



## Bentley Neighbourhood Plan *Landscape Appraisal*

*Final Report*



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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Alison Farmer Associates was appointed by Bentley Neighbourhood Plan Group to undertake a landscape appraisal of the Parish, in order to provide a robust evidence base to support the development of policy within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. In particular the Neighbourhood Plan Group required land surrounding the village of Bentley to be assessed in detail to establish the sensitivity and capacity of these areas to accommodate housing/employment development.
- 1.1.2 Bentley Neighbourhood Plan area covers the same area as the Parish. It stretches from Old Hall Wood and Brockley Wood in the north, to the Samford River in the south and from the A12 in the west as far as the A137 in the east. The Parish includes the main village of Bentley in the southern half of the area as well as a dispersed pattern of farms and properties along rural lanes and larger historic houses within grounds such as Bentley Manor, Bentley Hall and Bentley Park. The historic church within the Parish is separate from the main village and associated with Bentley Hall.

## 1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The key objective of this study is to provide a robust understanding of the character and qualities of the Neighbourhood Plan Area in order to make sound judgements as to the sensitivity and capacity of land to accommodate housing/employment development. This study also presents guidance on opportunities for landscape enhancement and green infrastructure which collectively help to shape a vision for the Parish.

## 1.3 Methodology and Approach

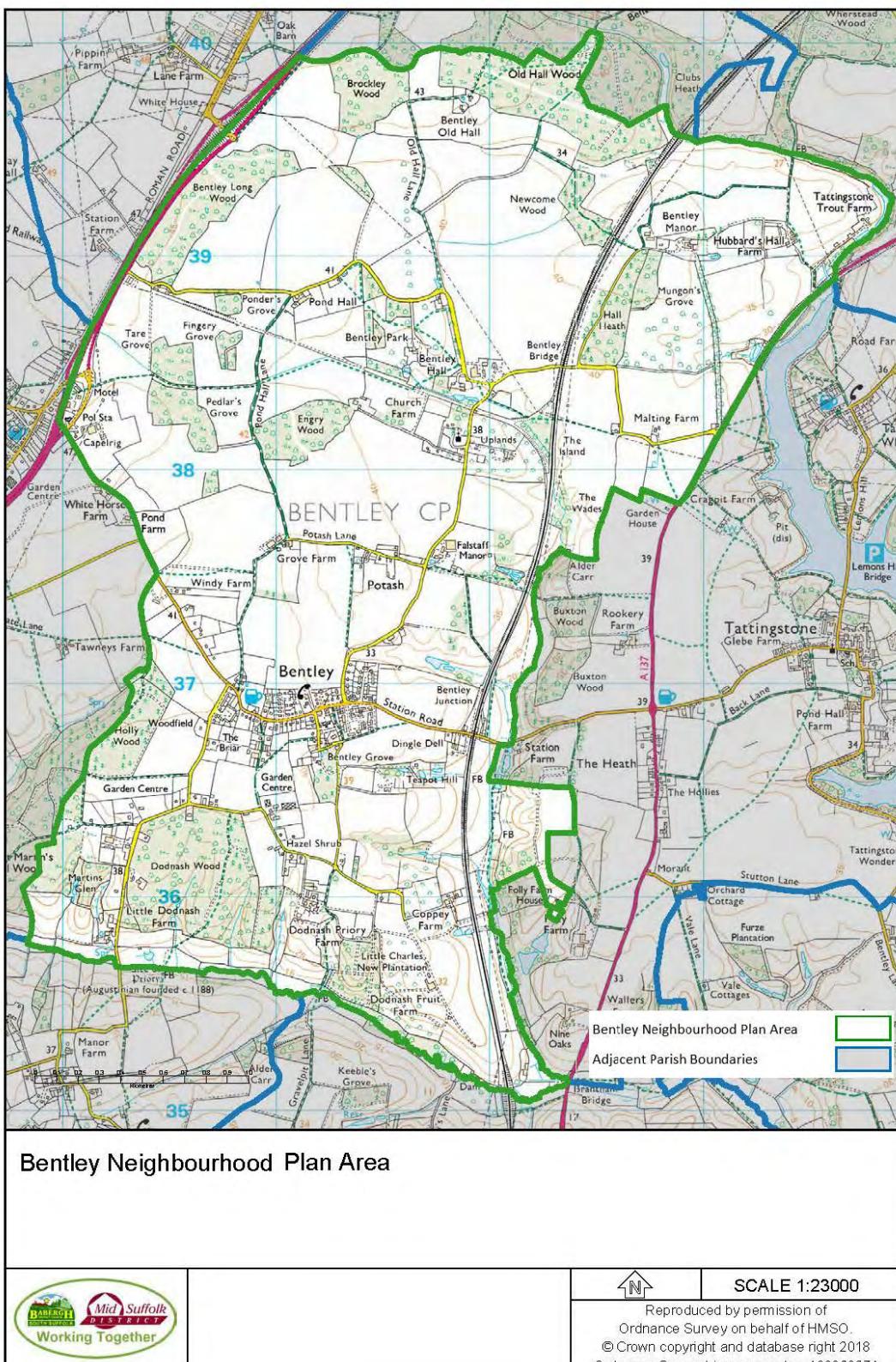
- 1.3.1 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with Guidelines on Landscape Character Assessment<sup>1</sup> and Guidelines in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment<sup>2</sup> and recently published guidance on Landscape Sensitivity<sup>3</sup>. Reference has also been made to other recent sensitivity and capacity assessments which reflect best practice. The approach has included a client meeting and familiarisation site visit, desk study and further detailed site assessment during June/July 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) Natural England.

<sup>2</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 (third edition).

<sup>3</sup> An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management, Natural England, June 2019



Bentley Neighbourhood Plan Area (Source: Babergh District Council Website)

1.3.2 This assessment is a landscape capacity-led approach which considers the settlement within Bentley Parish holistically and within its landscape setting. The approach also adopts emerging thinking on ecosystem services **and the benefits which are afforded by the special qualities of the area and opportunities to enhance and develop these further**. Analysis is used to provide robust evidence to support judgements on the sensitivity of land and its capacity to accommodate housing/employment development from a landscape/settlement perspective.

1.3.3 The appraisal reviews existing documentary evidence on the settlement and its landscape and considers the historic evolution, describes landscape setting, key views, gateways and landmarks as well as valued characteristics and spaces. Opportunities for environmental initiatives which seek to enhance local identity and settlement distinctiveness are highlighted where relevant.

1.3.4 The following definitions of terms are used in this study:

**Sensitivity** is defined as the ability of the landscape to accommodate a particular type of change (in this case housing or employment development) without adverse effect and is determined by consideration of local character and visual sensitivity.

**Value** is defined as the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. In this study, value has been assessed with reference to Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3<sup>rd</sup> edition).

**Capacity** of an area considers the extent and nature of development which may be accommodated and includes consideration of opportunities for enhancement or mitigation which may improve the degree of fit and increase capacity of the landscape to accommodate change.

1.3.5 Where land/sites have been assessed in terms of sensitivity and capacity it is from a landscape perspective only and no consideration has been given to matters such as access or land ownership. It is therefore possible that land identified as suitable for development from a landscape perspective, may subsequently be discounted for reasons other than landscape.

## 1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan

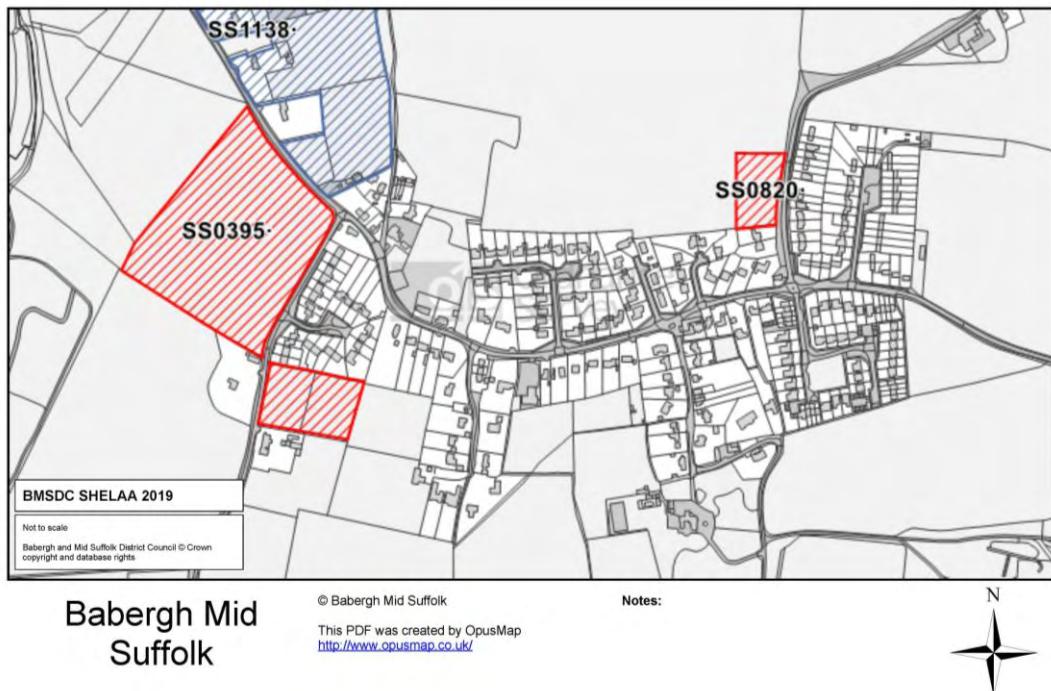
1.4.1 Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), Babergh confirmed the Neighbourhood Plan Area for Bentley on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

1.4.2 The Bentley Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was subsequently established, and a questionnaire survey undertaken in the summer of 2019 which sought the views of the local community. The following results are relevant to this study:

- 250 respondents cherished the 'lovely countryside' when asked what they liked most about living in the village. Other cherished aspects included the 'peace and quiet in the area' and 'nature on the doorstep'.
- When asked what the 2030 vision for the village would be, 200 respondents wanted it to be rural.
- The loss of countryside was the second biggest concern of respondents in relation to new housing, after traffic concerns.
- 185 respondents wished to see the wildlife in the village protected as a priority. Other priorities including the planting of street trees, the use of land behind the village hall and the establishment of a community garden.
- 71% of respondents wanted to see a number of small scale developments (5-15 dwellings), and infill development rather than greenfield sites.

