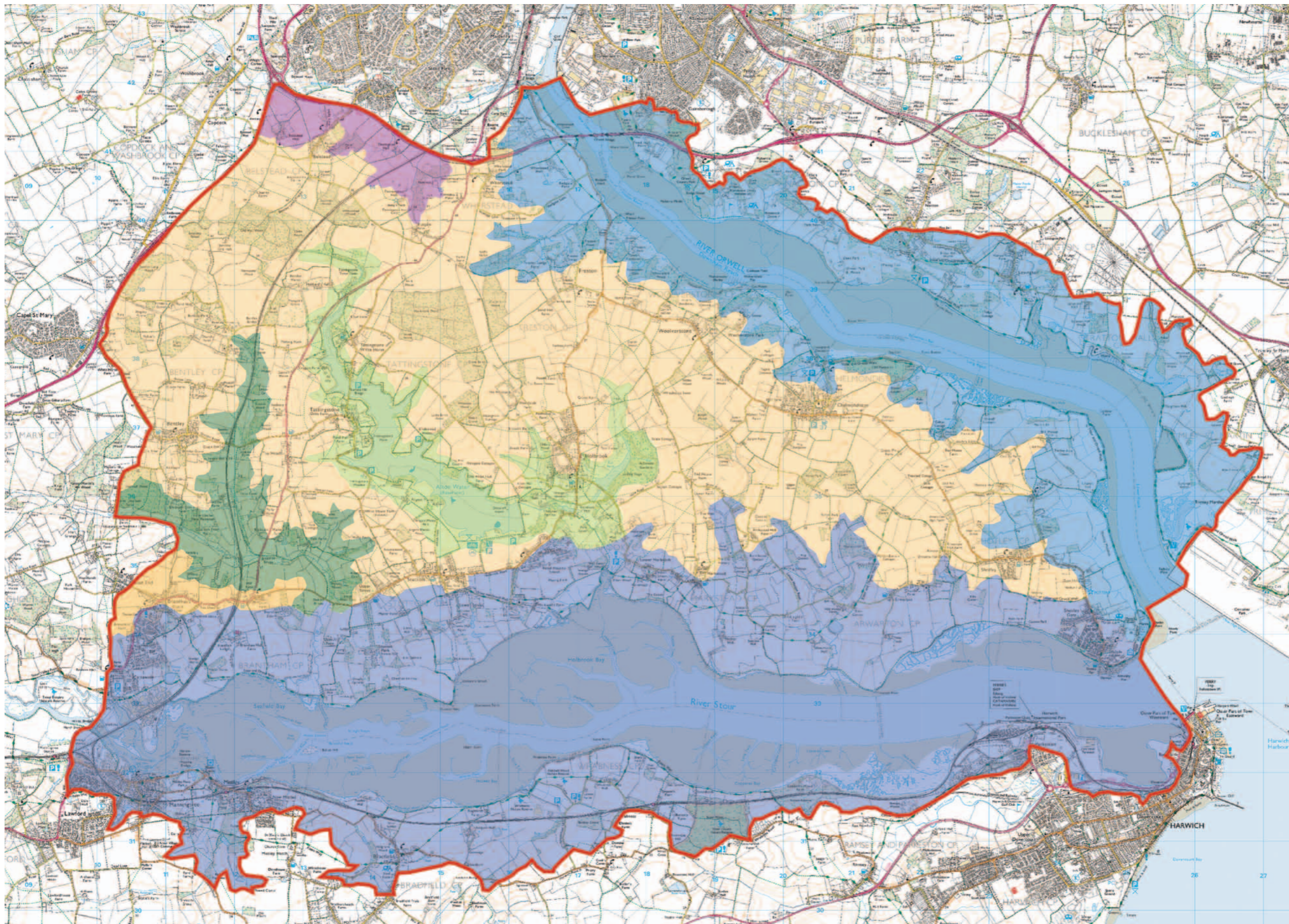
April 2013



**Alison Farmer Associates**  
29 Montague Road  
Cambridge  
CB4 1BU  
Tel: 01223 461444  
[af@alisonfarmer.co.uk](mailto:af@alisonfarmer.co.uk)

