

**Rickinghall and Botesdale
Neighbourhood Plan
*Landscape Appraisal***

Final Report



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Contents

1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Objectives.....	1
1.3 Scope of Work.....	1
1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan.....	2
1.5 Potential Development Sites.....	3
1.6 Methodology and Approach.....	5
2: The Evolution of the Rickinghalls and Botesdale.....	7
2.1 Early Origins and Evolution.....	7
2.2 Surrounding Historic Landscape Patterns.....	8
3: Landscape Character.....	9
3.1 National Character Area 83 South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands.....	9
3.2 Suffolk County Landscape Character and Local Assessments.....	10
3.3 Special Landscape Area.....	16
4: Settlement Character and Conservation Area.....	17
4.1 Settlement Form.....	17
4.2 Conservation Area.....	18
5: Detailed Analysis.....	19
5.1 Introduction.....	19
5.2 Extent of Setting.....	19
5.3 Landmarks and Key Views.....	20
5.4 Townscape Character Areas.....	22
5.5 Gateways.....	23
6: Detailed Assessment of Peripheral Areas.....	25
6.1 Introduction.....	25
6.2 Analysis Tables.....	25
6.3 Development within the Wider Parish.....	34
7: Summary of Findings.....	35
7.1 Special Qualities to Conserve and Enhance.....	35
7.2 Changes to Avoid.....	36
7.3 Management and Development Guidelines.....	36
7.4 Conclusions.....	37

1: Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Alison Farmer Associates were appointed by Rickinghall and Botesdale 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 within and surrounding the main village to be assessed in detail to establish the sensitivity and capacity of these areas to accommodate housing growth.

1.1.2 Rickinghall and Botesdale Neighbourhood Plan area contains the three Parishes of Rickinghall Superior, Rickinghall Inferior and Botesdale. The area stretches from the valley of The The Swimming Ditch (a tributary stream to the River Ouse) in the north through to Allwood Green in the south. The main settlement within the Parish is Rickinghall and Botesdale which is predominately linear in form lying just north of the A143 bypass and approximately 10km from Diss. Also within the Parish are the dispersed settlements of Candle Street, Allwood Green and Botesdale Green.