## 1.5 Potential Development Sites

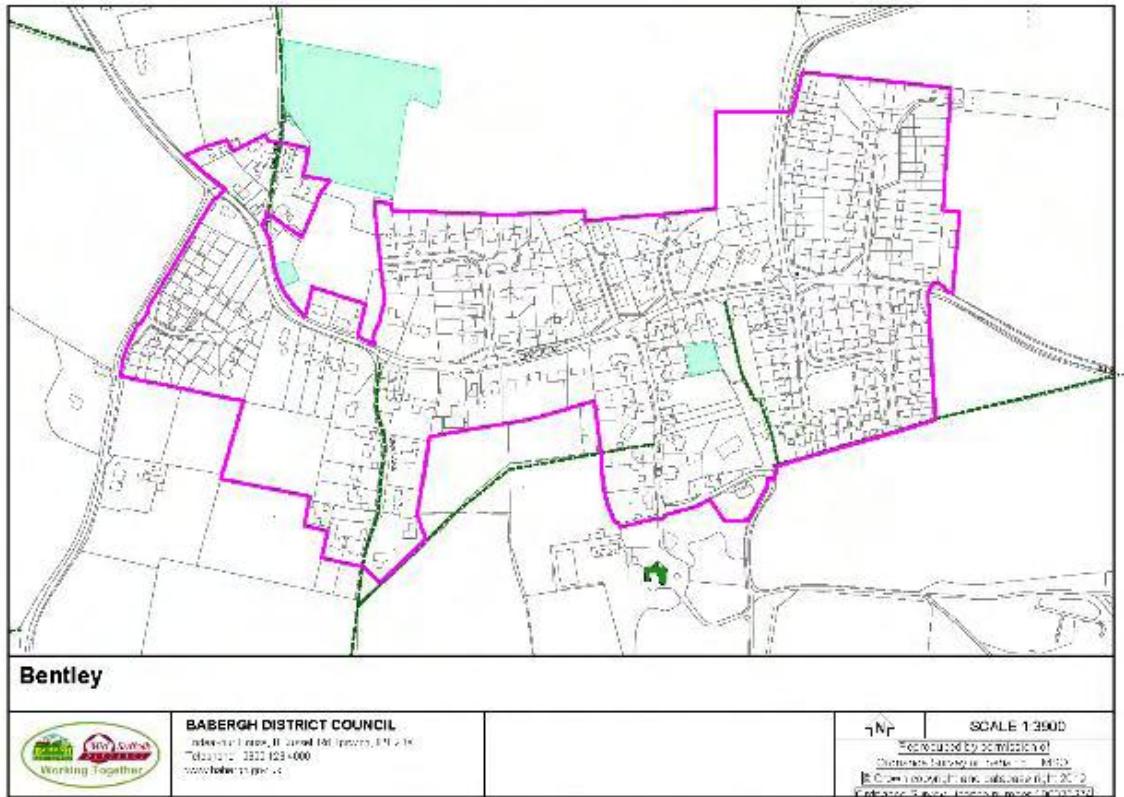
1.5.1 The Draft Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) (July 2019) identified 4 sites with potential for development within the Parish and these are shown in the drawing below. Three of the sites were considered suitable, available and achievable (shown in red) and one, SS1138, was identified as unsuitable (shown in blue) due to poor connectivity to the existing settlement.



1.5.2 Details relating to the suitable sites are as follows:

- **SS1044** – Land East of Bergholt Road. The site was considered potentially suitable for residential development, taking identified constraints (including proximity to the AONB extension) into account. Estimated dwellings yield 20.
- **SS0395** – Land south of Station (Capel) Road and west of Bergholt Road. The site was considered potentially suitable for residential development, taking identified constraints (including proximity to the AONB extension and area of archaeological potential) into consideration. Estimated dwellings yield 60.
- **SS0820** – Land west of Church Road. Part development of the site (eastern edge road frontage) was considered potentially suitable for residential development, taking identified constraints (including archaeological potential and access) into consideration. Estimated dwellings yield 40.

1.5.3 In the recently published Joint Mid Suffolk and Babergh Local Plan (Preferred Options Consultation Draft, July 19), Bentley is identified as a Hinterland Village. The Plan specifies a minimum housing requirement for the Bentley Neighbourhood Plan area of 52 dwellings. There are no allocated sites identified however the settlement boundary (shown in pink below) includes land west of Church Road (site SS0820) and land west of Link Lane (approved housing scheme).



1.5.4 The tables below set out current and approved planning applications. These are useful to understand in terms of change which is likely to occur and where pressure is currently being experienced. These tables should not be used to provide an assessment of housing numbers being accommodated within the Parish.

***Within and adjacent to Bentley Village***

<b>Application No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
B/17/00003	16 dwellings. Approved
DC/17/03175	1 dwelling. Approved
DC/18/02184	4 dwellings. Approved
DC/19/01097	3 dwellings. Withdrawn
DC/19/00291	Includes SHELAA site SS0802. 45 dwellings and new school drop off. Pending
DC/19/03787	8 dwellings. Pending
DC/19/03322	1 dwelling. Refused

***Within the wider Parish***

<b>Application No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
DC/17/06221	1 dwelling. Approved
DC/17/04729	2 dwellings. Approved
DC/17/02077	1 Dwelling. Approved

## 2: The Evolution of Bentley Parish

### 2.1 Early Origins and Evolution

- 2.1.1 The early origins of settlement within the Parish have been influenced by the underlying geology and drainage system. Most of the Parish has an underlying geology of Red Crag Formation giving rise to light sandy, free draining soils. The tributary valleys to the south eastern and southern boundaries of the Parish consist of the heavier soils of London Clay.
- 2.1.2 The primary watercourse within the Parish is the Samford stream which flows through an east-west steep sided valley and forms the southern boundary of the Parish. Flowing in from the north is a notable northern-south orientated tributary which creates the eastern edge of the Parish. At the north eastern corner of the Parish is a further stream which feeds into Alton Water. Beyond the valleys the Parish comprises an elevated farmed plateau which is gently undulating.
- 2.1.3 The Domesday records 7 households with one mill and one church within Bentley Parish. By the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS in the late 1800's the settlement across the Parish comprised a dispersed pattern with clusters of dwellings at junctions (such as at the Case Is Altered Public House or Bentley Station) or manor houses (such as Bentley Grove or Bentley Hall and Park). The latter was associated with the Parish Church and an area of parkland landscape. This latter cluster carried the place name Bentley. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that development focused along Caple and Station Roads in the southern half of the Parish. This development, including the introduction of small-scale housing estates accessed off the main road, has over time filled in the gaps between dwelling clusters. The result was the creation of a more nucleated settlement which then took the name Bentley Village. **The isolated location of the present-day Parish Church and Primary School is a reminder of the more dispersed origins of settlement pattern in the Parish. This pattern is also reflected in the relatively dense network of narrow rural lanes which connected dwellings and farms, and the polyfocal nature of the village which has no historic core.**
- 2.1.4 The sequence of maps below illustrates how settlement has evolved over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



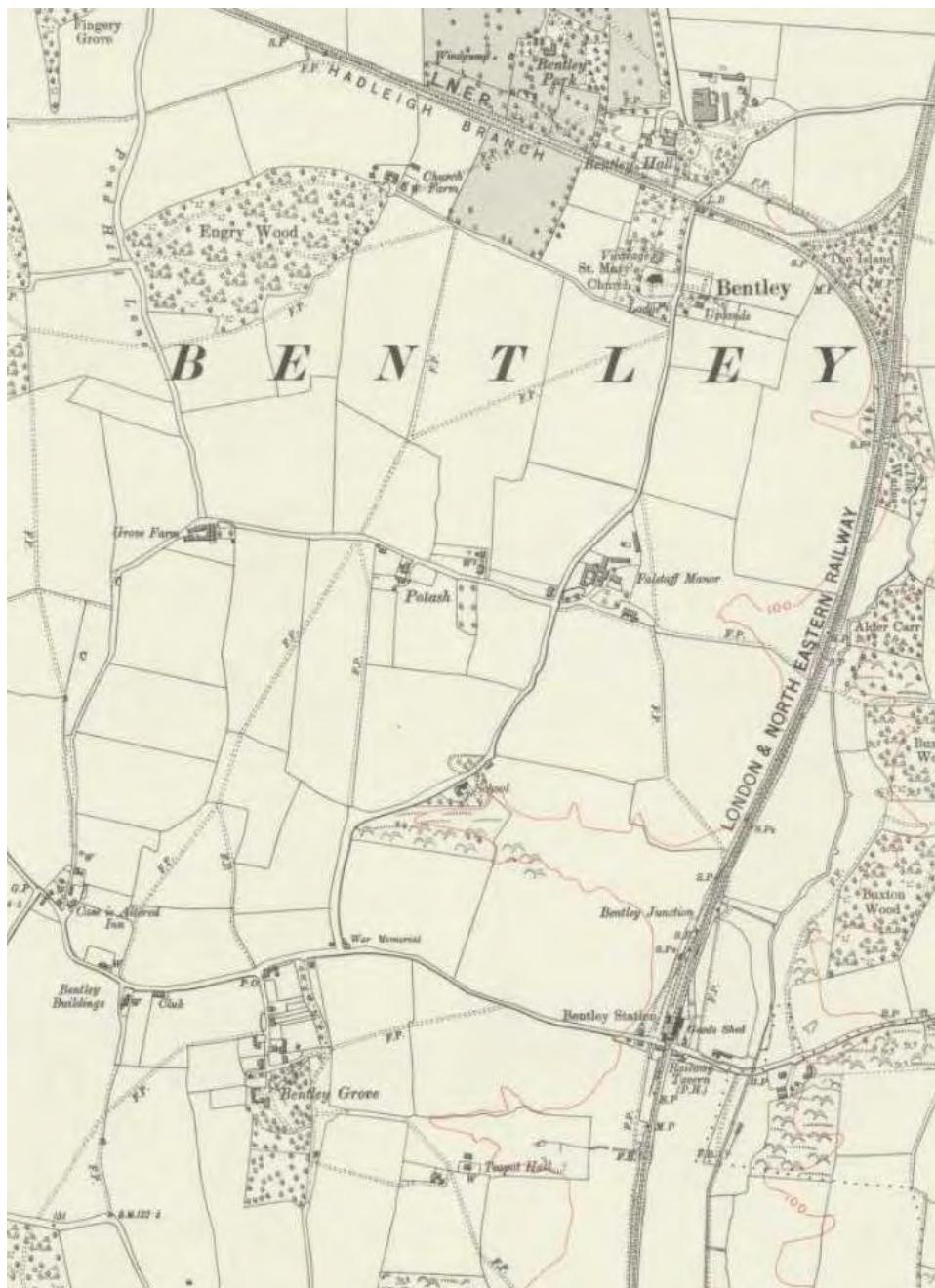
**Map 1: Extract from Hodkinson's 1783 map of Suffolk**