# Shotley Peninsula Landscape Character Assessment

Drawing Number 5:  
Landscape Character Areas



Date: April 2013  
Scale: 1:50,000  
Status: Final



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**ALISON FARMER**  
ASSOCIATES  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

<b>Key:</b>		Orwell Estuary		Shotley Peninsula Plateau		Samford Valley	
	Study Area Boundary		Stour Estuary		Holbrook Valley and Alton Water		Belstead Brook

### 3.3 Shotley Peninsula Plateau

#### Description

**Context:** This includes the central upland farmed plateau of Shotley Peninsula which stretches from the western boundary of the Study Area (A12) as a central 'shoulder' of land as far as Shotley in the east. It is bounded to the north and south by the Orwell and Stour Estuary character areas respectively. The change in character is generally marked by a break in slope and or views to the estuary water. The plateau is drained by small streams which create shallow valleys and add variation to this otherwise relatively flat plateau.

**Constituent Landscape Types:** Ancient Estate Claylands and Ancient Estate Farmlands



#### Summary Description

This is a flat plateau of loamy well draining arable land, which forms the central part of the Shotley Peninsula. It has historically been regarded by 18th and 19th century agricultural writers as having some of the best soils in the country. This landscape is unique in Suffolk with a mix of "modern" rectilinear field systems with Ancient Woodland and parklands.

The landscape pattern is characterised by large-scale arable blocks divided into rectilinear fields (reflecting relatively late enclosure) coupled with ancient woodland and remnant parklands. There are some notable hedges of holly with pollard oaks, while suckering elm is usually very dominant on the lightest land. Place names reflect former heathland, and occasional patches of gorse and birch in verges/hedgerows indicate former unenclosed areas of common grazing and heath. Although the predominant land use is arable, some pig rearing occurs in the east and orchards/fruit growing in the west. Areas of open arable farmland are of particular value for farm birds including lapwing, grey partridge, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow, turtle dove and corn bunting.

Historically this landscape had a number of extensive parkland landscapes including Tattlingstone and Woolverstone which extended into the adjacent Holbrook Valley or Orwell Estuary character areas respectively. Although both have now become fragmented, remnants of parkland continue to make an important contribution to local sense of place.

The area has a substantial number of ancient woodlands, some up to 80ha in size. In the west there is the close grouping of Great and Little Martin's Woods, Dodnash Wood and Holly Wood; Old Hall Wood on Bentley's northern boundary close to Spinney Wood and Wherstead Wood, with Holbrook Park and Cutler's Wood forming another group to the east. The southeastern part of the area has smaller woods, such as Rence Park. There are also areas of plantation woodland although these are relatively small.

The existing settlement pattern is mainly one of villages, but with some dispersed farmsteads and isolated houses/churches. In the main, settlement clusters are on the edge of this landscape and housing development in the latter part of the century has significantly altered the character and appearance of many of the villages e.g. Holbrook, Shotley and Chelmondiston. This pattern of growth onto the Shotley Plateau has masked the historic association of settlement with adjacent valleys and estuaries.

Outside the villages the landscape is scattered with farms, cottages or isolated churches which in the Middle Ages would have been associated with manor halls. Often the farms comprise a mixture of exceptional vernacular buildings and some examples of more modern and larger scale buildings. On the western fringe of this landscape, at the boundary with the claylands, that there is a notable pattern of estate halls including Bentley Old Hall, Bentley Manor and Bentley Hall.

This landscape is crossed by a series of minor roads including the B1456 and B1080 as well as the more significant A137. These roads, along with a network of single tracked lanes, connect the various settlements and reinforce the perception of the area being a rural backwater. Some ancient routes remain as tracks and footpaths particularly in the west.