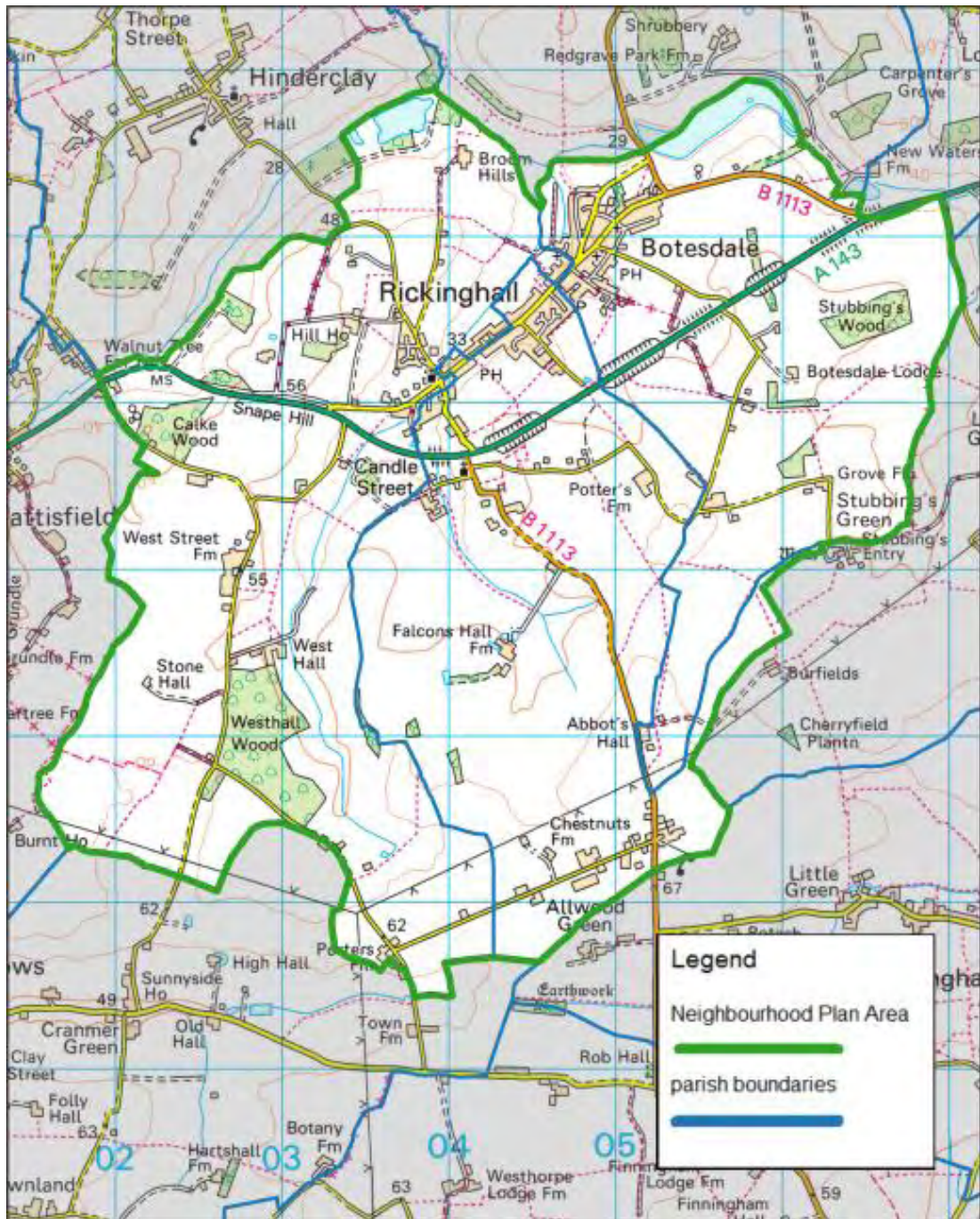
1.2 Objectives

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 surrounding the main settlement to accommodate housing development. This study also assesses the dispersed settlement patterns within the wider Neighbourhood Plan area, and provides broad guidance on accommodating development in these areas also.

1.3 Scope of Work

1.3.1 The assessment considers all the land surrounding the settlement of Rickinghall and Botesdale and also the wider landscape setting. Where relevant, reference has also been made to land beyond the Parish where there is strong inter-visibility such that the wider landscape forms a setting to the settlement, bolstering its sense of place and /or is important in outward or inward views i.e. views to the north and northeast into the Parish of Redgrave.

1.3.2 Where land has 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 possible therefore that, land identified as having some capacity to accommodate development without significant adverse landscape effects, may subsequently be discounted for reasons other than landscape.



Botesdale and Rickinghall Neighbourhood Plan Area (Source: Mid Suffolk District Council Website)

1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.4.1 Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, Mid Suffolk granted Neighbourhood Plan Area for Rickinghall and Botesdale on 11 May 2017.
- 1.4.2 The Rickinghall and Botesdale Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was subsequently established and a series of surveys have been undertaken with the local community including a Housing Needs Survey which sought views on quality

of life, housing and development, jobs and local economy and protection of the environment. This questionnaire revealed that the majority of respondents wished to see several small developments rather than a single large scale development and that key concerns focused on access and safety issues regarding traffic, pressure on the health centre, environmental impact and loss of village identity.

1.5 Potential Development Sites

- 1.5.1 Rickingham and Botesdale were identified as a key service centre in the emerging local plan and are therefore considered a sustainable location for residential development. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) carried out in May 2016 considered peripheral sites around the settlement and identified four sites which were regarded as potentially suitable for residential development namely:

Site reference	Location	Status
BOT/RIC01	Land south of Diss Road/Park View, Botesdale	Subject of current outline planning application - decision awaited
BOT/RIC02	Land at Rectory Hill and The Street, Rickingham	Small site on western edge of the area subject of a current planning application - decision awaited
BOT/RIC03	Land north of Back Hills, Botesdale	No current activity
BOT/RIC05	Land at Back Hills, Botesdale (planning application approved)	Subject of current outline planning application - approved with conditions

- 1.5.2 It also rejected three sites as unsuitable for residential development namely:

Site reference	Location	Reason for Rejection
BOT/RIC04	Botesdale Green, Common Road, Botesdale	Site is poorly related to existing settlement, services and facilities
BOT/RIC06	Land off Bury Road, Rickingham	Majority of site is in flood zone 3
BOT/RIC07	Land at Rectory Hill, Rickingham	Poor relationship to existing settlement, services and facilities However, small site in the northern part of the area recently granted outline planning permission

- 1.5.3 In August 2017 Babergh and Mid Suffolk undertook a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). This study took all sites which

had come forward as part of their call for sites in April 2017 and assessed them against set criteria to determine which were deliverable, those with potential and those which should be discounted.