This map illustrates large blocks of woodland within the Parish, wrapping around Old Hall to the north with Hulley Wood and Dodnash Wood to the south. The Parish church sits at the head of the Samford tributary valley, with settlement dispersed along the lanes throughout. Note the place name Bentley is associated with the Church and no Bentley village is evident.



**Map 2: Extract from 1887 map. (source – Historic Maps Scotland)**

This map shows the introduction of the Great Eastern Railway as well as the Hadleigh Branch (now disused). Note that the place name Bentley is still associated with Bentley Hall, Park and Church/Vicarage. A cluster of dwellings can be seen along Potash Lane (an area known to have been a focus on small scale industry). To the south three clusters of development are evident – one associated with the Case is Altered Public House, the second associated with Grove Lane and Bentley Grove and the third associated with Bentley Station. Other isolated properties are seen at Falstaff Manor and Teapot Hall.



**Map 3: Extract from 1924 Map. (source – Historic Maps Scotland)**

This map illustrates the extent of woodland and parkland in the northern part of the Parish. It otherwise shows little change from the 1887 map.



**Map 4: Extract from 1958 map. (source – Historic Maps Scotland)**

This map illustrates the start of development in the southern part of the Parish along the east-west Capel and Station Road and also along the lanes which extend perpendicular to this. This map also shows a degree of field boundary loss in the central part of the Parish. Otherwise there has been limited change. Note that the place name Bentley is still associated with the Church and that a number of small scale orchards have developed alongside dwellings on Capel Road.

2.1.5 The present-day OS map (illustrated on page 3) demonstrates the establishment of Bentley village through infill development and small-scale residential cul-de-sacs accessed off the Capel and Station Roads in the last 50 years.

2.1.6 Today, Bentley has a population of around 776 (2011 census). Its origins as a dispersed settlement pattern are still evident in form of the village which has no historic centre but a sequence of small focal points such as the pub, war manorial and station. The cul-de-sac developments have a relatively uniform character with a number comprising just single storey dwellings. These areas contrast with the more eclectic mix of housing along the historic lanes which run perpendicular to the main road and include a range of houses dating to different periods. These lanes also retain a rural character often with no footpaths, kerbs or street lighting. Due to new infill housing being accessed off the main road through the village, the rural and eclectic character of the perpendicular lanes remains intact and forms an important characteristic of the village.



Grove Road illustrating the rural and varied character of this back lane which is typical of the village. Here there is an eclectic mix of dwellings and varied orientation of buildings. Note the wooded backdrop as a result of parkland trees associated with Bentley Grove. The dwellings are often within large plots or associated with small scale pastures at the rear. The character of this back lane is also repeated along Link Lane and Case Lane.

## 3: Landscape Character

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

3.1.1 Bentley Parish is covered by National Character Area - NCA 82 Suffolk Coast and Heaths. The A12 / western boundary of the Parish also marks the boundary with the neighbouring NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. These character area boundaries are not abrupt but transitional, although NCA 82 is most strongly expressed.

3.1.2 This assessment notes the following relevant characteristics:

- Inland valleys contain small-scale historic patterns of irregular drained meadow enclosure, bounded by elm hedgerows
- Settlement is sparse, with small isolated villages and farmsteads
- A rich archaeology includes....numerous country house estates
- Areas of older, mainly broadleaved plantation woodland, occur within the estate and landscape parklands along the Stour and Orwell valley slopes as well as along the A12 corridor.

### 3.2 Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment

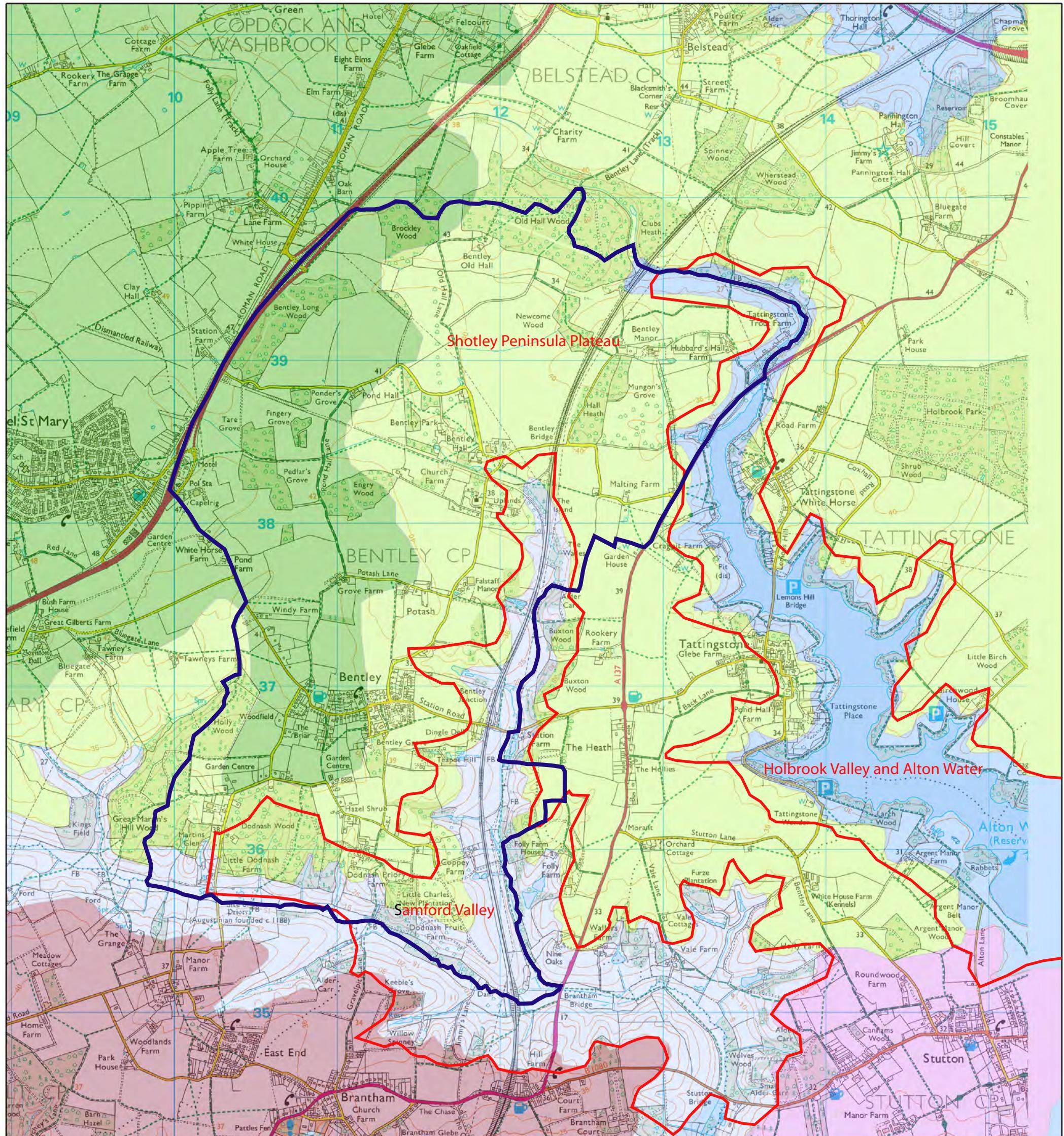
3.2.1 The landscape of Bentley Parish is described in the Suffolk County Assessment which divides the area into four character types as illustrated on Figure 1. The predominant landscape types in the Parish are Rolling Valley Farmlands within the Samford Valley and its tributary; Ancient Estate Farmlands forming the majority of the landscape above the incised valley slopes and Ancient Estate Claylands which forms the marginally higher plateau landscape (above the c. 40m contour) in the west of the Parish. In the northeast of the parish is a small area of Rolling Estate Farmlands which comprise the upper valley of Alton Water. This latter character type is not discussed further due to its small extent within the Parish. However, characteristics relating to the three main character types are provided below.

#### ***Rolling Valley Farmlands***

3.2.2 This landscape type occurs along the main Samford Valley and its northern tributary. The outer edge of this type is generally marked by the break in slope (c. 35m contour). Valley slopes are steep in places with woodland along the outer edge and often defining the rim of the valleys. Where the upper slopes are open there are longer distance views across and down the valley landscape. The valleys have a wooded, pastoral and small-scale character. The tributary valley includes the Great Eastern Railway (Ipswich to Manningtree trainline), a line of pylons and in places the valley slopes have been quarried for sand and gravel deposits.