This landscape has a degree of homogeneity and regularity to it and a rural settled character. Some spatial variations occur - for example there is a greater concentration of woodland blocks in the west compared to the east; however, overall, the pattern of a wooded skyline across large scale open arable fields is consistent across the area. In most views there is often a farmstead or manor house reflecting the settled character.

There are glimpsed views to areas outside of this area e.g. Felixstowe docks or Royal Hospital School clock tower, and in the north the close proximity to Ipswich is evident in road development, presence of masts and increase in farm food outlets and small scale business parks converted from agricultural buildings.

#### **Distinctive Characteristics**

- Deep loamy soil that originated as wind-blown sediments from glacial sources giving rise to fertile soils and predominately Grade 2 Agricultural Land
- Elevated, open, exposed, gently undulating plateau/shoulder of land, drained by small shallow valleys particularly in the southeast between Holbrook and Erbarton
- Predominately arable farmland defined by rectilinear hedgerow enclosures and woodland blocks giving rise of an often open and defined landscape
- Extensive areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and some mixed conifer plantation which form blocks of woodland and create visual structure to the otherwise open, relatively flat landscape
- Hedgerows along lanes frequently comprise suckering elm with pollarded oaks and holly
- Dispersed estate farmsteads are the predominate settlement pattern reflecting former medieval halls and parks (e.g. Pannington Hall and Bond Hall) and remnant areas of parkland including Bentley Hall, Bentley Park, Bentley Manor and Belstead Hall
- Settlements of Bentley, Belstead, Woolverstone, Stutton, Holbrook, Chelmondiston and Shotley, many of which include extensive areas of late 20th century housing development
- Concentration of historic manor houses, churches and farms particularly in the west
- Old lanes remain in the landscape as farm tracks and footpaths e.g. Old Hall Lane and Bentley Lane
- Occasional long distant views to a wooded skyline but there are no views to the estuaries which lie in close proximity to the north and south
- Views to isolated properties are commonplace giving rise to a settled but predominately quiet back-water character

#### **Evaluation**

##### **Special Qualities and Features**

- Whole area lies outside the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB designation but within its Additional Project Area as set out in the AONB Management Plan
- Majority of the area is designated a Special Landscape Area for its river valleys and woodland
- Area important for significant population of Dormouse and stag beetle

- SSSI woodlands at Holbrook Park and Freston and Cutler's Woods
- CWS designations associated with high concentration of ancient woodlands
- Significant blocks of ancient woodland including Bentley Long Wood, Brockley Wood, Old Hall Wood, Wherstead Wood, Holbrook Wood, Cutler's Wood, Glebe Wood, Bylam Wood, Rence Park, Broomfield Covert and New Covert.
- Erwarton Hall - late 16th century English county house (listed) and gatehouse with historical links with Anne Boleyn.
- Stools of coppiced sweet chestnut found in Holbrook Park wood are among the largest recorded in Britain (*The Shotley Peninsula, Sylvia Laverton, pg 17*)
- SAM at Potash Farm comprising an interrupted ditch system

## **Forces for Change and Their Landscape Implications**

### **Past and Current**

- Fragmentation of habitats e.g. woodlands due to intensification of arable cultivation
- Lack of hedgerow management reflected in gappy and over trimmed hedges, elm dieback and some stag head oaks
- Development of masts and telegraph poles which visually intrude into this landscape
- Pressure for wind farm development e.g. Thorington Hall/Cottage, east of Belstead
- Development of farm food outlets and business parks e.g. Wherstead Office Park in part due to proximity to Ipswich
- Significant areas of 20th century housing development extending onto plateau areas and altering traditional settlement pattern
- Increased traffic on B roads which traverse the plateau particularly B1456
- Loss of former areas of heathland - evidence now limited to place names and vegetation
- Noise intrusion from A12 in western extremities of this area
- New hardwood plantations e.g. Harkstead Hall Estate
- Lack of traditional woodland management and coppicing resulting in dereliction of some former coppice woods
- Diffuse pollution from use of agricultural chemicals affecting water quality in adjacent estuaries