1.5.4 This assessment considered each site against a number of topics, to determine in broad terms, likely effects and constraints. These included:

- landscape/townscape
- biodiversity/geodiversity
- historic environment
- open space
- transport and roads
- compatibility with neighbouring use

1.5.5 The assessment identified two sites in Botesdale and two sites in Rickinghall as suitable for residential/employment development and noted landscape and heritage constraints in relation to each as follows:

Site reference	Location	Landscape/Heritage Constraints
SS0098 (formerly BOT/RIC03)	Land north of Back Hills, Botesdale	Site lies within a Special Landscape Area Potential impact on Conservation Area Northern part of the site within Flood Zone 3
SS0949 (formerly BOT/RIC01)	Land south of Diss Road/Park View, Botesdale	Impact on Grade II listed building to the north of the site and the conservation area to the west of the site. Need to avoid disproportionate development to settlement
SS0091 (formerly BOT/RIC02)	Land at Rectory Hill and The Street, Rickinghall	Abuts the conservation area Reduce size of site to be in keeping with the existing settlement Need to avoid disproportionate development to the existing settlement.
SS0939	Land east of Rectory Hill and South of The Street, Rickinghall	Potential employment use with access to A143 Adjacent to conservation area

- 1.5.6 More recently the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group undertook their own call for sites. This has resulted in a further two sites coming forward namely land east of Garden House Lane and land south of Mill Lane.
- 1.5.7 In October 2017 the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group appointed AECOM to undertake an independent and objective assessment of sites and to determine which were the best sites to meet the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan. In looking at the suitability of sites the study considered site characteristics and environmental considerations. However it did not take account of landscape character or sensitivities relating to the character and qualities of the settlement and its landscape setting.

1.6 Methodology and Approach

- 1.6.1 This assessment supplements that undertaken by AECOM and has been carried out in accordance with Guidelines on Landscape Character Assessment¹ and Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity². The approach has included a client meeting and familiarisation site visit, desk study and further detailed site assessment during October and November 2017.
- 1.6.2 This assessment is a landscape capacity-led approach which considers the Rickinghall and Botesdale settlement and its landscape setting holistically. 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 development from a landscape/townscape perspective.
- 1.6.3 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. Local character areas are defined and used as a framework for understanding the relationship between built form and landscape setting. Consideration of the settlement holistically enables a thorough assessment of individual sites within a wider context rather than in isolation. Opportunities for environmental initiatives which seek to enhance local identity and settlement distinctiveness are also highlighted where relevant. The result is the presentation of a robust evidence base which can be used to inform the development of policy within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.6.4 The following definitions of terms are used in this study:

1 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.

2 Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2004.

Sensitivity is defined as the ability of the landscape to accommodate a particular type of change (in this case housing 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 in the context of Rickinghall and Botesdale settlement and with reference to factors such as designations, conservation interest, distinctive features, role and function (i.e. setting or gateway), condition and intactness, and rarity.

Capacity of an area considers the extent and nature of development which may be accommodated and is derived from an understanding of both landscape value and sensitivity of a landscape to change.