3.2.3 The description for this landscape type within the Suffolk County LCA highlights the following:

*'This landscape has small and medium sized fields on the valley sides with an*



### Key

- Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Character Areas

### Suffolk County Landscape Typology

- Rolling Valley Farmlands
- Rolling Estate Farmlands
- Ancient Estate Farmlands
- Ancient Estate Claylands

N



0m 500m 1km 1.5km 2km

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Bentley Neighbourhood Plan  
Landscape Assessment

**Figure 1: Landscape Character**

*organic form which was created by the piecemeal enclosure of common arable and pasture lands... . The overall impression in the landscape is of sinuous and organic boundaries around the anciently enclosed fields'*

3.2.4 Management Guidelines for the landscape type note that this landscape is particularly sensitive due to its topography and rich cultural heritage. More specifically:

*'In these valley side landscapes, the visual impact of new vertical elements is increased by the landform. Therefore, new buildings are likely to have a significant impact on both the character and visual amenity of valley floor and valley side landscape types. The setting of specific features and elements of these landscapes, such as small-scale enclosure patterns or historic buildings and monuments, can also be significantly damaged'*

*'Valley side landscapes have historically been a focus for settlement. However, large-scale expansion should be confined to the adjacent plateau. In this location the landscape and visual impact can be more easily mitigated with effective planting and design'*

3.2.5 In relation to large scale buildings on or near the valley sides it states that:

*'The siting, form, orientation and colour of these buildings make a considerable contribution to mitigating their impact. However, in a valley side situation, especially if located on the skyline, they will have a considerable visual impact. It is preferable to seek a location outside the valley where the visual impact of this type of development can be mitigated much more effectively'*

### **Ancient Estate Farmlands**

3.2.6 Within Bentley Parish this landscape type occurs adjacent to the Rolling Valley Farmlands Type forming a transitional landscape between plateau and valley. It is a gently sloping and undulating in places generally ranging between 25-40m AOD. The upper slopes above the valleys can be steep in places with wider elevated views. This landscape supports a high concentration of woodland and a variety of field sizes – mainly medium scale arable fields but some smaller scale pasture enclosures closer to the settlement edge. **This is a settled landscape comprising a dispersed pattern of individual farmsteads and cottages.** Bentley occurs set back from the valley fringes at the junction between this type and the Ancient Estate Claylands. with larger areas of settlement on the upper slopes forming the plateau fringe. Towards the south of the Parish there is a predominance of orchards, fruit farms and garden centres.

3.2.7 The description for this character type highlights the following:

*'This is a very anciently-settled area, .... The existing settlement pattern is mainly one of nucleated villages, but with some dispersed farmsteads and clusters of houses.'*

*'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 (probably named after a French abbot who owned them c.1200), Dodnash Wood and Holly Wood (recorded as the 'wood of Hulney' in the late 12th century) in Bentley and Old Hall Wood on Bentley's northern boundary ...'*

3.2.8 Management Guidelines for the landscape type note that:

*'The settlement pattern in the Ancient Estate Farmlands has a strong tendency towards clustered villages, surrounded by a scattering of individual farmsteads. Wherever possible this clear distinction should be maintained.'*

*'The change of land use, especially to residential curtilage, can often be more disruptive to the wider landscape than modifications to the buildings. Changes to the surrounding land from agricultural to residential use, which entails the introduction of lighting and other suburban features, can be extremely intrusive. Unless the site is well hidden, it may be necessary to impose clear conditions relating to the extent of garden curtilage and how this is screened from the wider landscape. The impact of new garden curtilage in this landscape is potentially even more significant than that in a clayland landscape because of the characteristic settlement pattern found here...'*

3.2.9 In relation to large scale agricultural buildings in open countryside, it states that:

*'The right choice of siting, form, orientation and colour of these buildings can make a considerable contribution to mitigating their impact. The plantations, shelterbelts, and tree lines found throughout this landscape provide opportunities to design locally appropriate planting schemes to reduce the visual impact further.'*

3.2.10 In relation to leisure facilities - Golf courses, holiday complexes, caravan sites, tourist centres, it states that:

*'The regular and recent nature of this landscape means that it does have more potential capacity, in respect of visual impact, to accept these developments but effective design and mitigation measures will be vital.'*

*'However, the impact on the character of the landscape both directly and indirectly may be highly significant and it may not be possible to effectively mitigate these impacts. Therefore, such developments would constitute a profound and undesirable change to landscape character, especially given the deeply rural and tranquil nature of the Shotley peninsula.'*

### ***Ancient Estate Claylands***

3.2.11 Within Bentley Parish this landscape type occurs along its western half, typically above 40m AOD forming the upper plateau. The topography undulates gently and contains a mix of woodland and large arable fields. The majority of the village of Bentley is located within this character type. The A12 forms the north western boundary to the Parish.

3.2.12 The description for this character type highlights the following:

*'The enclosure pattern is generally ancient and organic in appearance'*

*'The settlement pattern consists of occasional villages and numerous dispersed hamlets and farmsteads. Many of the farmsteads are medieval in origin and some are surrounded by moats'*

*'Blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland are scattered throughout the area, made up of oak, ash, field maple, hornbeam and small-leaved lime. Hedgerow trees are ubiquitous and in many places this landscape can feel well wooded'*

*'Despite the reasonably well-wooded landscape, the plateau landform means that the views are open and can be long. However, the comprehensive network of winding lanes and tall hedges means that other areas can be much more intimate'*

3.2.13 Management Guidelines for the landscape type note that:

*'Parishes in this landscape tend to consist of multiple clusters of varying sizes. The release of land for development should, if at all possible, reflect the local pattern. Ribbon development destroys this pattern and can have a considerable impact on the wider landscape'*

### 3.3 Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland LCA

3.3.1 The landscape of Bentley Parish is further detailed in the Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Assessment which identified three character areas as illustrated on Figure 1. These are Shotley Peninsula Plateau forming the majority of the Parish; Samford Valley following the southern and northern tributaries, and Holbrook Valley and Alton Water in the north east of the Parish. This latter area is not discussed further as it forms a small part of the Parish. This assessment provides a more detailed understanding of the landscape within the Parish and also helps define the upper slopes which form part of the perceived Samford Valley. Key characteristics relating to the two main character types are provided below.

#### Shotley Peninsula Plateau

3.3.2 The description for this character area highlights the following:

*'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.'*

*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...*

*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.*

*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.'*

### **Samford Valley**

3.3.3 The description for this character area highlights the following:

*'a valley landscape which is incised and narrow with steep valley sides . . . . There are few places where the valley is accessible by car as roads tend to pass across the valley rather than along it. Footpaths through the valley do however afford opportunities for quiet solitude. Similarly, there is little settlement except for the occasional isolated farm.*

*Ancient woodlands on the adjacent plateau landscape also help frame the valley landscape and reinforce the sense of enclosure.*

*The railway line connecting Manningtree with Ipswich severs the valley west of Brantham Bridge and passes through the northern tributary valley on its western valley sides. . . . the railway does affect perceptions of tranquillity within the tributary valley, as do the pylons which follow an almost identical route northwards.'*

## **3.4 Special Landscape Area**

3.4.1 The majority of the Parish was formerly designated as the Dodnash Special Landscape Area (SLA) (refer to Figure 2). An SLA is a local landscape designation identified in the 1980's, reflecting attractive combinations of landscape elements. Although the original assessment which lead to the area being designated is not available, the following types of landscape are known to be included:

- 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.**

3.4.2 Policy relating to the SLA has not been carried through into the emerging Local Plan.

3.4.3 The NPPF (Feb 2019) para 107a states that:

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

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

3.4.4 The NPPF does not define what is meant by a Valued Landscape. However, the Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 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'.*

3.4.5 Box 5.1 on page 84 of GLVIA sets out the criteria used to assist in defining a valued landscape. The criteria include landscape quality (condition), scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interests, recreational value, perceptual aspects and associations. Importantly the guidance notes that the criteria are not comprehensive and other factors may also be considered important in specific areas.

3.4.6 The presence of valued landscape within the Parish is considered further in section 4.6 below.

Extension was approved in 2020

### 3.5 Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

3.5.1 Bentley Parish falls within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Project Area. Whilst this is not a formal statutory designation it nonetheless forms an area of landscape which shares similar characteristics to the AONB and is a focus for the activity of the AONB Partnership. In recent years, land within Bentley Parish has been evaluated by Natural England in relation to a possible extension to the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (SC&H AONB). This proposal is currently with the Secretary of State for confirmation. During the evaluation which accompanied the proposals the Parish formed part of Evaluation Area 3, which was further subdivided into Area D1: Samford Valley and Area D3: Shotley Peninsula Plateau.

3.5.2 The evaluation noted that Area D1 Samford Valley 'forms a long and complex hidden valley on the northern side of the Stour Estuary. Special qualities relate to the distinctive pattern of extensive ancient seminatural woodlands, babbling streams, narrow lanes and greenways, irregularly shaped meadows and wet pasture, broad hedges, and vernacular farm buildings which, combined with the complex and sometimes steep morphology of the valley, give high landscape and scenic quality.'

*This is an inward-facing, traditional pastoral and small-scale landscape which has local visual complexity, and a tranquil, remote character’.*

3.5.3 The assessment concluded the Samford Valley landscape has the following special qualities:

- High concentration of ancient woodland framing the valley, some with remnant bank and ditch features and which are associated with the writings of Oliver Rackham.
- Remnant of the 12th Century Augustinian Dodnash Priory is a scheduled monument, reflecting its national value.
- The largest and most complex tributary valley to the Suffolk/Essex estuaries whose form, pattern of enclosures and land use is representative of tributary valleys within the existing AONB.

3.5.4 The Samford Valley therefore has progressed as an extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

3.5.5 In relation to evaluation area D3: Shotley Peninsula Plateau, the evaluation noted the following special qualities:

- Overall, the area has a modern utilitarian agricultural character of moderate landscape and scenic quality. There is little sense of relative wildness though **much of the area is tranquil**, reflecting the relative lack of large settlements and major roads.
- **Landscape and scenic quality are highest in areas with some topographical variation and where this combines with areas of semi-natural woodland and views of vernacular buildings, particularly in the area around Bentley Park, Bentley Hall and Bentley Manor where historic landscape patterns remain relatively intact. However, these areas are limited in extent within a wider area which overall, lacks distinction due to the intensity of modern agricultural use.**
- Shotley Peninsula Plateau as a whole is not considered suitable for inclusion within the Candidate Area for designation.