### **Future**

- Further development of tall cranes within the Harwich Bay area is likely to adversely extend the perception of built development associated with Felixstowe and affect the rural qualities of the tip of the peninsula
- Further suburbanisation of narrow lanes and larger roads due to inappropriate curtilage development or new infill development
- Pressure for redevelopment of HMS Ganges site at Shotley Gate (former naval training site now derelict) which may affect character of rural lanes
- Lack of hedgerow management resulting in fragmentation of hedgerow pattern
- Loss of hedgerow trees in particular ash due to Chalara or ash dieback
- Pressure for further vertical structures including masts and windfarms (inc domestic scale)
- Pressure to create a major new Areas of Natural Greenspace associated with Alton Water Reservoir, through acquisition of additional land on the north and northwest sides of the reservoir with potential to have wider implications for the character of this landscape which lies adjacent
- Pressure for housing growth in existing settlements including Chelmondiston, Holbrook, as key service centres, and also smaller settlements of Bentley, Stutton and Tattingstone as set out in Babergh District Core Strategy Issues Document (2011)
- Planning allocation for growth of Wherstead Office Park to the east of the current development and new access off the A137

- Some historic buildings are at risk - particularly farm related barns which have fallen into disrepair and yet make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness (eg the semi-derelict Grade 11\* listed Bentley Hall Barn)
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses/food outlets
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodlands
- Changes in crops and land use as a consequence of change in climate and markets

### Landscape Strategy

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the rural quiet character of lanes within the peninsula avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, widening, lighting or the introduction of roundabouts, all of which undermine the essential 'back-water' qualities of the area</li> <li>• Protect visual integrity of Woolverstone Village and particularly the unity of estate cottages along the main road. Avoid cumulative ad hoc development such as increases in signage, boundary treatment changes etc which may adversely affect the current character.</li> <li>• Protect newly planted woodland from deer damage through use of appropriate fencing</li> <li>• Protect dark skies and restrict the introduction of night lighting associated with new development or improvements to road infrastructure</li> <li>• Protect rural character of roads across this area and avoid development such as HMS Ganges site which will increase traffic pressure and the needs for road alteration which would undermine current character</li> <li>• Protect area's distinctive wooded skylines and avoid cumulative impacts from vertical structures which interrupt these skylines and undermine perceptions of a rural backwater. Ensure that any new development avoids adverse impact on adjacent estuary or valley landscapes</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and coppicing through appropriate woodland management regimes</li> <li>• Record and survey veteran trees seeking management which prolongs life and monitors gradual loss and potential replacement by maturing trees in future</li> <li>• Reinforce the historic pattern of regular boundaries though appropriate hedgerow management including coppicing of elm hedges</li> <li>• Maintain, enhance and restore locally distinctive holly hedges</li> <li>• Restore, maintain and enhance the network of tree belts and pattern of small plantations found across much of this landscape type</li> <li>• Restore, maintain and enhance the historic parklands through the preparation of significance statements and whole park plans to ensure recognition of subtle elements e.g. park railings</li> <li>• Restore and enhance the condition of ancient woodlands including the effective control of deer grazing and browsing</li> <li>• Resist development which will erode the tranquillity of the area</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the replanting of veteran trees and careful management of maturing trees in order to retain the character of mature trees in this landscape which are so characteristic</li> <li>• Undertake whole park plan for Woolverstone to ensure a clear understanding of the significance of the estate including the Nelson's Avenue, park boundaries and Estate cottages as a whole to inform future management</li> <li>• Plan for the preparation of village design statements to enable the special qualities of each settlement to be articulated so that new development can be incorporated sensitively</li> <li>• Plan for the creation of strong street scenes within villages which have undergone</li> </ul>



significant 20th century growth through the re-emphasising of old routes through the settlement, planting of street trees/avenues, reducing visual clutter such as overhead wires and signage

- Consider carefully the implications of future housing growth in the villages and seek ways to reinforce/reinstate local distinctiveness in any new development, including edge treatment, mitigation and open space provision

### 3.4 Holbrook Valley and Alton Water

#### Description

**Context:** This includes the valley of Holbrook River including the upper reaches which were flooded to form Alton Water reservoir. It also includes the remnant parkland, woodland and fish ponds associated with Holbrook Gardens. This character area is relatively small and stretches from the A137 in the west to Wall Farm in the southeast.