2: The Evolution of the Rickinghalls and Botesdale

2.1 Early Origins and Evolution

- 2.1.1 The Parishes of Rickinghall Inferior, Rickinghall Superior and Botesdale are orientated north south and reflect the early division of land to take advantage of landscape resources including the wetland landscape of the river valleys in the north and the plateau landscapes to the south which were suitable for animal grazing on commons and greens. The area also had a number of valuable raw materials including the quarrying of marl used as a soil improver and extraction of sand and gravel as well as the cutting of peat where it accumulated on the valley floor.
- 2.1.2 The separate village of Botesdale, Rickinghall Inferior and Rickinghall Superior have their origins as separate agricultural communities and were mainly involved in the growing of hemp. Proximity to the large linen market in Diss made this the primary local industry.
- 2.1.3 In the medieval period Botesdale was a hamlet of Redgrave, located a few miles to the north. Botesdale developed when the medieval market every Thursday was granted in 1227 by King Henry III,
- 2.1.4 As originally three settlements, Rickinghall Inferior, Rickinghall Superior and Botesdale all had their own churches – St Marys Inferior, St Marys Superior and Chapel of Ease otherwise known as St Botolph's chapel respectively. The latter was built in 1338 and then renovated and changed to a chantry chapel in the late 15th century. When chantry chapels were abolished in the 1540s it became a school and a house was added on for the schoolmaster. In 1884, it was restored to use as a chapel of ease to Redgrave. It is a grade II* listed building. The churches in Rickinghall Inferior and Superior are both named St Mary's and are Grade I listed. Rickinghall Superior church is located outside of the main Rickinghall/Botesdale settlement located to the south on slightly higher land and in association with the hamlet now known as Candle Street.
- 2.1.5 In the 17th century the main road passing through the settlements had become a toll road from Scole to Bury St Edmunds. Coaching houses such as the Bell Inn developed along The Street and the octagonal Tollgate House at the northern end of Botesdale reflects this history today.
- 2.1.6 Over time new development along the main street has occurred such that it is now not possible to distinguish between the three settlements. The form and character of the settlements has altered very little in the 20th century. Where development has occurred it has comprised infill sites and a number of cul-de-sac housing estates in the latter part of the 20th century and early 21st century. A further recent change to the settlement was the construction of the A143 bypass to the south of the village in 1995 which removed through traffic but also severed a number of historic lanes

connecting the settlement to the wider plateau landscape to the south and separated Rickinghall Superior church from the village.

2.2 Surrounding Historic Landscape Patterns

- 2.4.1 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is the process of characterising the historic landscape into a series of types. A HLC was undertaken for the whole of Suffolk in 1998-99. This identified the field enclosures surrounding the settlement and within the wider parish and noted that the majority comprise pre 18th century enclosure of random or irregular co-axial fields. These enclosure patterns are considered to date back to the Medieval period and possibly earlier and are of great historic significance defined by species rich hedgerows and associated with ditches and banks. Other historic landscape types identified in the assessment included the former common pasture of Botesdale Common which was enclosed in the 18th century or later, meadow and managed wetland along The Swimming Ditch and post medieval park and leisure at Regdrave Park.
- 2.4.2 Historic maps dating to the early 20th century illustrate the pattern of linear ditches within the valley floor reflecting areas of former peat cutting, areas of parkland associated with Redgrave, as well as historic lanes and routes. Redgrave Park to the northeast of the village is first documented in the 14th century and appears as a deer park on Saxton's Map of 1575.
- 2.4.3 In 2010/11 all three parishes of Rickinghall Inferior, Rickinghall Superior and Botesdale were assessed in terms of their hedgerows as part of the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey. These assessments revealed that in Rickinghall Inferior 66.9% of hedgerows were recorded as species rich; 67.3% in Rickinghall Superior and 84% in Botesdale placing all three parishes way above the District and County averages. In Rickinghall Superior it was noted that 'the overall pattern of the hedgerow network is so tightly interwoven immediately south of the village'³. The richness of these hedgerows is a testament to their antiquity.

³ Taken from statistical analysis and commentary by Guy Ackers of Suffolk Hedgerow Survey.

3: Landscape Character

3.1 National Character Area 83 South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands

3.1.1 This National Character Area (NCA) occupies a large area of central East Anglia and comprises a high and predominately flat clay plateau which is incised by numerous small-scale wooded river valleys with complex slopes. The underlying geology is chalk, which forms the principal aquifer, and shallow marine deposits overlain with glacial till, buried river gravels, lake sediments and banks of glacial outwash deposits.

3.1.2 Rivers are mostly small and slow flowing and their valleys contain an important mosaic of small-scale pasture, wet heath, reedbeds and woodland. Large areas of woodland are scarce, with most confined to the edges of the plateau. Views are frequently open, only sometimes confined by hedges, hedgerow trees and scattered smaller woodlands that are still notable elements of the landscape. Occasionally there can be a feeling of exposure, although within the valleys it is possible to find quite confined landscape with intimate views.

3.1.3 This is a long-settled landscape with a strong utilitarian and rural character. Settlement patterns include nucleated villages along the river valleys, dispersed hamlets and moated farmsteads. Village greens or commons are a key feature of the area.

3.1.4 The statements of environmental opportunity set out in the NCA description include SEO2 which states:

'Encourage measures that conserve and enhance the characteristic historic settlement patterns including notable village commons and greens, and historic features such as moated farmsteads and windmills, ensuring that access and educational opportunities are maximised and ensure that the design and location of new development add to the sense of place and history across the NCA'.