3.5.6 Whilst the evaluation Area D3 was not identified as part of the extension to the AONB, the assessment highlights the area to the north of the village of Bentley as having valued landscape components and which were considered to express a higher scenic quality than found in the wider Shotley Peninsula Plateau. This is considered in more detail in section 4.6 below.

## 3.6 Areas of Open Space

3.6.1 The Parish contains a number of Areas of Open Space as defined in the Joint Mid Suffolk and Babergh Local Plan (Preferred Options Consultation Draft, July 19) and these are illustrated on Figure 2. They include:

- Village Field

- Playing field and play area
- Bentley Bowls Club

3.6.2 NPPF (2019) Section 8 enables local communities, through the development of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, to identify green areas for special protection that are particularly important to them.

3.6.3 Local Green Space (LGS) designation must include land which is locally special offering unique benefits to the local community. It may not be appropriate for some areas or open space to be designated. The NPPF sets out the criteria for designating LGS Sites which can include areas which are:

- a. *in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- b. *demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- c. *local in character and is not an extensive tract of land'.*

3.6.4 Areas of Local Green Space within the Parish have been considered in relation to these criteria (refer to section 4.6 below).

## 4: Detailed Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section builds on previous sections of this report and seeks to establish more detailed baseline data on settlement character and landscape context. Consideration is given to identifying key landmarks and key views in and out of the settlement as well as gateways. It has also considered areas suitable for Local Green Space and valued landscape. The analysis of the Parish is illustrated on Figure 3.

### 4.2 Built Landmarks and Landscape Features

4.2.1 Key built landmarks which contribute to sense of place and orientation have been identified and are illustrated on Figure 2. They include the following:

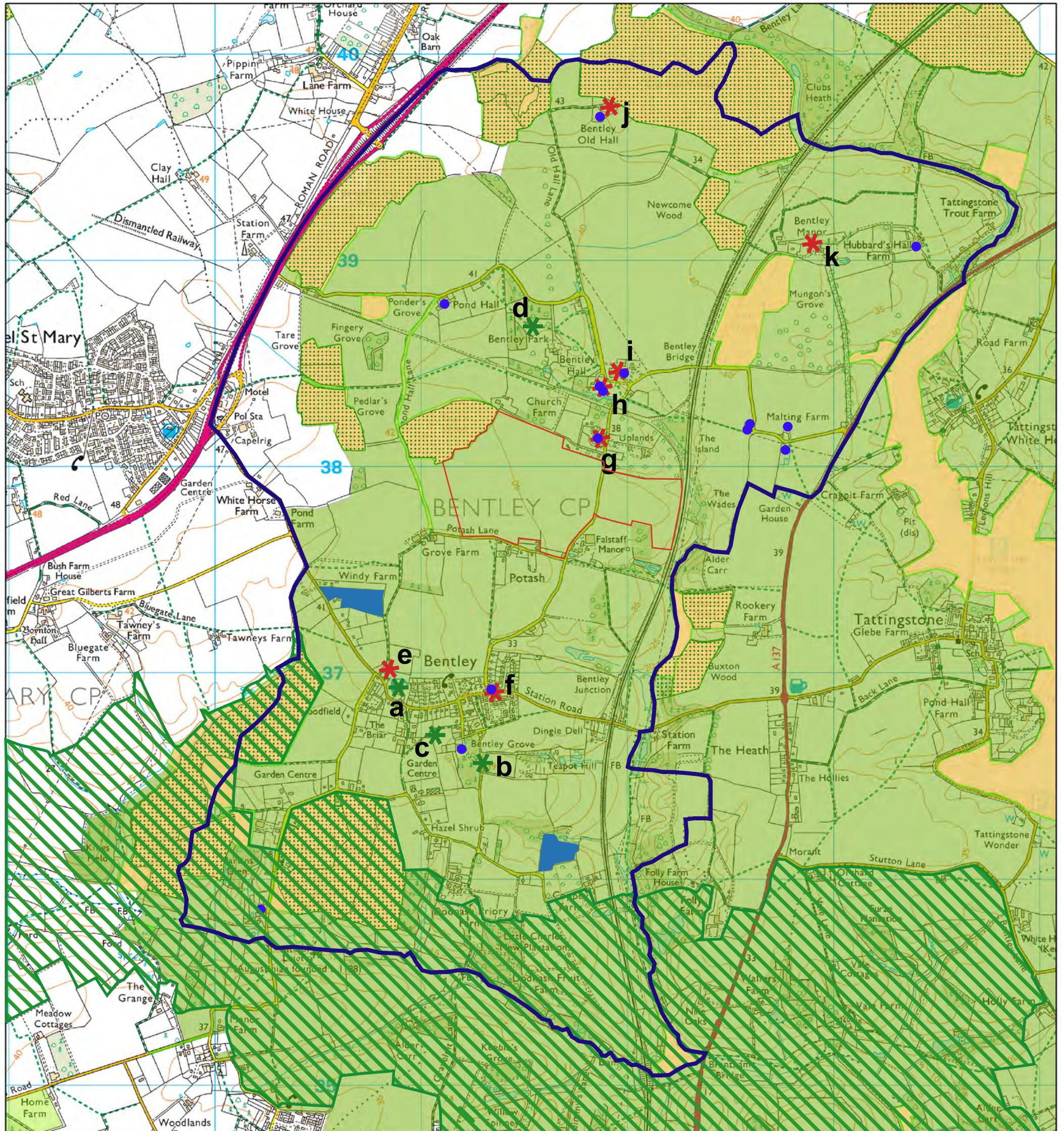
- The Case is Altered Public House, Capel Road
- War memorial, at the junction of Capel Road with Church Road
- Church of St Mary, Grade II\*, Church Road
- Bentley Hall and Meeting Hall Stables, both Grade II\*, Bentley Hall Road
- Bentley Hall Barn, Grade II\*, Bentley Hall Road
- Bentley Old Hall
- Bentley Manor

4.2.2 A number of landscape features have also been identified as important elements contributing to local sense of place. These include:

- Open space adjacent to the village pub
- Bentley Grove lime trees
- Small scale pastures south of the village hall and west of Grove Road
- Historic parkland associated with Bentley Hall

### 4.3 Rural Lanes

4.3.1 An important characteristic of Bentley Parish is its network of historic lanes which retain a strongly rural character as a result of their narrow width, sinuous nature, steep banks in places, grass verges and veteran trees. Rural lanes may be identified as Quiet Lanes which is a nationally recognised designation, requesting people to “Expect & Respect”. The lane is hosted by a local, rural community, such as a parish or village shop, who recognise that Quiet Lane designation can bring benefit to their local quality of life.



### Key

- Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Listed Buildings
- Ancient Woodland
- Local Wildlife Site
- Traditional Orchard
- Former Special Landscape Area
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB

- Landscape Features
  - a. The Case Has Altered Open Space
  - b. Bentley Grove Limes
  - c. Small Scale Pastures
  - d. Historic Parkland
- Built Landmarks
  - e. The Case is Altered Public House
  - f. War Memorial
  - g. St Mary's Church
  - h. Bentley Hall
  - i. Bentley Hall Barn
  - j. Bentley Old Hall
  - k. Bentley Manor

### Bentley Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Assessment

Figure 2: Designations and Features





Grove Road - typically narrow and rural character of the lanes in the Parish which are single width with some passing places and contain many bends which obscure the road and enable views out across wider countryside.



Bergholt Road - looking southwards towards the Samford Valley. Sections of this narrow lane are sunken as the trees that form Dodnash Wood meet overhead. This lane leads towards Little Dodnash Farmhouse, Grade II Listed and the site of Dodnash Priory.

4.3.2 Lanes may also be designated Protected Lanes. In this instance they are particularly valued for the following reasons<sup>4</sup>:

- Diversity: the range of features, form, alignment, depth and width of the lane
- Historic Integrity: Extent to which the lanes are intact and free from improvements or damage
- Archaeological Potential: Potential to contain archaeological interest
- Aesthetic value: number of aesthetic features, forms and alignment and significant views
- Biodiversity: Number and nature of wildlife designations, habitats, important species including grass banks and verges, mixed species hedgerows, veteran trees

4.3.3 This assessment has highlighted that the network of rural lanes within the Parish make a strong contribution to the character of Bentley village and the wider landscape (including Bentley Road, Grove Road, Church Road and Bentley Hall Road). Further work is required to establish if these lanes should be identified as particularly valued using the criteria above or as Quiet Lanes. This could then inform policy development within the Neighbourhood Plan for their conservation along with local community initiatives for enhancement.

## 4.4 Important Views

4.4.1 Bentley Parish Neighbourhood Plan Group have identified a range of views throughout the Parish which they regard as reflecting the special qualities of the Neighbourhood Plan area and which are highly valued by local residents. This assessment seeks to complement this work and focuses on the views into and out the village of Bentley.

4.4.2 Key views are illustrated on Figure 3 and described briefly below:

### Views Out of the Settlement

#### **Viewpoint 1: Looking North along Church Road**

4.4.3 On leaving the village, Church Road has a transitional character where housing flanks one side of the road – built form, mown verges, concrete kerb and footpath introducing some urban elements. Nevertheless, the narrow width of the lane and its western vegetated banks and soft verge mean than it retains a strongly rural character contrasting with the main road through the village. The land drops away from the village into the upper reaches of the tributary valley, reinforcing a sense of departure from the village and adding local distinctiveness. Filtered views to the wider landscape to the north are possible in winter.

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<sup>4</sup> These criteria have been established and used by Local Authorities in Essex over many years.



***Viewpoint 2: Looking northeast from edge of settlement on Station Road***

4.4.4 Elevated views to the wider undulating landscape on the eastern edge of the village. Here the plateau farmland dips gently into the adjoining valley landscapes resulting a close visual relationship between the two with woodland forming the skyline. Much of the village edge is screened by vegetation and set back from the edge of the valley.