**Constituent Landscape Types:** Rolling Estate Farmlands, Valley Meadowlands and Ancient Estate Farmlands at the margins



#### Summary Description

This landscape focuses on the valley of Holbrook River which comprises two distinct parts, firstly Alton Water, a manmade reservoir completed in 1978 which drowned the previous upper reaches of the shallow Holbrook Valley, and the river valley to the east and south which includes Holbrook Mill, meadows and remnant fish ponds associated with Holbrook Gardens.

Historically this landscape would have contained two landscaped gardens the first Holbrook Gardens (formerly the pleasure grounds to Woolverstone Hall) and the second Tattingstone Park associated with Tattingstone Place. Both have now become fragmented, the latter as a result of the creation of Alton Water.

Alton Water forms the largest area of inland water in Suffolk with a circumference of over 8 miles (13 km). It is fed from the River Gipping and bore holes on the north side of the River Orwell and has a natural indented coastline. At its widest the reservoir is approximately 0.5km and its water edge well vegetated. This, combined with the shallow valley sides, means that there are relatively few views to open water from the wider landscape and views tend to be restricted to glimpses from the water's edge. Similarly the narrow width of the reservoir means that it often appears small in scale and more like a lake. Only when viewing up or down the valley is there a greater sense of an expanse of open water.

The reservoir provides an important function in providing water to local conurbations, but is also marketed and managed for informal recreation including fishing, quiet water sports, walking and cycling. There is an information centre and facilities to the south near Stutton, parking at a number of locations, and waymarked trails around the reservoir.

East of the reservoir, the natural river valley returns and comprises gently sloping valley sides supporting both arable and pasture and a narrow valley floor with some areas of wet meadow/pastures as well as a small area of willow plantation. These wet pastures are likely to have been former reedbed/salt marsh prior to the construction of the sluice and flood defence barrier at the head of Holbrook Creek. There are a number of water channels and waterbodies in the valley relating to the fishponds associated with Holbrook Gardens which extended further to the north and also the mill pond. Overall the valley is well treed both in terms of small copses and lines of alder along watercourses or hedgerows and hedgerow trees and as such there are only occasional glimpsed views across the valley or to landmark buildings. Landmark buildings include the clock tower and water tower of the Royal Hospital

School, which lies on higher land adjacent to the valley, as well as Holbrook Mill and church. The South Suffolk cycle route B runs through this area.

In terms of settlement this landscape comprises mainly a dispersed pattern of dwellings: these include the historic cluster of dwellings around Holbrook Mill (formerly the hamlet of Holbrook prior to more recent expansion to the north) as well as more recent infill large properties along the rural lanes. In the context of Alton Water there is the village of Tatingstone which is associated with Tatingstone Park and includes the Tatingstone Wonder - a folly church which is a local landmark and is Grade II\* listed as well as St Mary the Virgin church (Grade II\* listed) and former 18th century Workhouse (now residential). To the southeast of the village is Tatingstone Place, where former parkland and designed landscape is still evident as are white park railings around the house/farm. The village is connected to another small cluster of dwellings (and the 17<sup>th</sup> century coaching inn called the Tatingstone White Horse) on the north shore of the reservoir by the Lemon's Hill Bridge which is engineered in character reflecting the recent construction of the reservoir.

Where the rural lanes descend into the Holbrook Valley around Holbrook Mill they are often incised and flanked by former hazel coppice and woodbanks.