3.1.5 This is elaborated with specific guidance as follows:

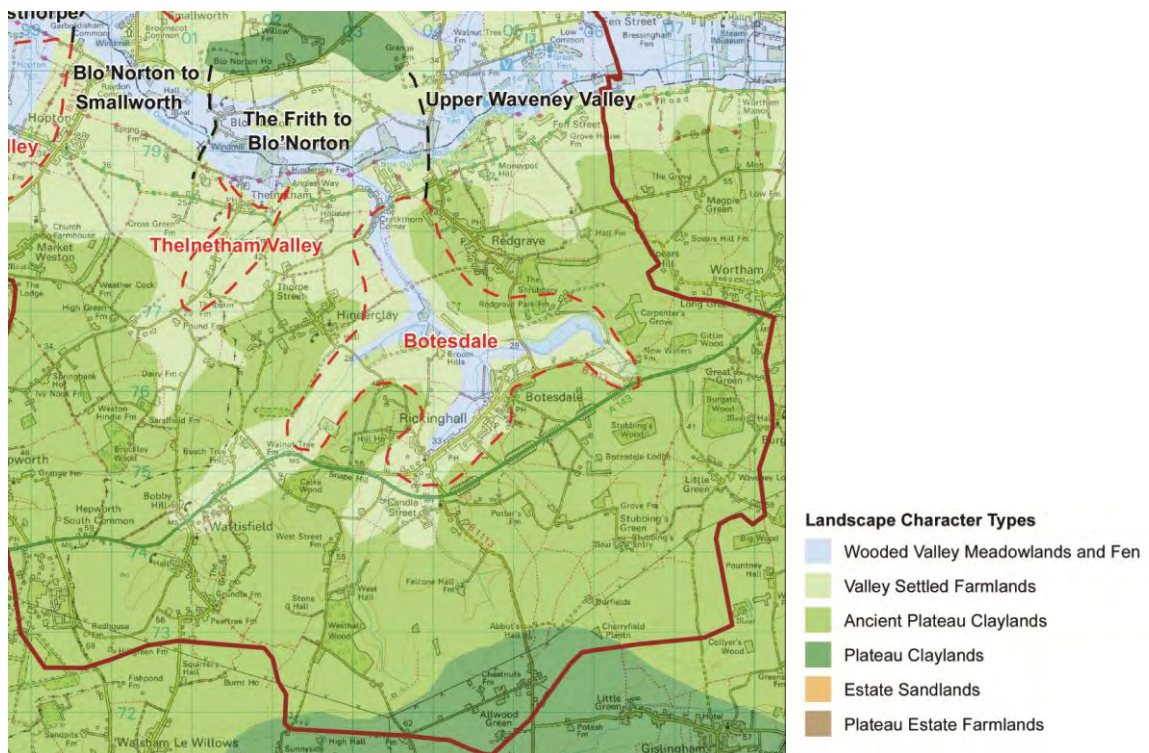
- Plan for well-designed new development inspired by local character.
- Promote the use of traditional building materials as appropriate to enhance the significance and local distinctive character of the area's traditional architecture.
- Ensure local development frameworks recognise the importance of conserving and enhancing the landscape and the sense of history to help to reduce the likelihood of negative impacts from new development.
- Support the use of history and landscape characterisation to inform change, and encourage their use in community based planning to help to identify locally valued townscapes, rural landscape and historic features.

- Maintaining the distinctive character, settlement form and building materials of the villages and market towns; improve their setting and settlement fringes through the allocation of new greenspace and woodland planting.
- Conserve the distinctive medieval churches...ensuring that their setting and visual presence in the landscape are retained for their contribution to sense of place.
- Conserving and protecting historic parklands.
- Retaining and restoring historic green lanes and former droveways.

3.2 Suffolk County Landscape Character and Local Assessments

3.2.1 The Suffolk County landscape character assessment defines landscape character types. Four types are relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan Area of Rickingham and Botesdale and are illustrated below. They include:

- Wooded Valley Meadowland and fens
- Rolling valley farmlands and furze
- Ancient plateau claylands
- Plateau claylands



Source: Little Ouse Headwaters Project Landscape Character Assessment

3.2.2 In 2011 a local character assessment was undertaken in relation to The Little Ouse Headwaters Project which aims to restore, conserve and promote the enjoyment of the wildlife and landscape of the Little Ouse Valley. The study area included Rickingham and Botesdale Neighbourhood Plan area and the assessment utilised the

existing classification set out in the Suffolk County landscape character assessment and further developed the descriptions providing a greater level of detail regarding local character and management initiatives. The relevant key characteristics and management guidelines are set out below.

Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fen



3.2.3 This character type lies to the north of the Neighbourhood Plan area and comprises the valley floor landscape of the streams which feed the Little Ouse River. Notable characteristics relevant to this landscape type include:

- Small scale narrow linear landscape of shallow and narrow valley floors.
- Extensive areas of peat deposits and complex soil pattern.
- Land use is predominately cattle grazed pastures.
- Areas of unenclosed “wild fen” with an absence of ditches and mosaic of shallow peat extraction pits.
- Fields are typically small to medium in size and bounded by hedges containing hedgerow trees and/or drainage ditches.
- The fields are of varied shape and form resulting in an irregular pattern of enclosure.
- Plantation and carr woodland along watercourses.
- Limited settlement and few metalled roads.
- White bridges across the rivers are also a unifying feature.
- Views are often channelled along narrow rural roads or restricted by waterside vegetation and woodland resulting in a skyline which is predominantly tree-lined or areas where there are glimpsed views to the valley sides.
- Although not remote, the pastoral character, lack of settlement and low levels of vehicle movement combine to form an intimate, tranquil landscape.
- Tangible sense of relative wildness/remoteness particularly in woodland areas.

3.2.4 Guidelines include:

- Avoid new development within the valley floor and on the valley sides which visually intrudes/detracts from the tranquillity, undeveloped character and remoteness.

- Maintain characteristic white bridges across watercourses.
- Ensure the restoration and maintenance of valley fens for wildlife conservation - undertake the infilling of drainage ditches in order to aid recreation of fen habitat where it will join existing fen sites and reverse past fragmentation.
- Maintain important views to key landmarks and open up views through strategic removal of woodland.
- Restore and maintain grazing with cattle and sheep to ensure the continuation of traditional agricultural practices integral to the character and condition of important wildlife sites in this landscape.
- In places less critical for connecting fen sites, restore and retain the characteristic pattern of drainage, particularly ditches, and ensure they deliver ecological benefits.
- Support arable reversion through agri-environment schemes, or with the expansion of livestock enterprises in order to restore the pastoral character of this landscape.
- Consider the varied pattern of openness and enclosure within the valley floor ensuring the continued management of wet woodland and hedgerows where they contribute to biodiversity and create varied character and frame views.
- Ensure effective visitor management including clearly marked routes, signage and interpretation, car parking and facilities and consideration of health and safety issues close to areas of open water/poor drainage.

Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze⁴



3.2.5 This character also lies in the north of the Neighbourhood Plan area and includes the majority of the Rickinghall and Botesdale settlement which sit just above the flood plain overlooking the stream valley to the north. This landscape also forms the immediate setting to the settlement on the valley slopes. Key characteristics relevant to this landscape type include:

- Underlying geology comprises chalky till and glaciofluvial drift.
- Topography is gently undulating and ranges from 25-50metres AOD.

⁴ This character type was renamed in the Little Ouse Headwaters LCA to Valley Settled Farmland.

- Landcover is predominately arable, with distinctive areas of pasture and sandy acidic heathland.
- Field patterns are variable but predominately medium in scale and often geometric in pattern.
- Mature oaks associated with patchy remnant field boundary hedgerows.
- Woodland occurs in discrete blocks often on the upper slopes of the valley sides forming a treed horizon.
- Settlement pattern is defined by frequent dispersed farmsteads and hamlets and occasional linear or nucleated villages.
- Local vernacular architecture includes red pantiles and timber framed buildings with render and brick skins.
- Church towers associated with settlement and extant windmills on junction of the valley side and valley floor are local landmarks.
- Views are contained by landform, field boundaries and woodland and occasionally open up across the valley floor or to adjacent plateau landscapes.
- A tamed rural landscape, with a generally tranquil quality.