***Viewpoint 3: Looking southeast from edge of settlement***

4.4.5 View out from Grove Road and Public Right of Way. The built edge along Grove Lane is well vegetated whereas that along Silver Leys (to the left of the picture) is more open, the cul-de-sac layout of housing creating an uniform built edge. Elevated outward views from the edge of the village are across gently sloping land that drops away into the tributary of the Samford Valley. Woodland forms the skyline.



***Viewpoint 4a and 4b: Looking southeast and west from edge of settlement across pastures***

4.4.6 This view is of the small-scale enclosed pastures that form the southern edge of the settlement. The veteran oak at the centre of these fields along with glimpsed views to historic buildings along Grove Road and the wider countryside give the area a strong sense of place. These fields form part of the historic setting of Bentley Grove.



**Views Looking Towards the Settlement Edge**

***Viewpoint 5: Looking north towards settlement from Grove Road***

4.4.7 The open built edge at the rear of Silver Leys is clearly visible on approaching the village from the south. Built form has a uniformity and curtilage treatments create visual clutter. Grove Lane retains a rural character with its narrow width, sinuous form, grass verges and lime trees.



***Viewpoint 6: Looking north towards settlement from Public Right of Way***

4.4.8 Filtered views to the edge of development on Link Lane. The variety of built form in terms of building style, size and materials gives rise to a visually varied and indented edge with field boundary trees filtering views.



Viewpoint 10: Looking towards the southern settlement boundary.

***Viewpoint 7: Approach to village from the west***

4.4.9 This view is taken from Capel Road approach the village from the west. Windy Farm, on the edge of Bentley can be seen tucked into the landscape. It forms the first of a number of dispersed and loosely arranged dwellings set in large plots along the northern side of Capel Road. The approach into the village is leafy and green, dwellings often set back behind hedgerows.



Viewpoint 7: Approach to settlement from the west.

***Viewpoint 8: Approach to village from the west***

4.4.10 This view is taken from Capel Road. The bend in the road enable views across open arable to the south east and properties off Bergholt Road which have a wooded backdrop. Vegetation along the road and setting back of properties results in this approach maintaining a rural feel. The gateway into the village is not reached until the junction with Bergholt Road. The open arable field and wooded backdrop to houses are important components of this view.



Viewpoint 8: Approach to settlement from west.

***Viewpoint 9: Views to the northern edge of settlement***

4.4.11 This view is taken from the public right of way that leads north west from Case Lane and looks to the northern edge of settlement, across medium scale arable fields. The settlement edge is heavily vegetated, barely discernible from the wider landscape, with glimpses of rooflines amongst the vegetation. Visible dwellings are located on East Mill Green, South View Green, and Church Road.



Viewpoint 9: View towards northern edge of settlement.

***Viewpoint 10: Views to the northern edge of settlement***

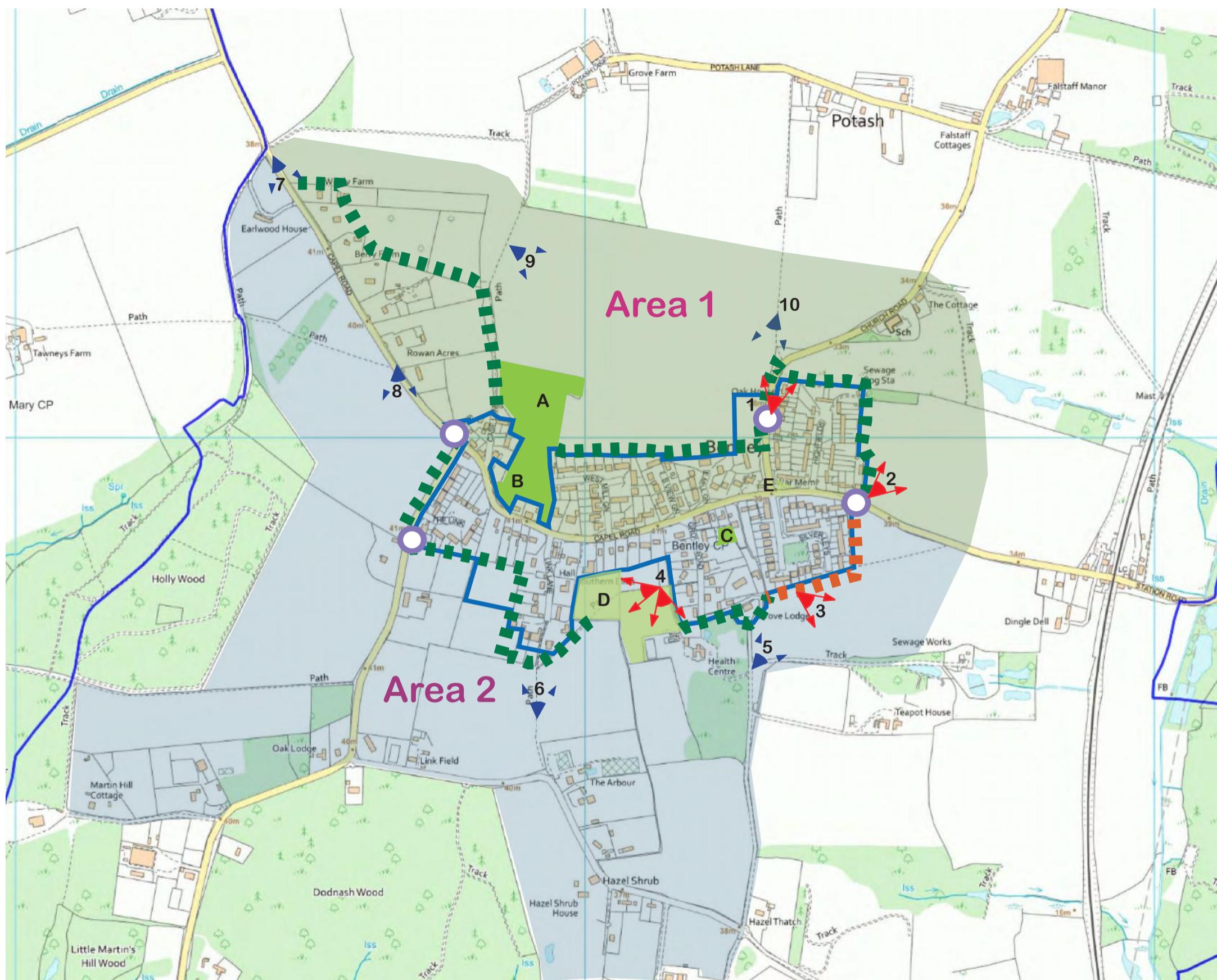
4.4.12 This viewpoint looks to the northern edge of settlement from a public right of way. The distinctive undulation formed by the upper reaches of the tributary valley is apparent in the foreground and is distinctive in terms of the village setting. The edge of the village is heavily vegetated with only glimpsed views of rooftops visible.



Viewpoint 10: Looking towards the southern settlement boundary.

## 4.5 Approach and Gateways

4.5.1 The viewpoint analysis above illustrates the general lack of visibility of the village from the wider landscape. Where there are views towards built form, they are often substantially filtered by vegetation such that only a small proportion of development is



### Key

<span style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Settlement Boundary	<span style="background-color: #80B140; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Assessment Area 1
<span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Gateways	<span style="background-color: #A9C4E8; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Assessment Area 2
<span style="background-color: #80B140; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Existing Areas of Open Space		
	A. Village Field		
	B. Playing Field and Play Area		
	C. Bentley Bowls Club		
<span style="background-color: #80B140; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Proposed Local Green Space		
	D. Small pastures south of Village Hall		
	E. Triangular area associated with War Memorial		
<span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Views Towards Settlement		
<span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Views to Wider Landscape		
<span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Vegetated Built Edge		
<span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"></span>	Open Built Edge		

**Bentley Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Assessment**  
**Figure 3: Detailed Analysis**

N  
↑ 0m 500m 1km 1.5km 2km

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visible. This gives the impression of a dispersed settlement pattern set within a wider landscape and frequently with a wooded backdrop. This character is typical of the Parish as a whole which has historically evolved from a dispersed settlement form and which is still readily apparent around Bentley Hall to the north and along Hazel Shrub to the south. The rural character of the lanes approaching the village reinforce this rural dispersed character. Predominately the approaches are transitional with development occurring on one side of the road before the gateway is reached, often at a road junction. The local topography also enhances the sense of arrival and departure, especially along Station Road, Church Road at the eastern end of the village and Bergholt Road to the south, as the land dips away to the surrounding valleys.

4.5.2 Within the village the rural landscape remains close to the main street due to the linear form of the village and narrow depth of development. The indented edge created by development along perpendicular lanes reinforces this. Open space therefore extends into the built edge to the north and especially at The Case is Altered pub but also to the south where the small-scale pastures form an immediate and accessible open space between Link Lane and Grove Road.

## 4.6 Local Green Space

4.6.1 This assessment has considered opportunities for the designation of additional areas of Local Green Space using the criteria set out in Section 3.6 above.

Area	Analysis	Recommendation
Small scale pastures south of Village Hall and west of Grove Road	Remnant area of small scale enclosures close to the settlement edge accessed via rights of way. Area is valued for its historic enclosures and veteran tree, nature conservation interest and access to natural green space close to the settlement. This area of open space forms a transition between the village and wider agricultural landscape.	Consider for Local Green Space Designation
Open space at centre of Silver Leys	This area of open space is of amenity value to the local residents. This area does not have an historic or nature conservation interest but does have potential to be managed by the local community for nature conservation.	Consider for community nature conservation project
Open space at centre of Highfields	This area of open space is of amenity value to the local residents. This area does not have an historic or nature conservation interest but does have potential to be managed by the local community for nature conservation.	Consider for community nature conservation project
Triangular area associated with the War Memorial	This area forms an important break in the street scene and provides an immediate setting and context for the village War Memorial and a focal point at the western end of the village.	Consider for Local Green Space Designation
Triangular greens associated with road junctions	These triangular areas of land forms important breaks in the street scene but lack a strong identity and have limited historic or ecological value. They do however offer opportunities for improved nature conservation and street tree planting.	Consider for community nature conservation and street tree planting project.