### **Distinctive Characteristics**

- Flat valley floor made up of seasonally wet clays overlying alluvial deposits and peat with freer draining soils on the valley sides
- Sinuous and incised valley of the Holbrook the upper reaches of which have been significantly altered with the creation of a reservoir (Alton Water) in the 1970's
- Land use comprises a mixture of arable and pasture on the valley sides with patches of wet pastures within the valley floor
- Alton Water is a small scale reservoir defined by gentle sloping valley sides giving the appearance of a large linear lake
- The fringes of Alton Reservoir are well vegetated with a mixture of woodland and scrub enclosing views - some areas of ancient woodland including hazel coppice and woodbanks
- Alton Water is valued for its birds offering breeding bird habitat for species such as Common Tern in summer and as a refuge/roost for wildfowl during winter months
- The area is generally unsettled although there are occasional farmsteads on the edge of the valleys or on locally higher spots and the historic settlements of Holbrook and Tatingstone on the valley sides
- Strong but informal recreational focus around Alton Water including fishing, cycling, quiet water sports and good parking, footpath and cycle path provision
- Alton Water reservoir and Holbrook Valley are strongly concealed from views in the wider landscape and visible only from close proximity - this landscape does not have a strong presence in the wider landscape

### **Evaluation**

#### **Special Qualities and Features**

- Alton Water and Holbrook Gardens are both designated CWSs for their habitat mosaics
- Holbrook Mill in the valley floor and St Andrew's Church overlooking the valley are key landmark buildings in this character area which add to local distinctiveness
- Attractive views across open water and to landmark buildings including St Andrew's Church, Holbrook and from the village of Tatingstone across open water of the reservoir
- Remnant water meadows and wet pastures giving rise to visual variety and small scale landscape which contrasts with upper reaches of the Holbrook valley/reservoir landscape
- Remnant parkland trees either side of Alton Reservoir which formed part of Tatingstone Park

- Listed buildings within this landscape and on its margins which act as local landmarks
- Easily accessible recreation associated with Alton Reservoir
- Incised rural lanes which descend into the valley landscape flanked by old coppiced hazel and earth banks
- Banks of Holbrook River provides important habitat for Water Vole and Otter
- Northern fringes of Alton Water provide scrub and woodland cover suitable for Hazel Dormouse

## Forces for Change and Their Landscape Implications

### Past and Current

- Fragmentation of woodlands and habitat networks
- Loss of valley landscape as a result of reservoir creation and associated built structures which do not reflect local vernacular styles and are functional/utilitarian in character
- Some hedgerows are gappy and over trimmed and others show elm dieback and some hedgerow oaks with stag heads and lack of management
- Overgrown character of scrub and woodland vegetation on shores of Alton Water with opportunities to open up some vistas and views from the surrounding landscape and shores of the reservoir and create more striking headlands
- Conversion of pasture to arable cultivation on the valley sides
- Planting of poplar trees on the valley sides/lower slopes

### Future

- Further suburbanisation of narrow lanes and larger roads due to inappropriate development on boundaries and within curtilages as well as infill development
- Alton Water identified as an area with significant potential to provide Area of Natural Greenspace for major conurbations such as Ipswich which are likely to experience considerable housing growth in future
- Increase in woodland and hedgerow trees obscuring views across the valley
- Pressure for solar park development particularly on south facing slopes

## Landscape Strategy

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the rural quiet character of lanes resisting unsympathetic highways improvement or signage</li> <li>• Protect the rural valley setting of Holbrook Mill and St Andrew's Church which add to the significance of these historic buildings and combined with these landmarks add to local distinctiveness and sense of place</li> <li>• Protect and restore historic features within the valley, particularly those relating to the watercourses e.g. mills, bridges and sluices</li> <li>• Protect Water Vole habitat through appropriate grazing levels, avoiding bank erosion and introduction of riparian woodland</li> <li>• Protect unspoilt rural valley character from solar park development where it may undermine the pattern of land use and be visually prominent</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and coppicing through appropriate woodland management regimes</li> <li>• Record and survey veteran trees seeking management which prolongs life and monitors gradual loss and potential replacement by maturing trees in future</li> <li>• Manage woodland and scrub areas fringing Alton Water and seek opportunities to open up views across the water and to the reservoir from the surrounding wider landscape</li> <li>• Manage recreation in this landscape and ensure the development of any new</li> </ul>