## 4.7 Valued Landscape

4.7.1 In the context of the Parish the former Special Landscape Area (SLA) comprised areas of arable plateau to the north and west containing notable ancient woodlands and some parkland, as well as the distinctive incised river valleys.

4.7.2 The former SLA, where it lies beyond the proposed extension to the SC&H AONB but within Bentley Parish, has been reviewed as part of this landscape assessment in the context of the criteria for assessing valued landscapes set out in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). This has revealed that the northern part of the Parish has a weight of evidence to support its recognition as a valued landscape due to its intact historic patterns of settlement, ancient woodland, remnant parkland and rural lanes. Although the topography over much of this landscape is relatively flat, scenic quality is derived from the balanced and cohesive composition of mature trees, wooded skylines, arable fields, historic vernacular buildings and lack of modern development. The footpath network and winding rural lanes, coupled with gentle folds in landform, afford a range of sequential views across a rural backwater which impart strong perceptions of time depth. The ancient woodlands and hedgerows are valued habitats for significant populations of endangered Stag beetle and Dormouse. Many of the buildings are listed and form important groups. These qualities elevate the area above normal countryside.

**Table 1: Value Landscape Assessment**

Criteria	Assessment
<b>Landscape Quality</b> (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape.	The landscape of the arable and wooded plateau in the north of the Parish is in good condition - here historic patterns of enclosure, winding narrow lanes and woodlands remain intact. In the south of the parish the landscape is more fragmented as a result of commercial land uses and pony paddocks. In addition, uncharacteristic non-native planting such as poplars, leylandii and conifer hedgerows, along with close board fencing and concrete post and rail fencing give rise to a landscape of lesser quality. There is also a loss of quality and condition to the eastern valley slopes of the tributary valley where spoil heaps form uncharacteristic mounds on the upper valley slopes. The historic lane network is intact and retains its rural character.
<b>Scenic Quality:</b> The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses.	The whole of the Parish was part of the Dodnash Special Landscape Area. Scenic quality in the northern parts of the Parish derive from the combination of blocks of semi-natural broadleaved woodland which form a treed horizon and medium scale arable fields or areas of remnant parkland comprising areas of pasture with veteran trees or avenues. Whilst there is little notable change in topography visual interest is derived from outstanding historic rural buildings which nestle in the landscape

	<p>including Church of St Mary, Bentley Hall and aisled barn. Settlement is not widely visible with views to individual or small groups of dwellings only, even on the settlement edge. A network of minor sinuous and occasionally incised historic lanes lined by hedgerows, grass verges and mature oaks, traverse the area. The sinuous nature of these lanes gives rise to changing views and vistas which please the senses. Scenic quality declines to the south where the land use is more mixed including horse paddocks, and orchards. The tributary valley to the east, whilst of greater topographic interest is influenced by pylons and the railway which fragment the valley. There is a maturity and deeply rural character to this landscape.</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>This landscape contains ancient woodland habitats, traditional orchards as well as veteran trees which are rare for their relative concentration in the Parish. The low number but fine examples of designated and undesignated heritage assets and their tangible interrelationships is also rare. This area supports a high population of Stag beetle and Dormouse.</p>
<p><b>Representativeness:</b> Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important.</p>	<p>Most of the Parish is representative of Shotley Peninsula Plateau landscape character, with medium scale arable fields bounded by ancient woodlands, and network of historic lanes.</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>Natural heritage interest includes ancient woodland, many of which are Local Wildlife Sites and relatively large populations of Stag beetle and Dormouse. High concentration of rural listed buildings including Church of St Mary, Bentley Hall, Bentley Hall Stables and Bentley Hall Barn as well as Bentley Grove manor house and the Case is Altered pub. Intact pattern of historic winding narrow, and occasionally incised, lanes such as Church Road.</p>
<p><b>Recreational Value:</b> Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.</p>	<p>This landscape is highly valued by the local community for informal outdoor recreation. There are a high concentration of public rights of way and quiet rural lanes through this area. This area includes the South Suffolk Route B Cycle Route which passes along Grove Road and Station Road towards Alton Water to the east.</p>
<p><b>Perceptual aspects:</b> A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and or tranquillity.</p>	<p>A hidden rural landscape, between the A12 and the Colchester to Ipswich railway line, it has an ancient and tranquil character. This landscape feels secretive, hidden by large ancient woodlands and gentle undulations in topography. Tranquillity is reduced due to noise intrusion close to the A12 and railway and visual intrusion from pylons in the east. Traffic on the rural lanes, especially at school drop off and pick up, also reduces tranquillity albeit intermittently.</p>
<p><b>Associations:</b> Some landscapes are associated with particular</p>	<p>Bentley is associated with the Tollemarch family who originated here and had a significant impact on the</p>

people, such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.	economy and politics of East Anglia since the reign of Edward I.
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## 5: Assessment of Local Landscape Areas

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section of the report focusses on the immediate fringes of the settlement of Bentley and considers the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape fringing the settlement to accommodate development. The setting of the village has been divided into two areas for the purposes of assessment which are illustrated on Figure 3. Within each area there may be sites which have already been approved for housing, are associated with current planning applications, or have been allocated in the Local Plan (Preferred Options Consultation Draft).
- 5.1.2 The assessment draws on all baseline data set out in this report. It is from a landscape perspective and does not take account of other issues or constraints which will also affect an area's ability to accommodate housing/employment development.
- 5.1.3 Where it is concluded that areas have some capacity for development it should not be assumed that these areas are free of sensitivity. The detailed assessment for each area, contained in the tables below, sets out the sensitivities relating to each area and highlights opportunities for mitigation and wider landscape enhancement. In this way information is provided on how development may deliver positive environmental gain in accordance with the Government's Environment Strategy, 25 Year Plan which states the clear objective to '*embed an environmental net gain principle for development, including housing and infrastructure*'. In particular this approach avoids the consideration of individual sites in isolation but looks at a broader context within which development can deliver positive change of benefit to the wider Parish and local community and at a landscape scale.

### 5.2 Local Landscape Areas Sensitivity Assessment Tables

## Peripheral Area 1: Bentley North and Eastern Fringes

<b>Relevant Planning Sites</b>	Land West of Church Road (DC/19/03789 – pending decision for 45 dwellings), DC/17/03175 (approved single dwelling). Site SS0820 in SHELAA
<b>Physical Character</b>	This peripheral area forms the northern and eastern edges of Bentley village and comprises medium scale arable fields as part of the plateau as well as the upper valley slopes to the Samford Valley tributary in the east. This landscape has a relatively open simple character and is predominately arable with woodland forming a treed skyline in the middle distance. Topography is gently sloping, increasing in gradient at the upper slopes of the valley. The subtle variations in topography and historic rural lanes are important in defining the setting to this part of the village.
<b>Existing Settlement Edge</b>	Housing on the edge of the settlement comprises predominately small-scale cul-de-sac development built over the last 50 years. The settlement edge is well vegetated, and this coupled with areas of single storey dwellings means that built form is not readily visible from the surrounding landscape. The urban edge is often straight with few indentations.
<b>Views and Visibility</b>	Views of the village from the wider landscape are possible from rural lanes and rights of way across arable farmland. From the north built form is recessive and agricultural qualities dominate. Views out of the settlement are limited from within housing estates but occur more frequently from the rural lanes where they leave the village and change direction or where there are gaps in hedgerows.
<b>Designation/Condition</b>	Previously formed part of the Dodnash SLA but lies beyond the proposed AONB extension. Built form within Bentley comprises mainly housing estates which do not reflect local settlement pattern or historic origins of the settlement. Uniformity of built form lacks distinction. The wider landscape is relatively intensively farmed with some loss of hedgerow pattern and planting of some conifer shelterbelts. Nevertheless, the rural lane network remains intact along with wooded skylines and the predominately soft urban edge means that built form does not dominate.
<b>Perceptual Qualities</b>	This is a rural, tranquil area despite being on the edge of settlement. There is a lack of visibility of housing once beyond the village edge. Housing estates are small scale and have a quietness to them.
<b>Function</b>	This area forms a distinctive rural setting to the village the subtle changes in topography reinforcing the location of the village on higher land, set back from the river valleys. This landscape is also valued for its role in providing a distinctive rural approach to Bentley especially along Church Road. In the area of the Case is Altered pub the landscape extends into the heart of the village forming an important corridor of open space which emphasises the small scale and linear character of the settlement.
<b>Sensitivity/Capacity</b>	<p>The following factors increase the sensitivity of this landscape to development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• changing topography, as land dips into the river valley to the east,</li> <li>• historic character of the lanes,</li> <li>• general lack of visibility of the village from the wider landscape,</li> <li>• linear form of the village and</li> <li>• dispersed pattern of development in the wider area.</li> </ul> <p>Overall this area has limited capacity for new housing development. Nevertheless, two areas are noted as having some capacity for new residential development. These include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing along Church Road which does not increase the width of the settlement or create a new abrupt, uniform, urban edge or reinforce cul-de-sac housing which is not characteristic. Care will need to be taken to retain the rural character of Church Road.</li> <li>• Housing development to the rear of properties on Capel Road. This area may be suitable for community and/or retirement housing due to its close proximity to key village facilities. Care would need to be taken to retain the rural and vegetated character of the settlement edge and public right of way to the east.</li> </ul>
<b>Mitigation</b>	<p>Mitigation of new development should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a well vegetated edge to development such that new dwellings are only glimpsed and do not appear as uniform housing estates.</li> <li>• Establish footpath links to the main facilities within the village including the village shop and pub as well as the school.</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate built form and vernacular styles that reflect rural character with particular attention to height, form and style of dwellings and choice of materials.</li> <li>• Retain the rural character of lanes.</li> <li>• Seek opportunities to integrate new community orchards as part of new development.</li> </ul>