<p>associated infrastructure is in keeping with the local rural character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the landscape's distinctive hedges along lanes and reinstate coppicing to ensure future survival</li> <li>• Manage and extend areas of wet grassland and meadow with appropriate grazing with cattle and sheep, particularly on areas of importance for wildlife and avoid bank erosion which may affect Water Vole and Otter habitat</li> </ul>
<p><b>Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the replanting of veteran trees and careful management of maturing trees particularly in areas of former parkland</li> <li>• Plan for the reversion of arable farmland to pasture on the valley sides where it extends down to the edge of the valley floor</li> <li>• Plan for the improved interpretation of the historic character of this valley landscape and its changing face through time</li> <li>• Plan for the opening up of views across the valley including across the reservoir and also around Holbrook through woodland and scrub management</li> <li>• Plan for the felling of poplar and retention of valley floor pastures through appropriate management and grazing levels</li> <li>• Plan for the increased informal recreational use of this area, particularly Alton Water and ensure sufficient provision of low key parking and facilities, which reflect local vernacular and character</li> <li>• Plan for the sensitive creation of circular themed walks associated with Alton Water that connect this 'honey pot' site with the wider landscape including facilities at Tattingstone and Holbrook</li> </ul>

## 3.6 Belstead Brook

### Description

**Context:** This includes the north sloping valley sides of the Belstead Brook which form the northern fringe of the Study Area where there are views overlooking Ipswich. Much of this character area extends beyond the Study Area boundary.

**Constituent Landscape Types:** Rolling Estate Farmlands, Ancient Estate Farmlands and Valley Meadowlands



### Summary Description

Only the southern valley sides fall within the Study Area and therefore this description focuses on these slopes, although they are discussed within the wider context of the valley as a whole.

Within this valley landscape there is a notable change in geology from the sandy deposits so characteristic of the Shotley Peninsula Plateau landscape, to the occurrence of heavier clay on the lower slopes. As a result of this there are spring lines which feed the Brook and which have also resulted in localised patches of wet woodland and pasture. This is evident to the north of Belstead Hall (Grade II\* listed), east of Belstead in Alder Carr and also Spring Wood north of Thorington Hall.

This landscape has seen significant change in second half of 20th century with construction of A14 on southern slopes of the river valley, a double line of pylons again along the southern valley sides and the significant growth of Ipswich onto the northern valley sides including urban fringe development such as the dry ski slope. As with villages/hamlets elsewhere in the Study Area the settlement of Belstead has also experienced some considerable growth and infill development which has altered its overall character and appearance. These changes contrast with other areas which remain relatively unchanged including Belstead Church, Belstead Hall and farm and Thorington Hall.

Immediately north of the A14 the open landscape on the edge of Ipswich forms part of Belstead Brook Park - an informal country park.

Although much of this landscape within the Study Area remains intact and rural in character it is visually and audibly influenced by the development associated with Ipswich and major infrastructure and this has undermined perceptions of tranquillity.

### Distinctive Characteristics

- North facing slopes forming part of the Belstead Brook and River Bourne Valley which separates the Study Area from the fringes of Ipswich
- Steep valley side slopes with numerous springs reflecting underlying geology
- Ash on lower slopes where clay substrates create impeded drainage contrast with free draining sandy soils on the upper slopes where there is a higher incidence of oak and patches of bracken and scrub
- Medium scale field pattern of hedgerows enclosing areas of intensive arable farmland

- Extensive views across Ipswich built development, although infrastructure is reasonably well concealed
- Areas of urban fringe development include the dry-ski slope, A14 and pylons
- Historic settlement of Belstead includes a collection of medieval farms and cottages interspersed with infill development along Old Lane and other more recent estate housing
- Perceptions of tranquillity affected by visual impacts of Ipswich and infrastructure and audible impacts of traffic