## Peripheral Area 2: Bentley Southern and Western Fringes

<b>Relevant Planning Sites</b>	Sites SS1138, SS0395 and SS1044 in SHELAAs B/17/0003 (approved housing for 16 dwellings), DC/19/03787 (pending decision for 8 dwellings), DC/19/02185 (approved housing for 4 dwellings).
<b>Physical Character</b>	This peripheral area forms the southern and western fringes of the settlement. This is a transitional landscape between the relatively flat landscape of plateau farmland and the upper valley slopes of the Samford Valley (the latter being included within the proposed extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB). Small scale pasture enclosures occur close to the village edge with land uses including pasture, horticulture, orchards and some pony paddocks. There are also areas of larger scale arable fields often fringed with woodland on the upper valley slopes. Mature woodland and individual mature oak trees and hedgerows provide a strong sense of enclosure while some planting such as poplar shelterbelts and leylandii hedges appear out of place. Sections of dead elm hedgerows and bracken are noticeable towards the southern end of Grove Road.
<b>Existing Settlement Edge</b>	Development is either directly off the main Capel Road - one plot deep or comprises small cul-de-sac development at The Links off Bergholt Road, or an eclectic mix of dwellings along perpendicular lanes e.g. Bergholt Road, Link Lane, Case Lane and Grove Road. Beyond the main settlement edge there is a dispersed pattern of dwellings to the south along Hazel Shrub Lane. There is some light employment development at Dodnash Farm and to the southwest, off Bergholt Lane, and some brownfield land associated with a former garden centre. The main settlement edge is well vegetated and built form is not prominent in views from the wider landscape. To the east the settlement edge is less vegetated resulting in a more prominent abrupt edge to housing on Silver Leys.
<b>Views and Visibility</b>	Views are generally contained by woodland which forms a distinctive backdrop of mature trees associated with Bentley Grove house and parkland along Grove Road and Dodnash and Holly Woods. From the edge of the plateau there are elevated views across the Samford Valley.
<b>Designation/Condition</b>	This area previously formed part of the Dodnash SLA but lies outside of the proposed AONB extension. It is of mixed condition as a result of land uses and areas which show a lack of management. For example, some lanes verges and small-scale pastures support ruderal vegetation and exhibit hedgerow loss. In the southwest, off Bergholt Road, leylandii hedgerows, close board fencing and signage erode local rural character. The subdivision of fields for pony paddocks and associated ancillary development also contribute to the overall mixed condition. Nevertheless, the small-scale enclosure pattern, rural lanes and mature hedgerows trees (where they remain), as well as timber post and cleft rail fencing, add to the rural character.
<b>Perceptual Qualities</b>	Small scale, intimate and domestic but still rural in character.
<b>Function</b>	This landscape forms an important setting to the village comprising a fringe of smaller scale enclosures on the edge of the settlement which filter views to built form and allow the rural landscape to penetrate the village between the Village Hall and Grove Road. Where this landscape lies adjacent to the rural lanes it can play an important role in defining a transitional approach to the settlement or in defining the village gateway e.g. along Bergholt Road. This area lies adjacent to the proposed boundary extension to the AONB and forms a setting to the designation.
<b>Sensitivity/Capacity</b>	The following factors increase the sensitivity of this landscape: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small scale enclosure pattern which forms a transition from built edge to wider arable landscape</li> <li>• areas of open space which penetrate the village and reinforce sense of place and settlement form and provide a setting to historic buildings</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small scale nature of the rural lanes</li> <li>• Land within the setting of the proposed extension to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB</li> <li>• Inter-visibility across the Samford Valley and increased visual sensitivity on open slopes</li> <li>• Proximity to valued ancient woodland</li> </ul> <p>The landscape has some capacity for small infill development within existing housing plots where they are a reasonable size e.g. along Grove Road, although care would need to be taken to retain the rural character of the small pastures to the west.</p> <p>Where there is a strong wooded backdrop there may also be scope for small scale development which is visually contained although care will be needed to provide a sufficient landscape buffer between new development and existing habitats and/or areas of landscape designation. Two areas are noted as having some capacity, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The former garden centre area off Bergholt Road. Here there may be scope for low density housing or low-key employment in association with the enhancement of the landscape including the removal of non-native vegetation and urban boundary treatment. This site is not without constraint including the proximity and setting of the proposed extension to the AONB, the sensitivity of the ancient woodland adjacent and the narrow, sinuous and rural character of the lane which accesses the site.</li> <li>• Land south of Capel Road and northwest of Bergholt Road. This area whilst visually contained, lies within the setting of the AONB extension and in close proximity to ancient woodland, it is therefore constrained. However, the area may be able to accommodate limited development of a linear nature along the roads. There is scope to set development back from Capel Road to provide a new village open space/village gateway whilst maintaining views and vistas to the wider landscape when departing from the village. Care will need to be taken to retain views from the lanes towards wider farmland and woodland and any new housing should be seen with a wooded backdrop. Large scale housing development and cul-de-sac arrangements that undermine the historic character of the village should be avoided.</li> </ul>
<b>Mitigation</b>	<p>New development should be associated with appropriate landscape buffer adjacent to ancient woodland and the AONB including new native woodland comprising oak and sweet chestnut which are characteristic of the area. Care will be required to avoid light and noise which undermines the sense of tranquillity within adjacent areas of ancient woodland. New development should also seek to deliver distinctive open space and view/vistas which reinforce sense of arrival and departure from the village.</p>

## 6: Summary of Findings

### 6.1 Special Qualities to Conserve and Enhance

6.1.1 This landscape appraisal has highlighted the following special qualities in Bentley Parish which, wherever possible, should be retained and enhanced. They include:

- Historic network of narrow, winding, rural and sunken lanes
- Areas of ancient woodland creating wooded horizons and backdrops
- Deeply rural, high quality countryside especially across the north of the Parish and Samford Valley to the south
- Eclectic mix of built housing styles along back lanes off the main road through the settlement
- Mature veteran oaks in hedgerows, along lanes and in remnant parkland
- Individual rural buildings associated with groups of trees or seen with wooded backdrop
- Soft vegetated edges to village
- Views across the rural landscape to individual or small groups of vernacular buildings

### 6.2 Changes to Avoid

6.2.1 This detailed analysis has also noted some changes which have undermined special qualities. It is useful to highlight these as it may inform decisions regarding any future development or environmental initiatives/management in the wider Parish.

- Creation of abrupt edges to development with little vegetation along the settlement edge
- Development on upper valley slopes which can be visually intrusive and where vertical elements can appear exaggerated
- Housing estates with single housing types which contrast with the back lanes and eclectic mix of housing styles
- Erosion of rural lane character through introduction of new development, signage, kerbs, new junctions etc.
- Development which, due to its location alters the small scale and predominately linear pattern of the village on the edge of the plateau
- Development which masks the subtle changes in topography at the edge of the plateau
- Introduction of individual dwellings which do not reflect the scale or detailing of vernacular properties in the area
- Introduction of street lighting or unnecessary signage
- Fragmentation of lanes due to the introduction of new access routes which

can physically interrupt hedges, grass verges and embankments

- Proliferation of individual dwellings along rural lanes within the wider Parish, particularly where this creates linear development

### 6.3 Management and Development Guidelines

6.3.1 The Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance (Aug 2015), aims to safeguard the character of the countryside by ensuring new development integrates positively. The Landscape Guidance, therefore, outlines the main elements of the existing character and provides a framework of broad principles that all development in the countryside will be required to follow.

6.3.2 Alongside the above guidance, the following management and development guidelines have been identified as a result of this landscape appraisal. These guidelines are provided to inform land management decisions, inspire local community initiatives and to inform the development of proposals by developers and to assist decision makers.

6.3.3 Management guidelines seek to reinforce local character and improve landscape legibility. They include the following initiatives:

- Undertake a veteran tree survey to better understand this important characteristic of the Parish and to effectively plan their future management
- Prioritise new street tree planting in areas of open verge within existing housing estates and at road junctions and 'triangular greens' to enhance the street scene
- Establish a community nature conservation project to manage amenity green spaces in housing areas as wildlife areas
- Undertake an assessment of lanes in the Parish with the aim of establishing Quiet Lanes/Protected Lanes where appropriate
- Enhance biodiversity of rural lane verges through appropriate management in collaboration with landowners and highways
- Retain the pattern of smaller scale enclosures to the southern edge of settlement as a community resource
- Seek opportunities to reduce the effects of existing spoil heaps beyond the Parish boundary where they are visually intrusive
- Manage chestnut plantations and Hazel through traditional coppicing to increase biodiversity
- Plant/reinstate hedgerows and trees using native species to provide connected habitat corridors for dormice and stag beetles as well as store carbon
- Manage existing hedgerows appropriately for birds, other wildlife and biodiversity
- Plan for the sensitive felling of conifer plantations and conifer hedges and their replacement with native species

- Seek opportunities to create new community orchards and to continue the tradition of locally grown produce
- Seek opportunities to remove close board fencing and concrete post and rail fencing where it has an urbanising influence on rural lanes

#### 6.3.4 Development guidelines seek to inform new development and include:

- Soften existing urban edge at the eastern end of the village through additional planting such as new hedgerow and trees along the public right of way
- Ensure new development reflects the dispersed and varied vernacular of the existing back lanes that lead off Capel Road, with a mix of larger properties within grounds or smaller scale terraced cottages
- Avoid urbanising and uncharacteristic boundary treatments to development
- Avoid proliferation of individual dwellings along rural lanes in the wider Parish where this leads to ribbon development
- Residential and employment development away from the village should avoid urbanising and fragmenting the area's historic rural character
- Underground overhead wires to improve streetscape where feasible
- Retain lower density, leafy character of development around the former Bentley Station and south of the village
- Ensure new development does not urbanise or fragment the integrity of rural lanes through the introduction of multiple new access points.

## 6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 This assessment has revealed that Bentley Parish has some capacity to accommodate appropriately designed and sensitively located housing. Due to the area's special qualities development is most likely to comprise small scale schemes rather than a single larger development.

6.4.2 New employment development may be accommodated on the former garden centre site of Bergholt Road. Otherwise any employment should be located close to the A12 whilst also avoiding urbanisation of the wider countryside. Buildings should be small scale and associated with woodland planting and new habitat networks.