## Evaluation

### Special Qualities and Features

- This whole area lies outside the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB but within the Additional Project Area as set out in the AONB Management Plan
- Important and valuable green landscape setting to Ipswich
- Notable mature veteran oaks in hedgerows  
Historic church of Belstead and associated manor house and farm form an outstanding collection of historic buildings and the church acts as a local landmark
- Valuable areas of woodland carr

### Forces for Change and Their Landscape Implications

#### Past and Current

- Loss of field boundaries and parkland landscapes due to intensive arable farming
- Traffic noise and intrusion from the A12
- Visual intrusion of the edge of Ipswich where it extends onto the northern slopes of the Belstead Brook beyond the Study Area - including housing, pylons, roads and lighting
- Loss of old farm buildings which have fallen into a state of disrepair
- Pressure for development and recreational access to this area

#### Future

- The Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy includes the development of the Belstead Brook Park and associated footpaths. It notes that this area could link with other initiatives, including a new country park at Wherstead (Project 77) and potential open space at Belstead Grove (Project 86), together with a network of green corridors out to the south (e.g. Projects 76 and 81), which would provide enhanced links to the improved Alton Water (Project 75, which has the potential to provide a significant area of ANG), and on to the Shotley Peninsula and Dedham Vale.
- Loss of hedgerow trees in particular ash due to Chalara or ash dieback
- Pressure for wind farm development - imminent application for construction of two wind turbines on land at Thorington Hall/Cottage, east of Belstead

### Landscape Strategy

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the setting of historic buildings and their association with other historic buildings in the vicinity</li> <li>• Protect historic farm buildings from disuse and loss</li> <li>• Protect area from developments which have a cumulative urbanising influence and seek to minimise urban influences through strategically located woodland planting</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage existing historic hedgerows and hedgerow oaks and plant new hedgerow oaks to replace old veteran trees in time</li> <li>• Manage areas of wet woodland through appropriate management i.e. coppicing</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>

- Plan for the continued expansion of Ipswich north of the A14 and seek ways to protect and reinforce the perceived separation of this landscape from Ipswich as a result of Belstead Brook Valley through strategic woodland planting and careful management of physical links between this area and Ipswich
- Plan to enhance habitat networks through woodland along stream courses and the development of field buffers and wide hedgerows



Appendix 3:  
Reference Documents

## **Landscape Character**

- Suffolk Coast and Heaths Landscape Assessment Technical Report, Land Use Consultants 1993
- National Character Area Profile: 82: Suffolk Coast and Heaths, Natural England, April 2015.
- East of England Landscape Character Assessment (2009).
- Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment 2009 and updated 2011.
- Essex Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates, 2003.
- Tendring District Historic Environment Characterisation Project, 2008.
- Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Landscape Character Assessment, Alison Farmer Associates, 2013.
- Historic Landscape Characterisation, Suffolk (2008).
- Shotley Peninsula, The Making of a Unique Suffolk Landscape, Sylvia Laverton, 2001
- Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance
- The Orwell Estuary Hinterland Report, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, 2007.

## **Designation History and Past Landscape Evaluation**

- Designation History Series: Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, Ray Woolmore/ Countryside Commission, 1999.
- Natural England Board Paper, NEB 73 03, Annex 2, SC&H AONB Boundary Variation Project, Natural Beauty Assessment, September 2017.
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, Evidence and Evaluation to support Boundary Extension to the South, Final Report, Alison Farmer Associates, 2013.
- Proposed Extension to Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, Natural Beauty Assessment, Natural England, September 2017

## **Management Plans**

- Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2018-2023

## **Local Planning Documents**

- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18))
- Tendring Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond Publication Draft June 2017
- Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils 2018

## **Assessment Guidance**

- Natural England Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England (2012)
- Guidance on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)
- An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management, Natural England (2019)

### **Planning Appeals**

- Planning Appeal APP/Z1510/W/17/3173352
- Planning Appeal APP/Z1510/W/18/3207509