3.2.6 Guidelines include:

- Ensure that new development is sensitively located and avoids adverse impacts on the setting of existing landmark buildings and historic landscape patterns.
- Avoid development which adversely affects the character and form of existing valley side settlement or results in ribbon development and the gradual urbanisation along rural lanes which visually intrudes/detracts from the tranquillity, undeveloped character and remoteness.
- Avoid large-scale agricultural buildings on or near valley sides and ensure careful siting, appropriate form, orientation and colour where this type of development is necessary.
- Where conversion and extension of historic barns is required care should be taken to retain vernacular character and the contribution the historic building makes to the wider landscape.
- Ensure that new or expanded curtilage to existing properties is designed to fit into the local context using traditional boundary treatments and native planting.
- Seek to minimise the impacts of horse paddocks on the landscape by encouraging limited use of post and rail fencing, tape and the careful siting of other associated features such as shelter and storage areas.
- Undertake a detailed hedgerow, tree and woodland survey to identify recent and ancient plantings and the coincidence between species mix and soil type in order to inform any hedge/tree restoration and management work.
- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees and coppice elm.
- Maintain the area of woodland cover; siting of any new woodland should be based on information from historic research and avoid blocking views to landmarks.

- Maintain a mosaic of bare ground and varying sward heights and scrub on the small heathland sites.

Ancient Plateau Claylands



3.2.7 This character type includes the central part of the Neighbourhood Plan area and lies to the south of Rickinghall and Botesdale settlement. Key characteristics relevant to this area include:

- Thick underlying deposits of glacial Lowestoft Till create elevated plateau.
- Gently undulating landform.
- Landcover is predominately arable with scattering of small mixed woodlands.
- Field pattern of ancient enclosure often irregular defined by hedgerows and some straight-edged fields associated with late enclosure of woods and greens.
- Ancient woodlands are a defining characteristic and provide some sense of enclosure.
- Low density, dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads of medieval origin.
- Villages associated with churches, manor sites and medieval greens.
- Strong local vernacular reflected in farm buildings and settlements.
- Halls, surrounded by landscape parks and woodland impart a designed character.
- Network of winding lanes and paths associated with hedges create visual intimacy.
- The skyline is prominent, sometimes interrupted by woodland but often affording wide-open views with limited inter-visibility to adjacent character types.
- This landscape feels still having a remote almost empty character in places.

3.2.8 Guidelines include:

- Avoid new development (including large scale agricultural buildings) which visually intrude/detract from the tranquillity, undeveloped character and remoteness found within this and adjacent valley landscapes.

- Ensure that new or expanded curtilage to existing properties uses traditional boundary treatments and native planting typical of the area.
- Seek to minimise the impacts of horse paddocks on the landscape by encouraging limited use of post and rail fencing, tape and the careful siting of other associated features such as shelter and storage areas.
- Where redevelopment of former airfields is proposed seek to retain cultural heritage features and ensure appropriate planting and mitigation.
- Encourage appropriate ongoing management of native hedgerows in order to improve connectivity of wildlife sites and create wildlife corridors and encourage the management of stag head oaks along lanes and the planting of new oak/ash trees.
- Seek opportunities to create grassland margins to crop fields and rural lanes to enhance biodiversity and reduce surface runoff.
- Maintain the small scale, rural character of the road network, resisting change due to signage or traffic calming/edge treatments which could have an urbanising influence.
- Maintain and restore historic greens and commons.
- Encourage the appropriate management of woodlands using traditional techniques. Also seek appropriate opportunities for the creation of new broadleaved woodlands, that complement and enhance local character.

Plateau Claylands



3.2.9 This character type lies in the southern fringes of the neighbourhood plan area and includes the hamlet of Allwood Green. Key characteristics relevant to this area include:

- Thick underlying deposits of glacial Lowestoft Till create heavy clay soils.
- Mixture of enclosure patterns including ancient irregular hedges and larger scale straight rectilinear patterns reflecting late enclosure of common/greens.
- Arable land use predominates giving rise to uniformity.
- Linear villages with multiple nuclei, landscape scattered with farmsteads and hamlets.
- Evidence of former commons in place names and straight roads.
- Large modern agricultural buildings a recurrent feature.

- Almost no woodland with small copses in villages, around farmsteads and ponds.
- Fields often defined by open ditches and contain field ponds.
- A working landscape on which suburbanisation is beginning to make an impact.
- Pylons extend across this landscape and are visually prominent.

3.2.10 Guidelines include:

- Conserve and enhance hedgerow trees through appropriate arboricultural management and reinforce through new mixed native hedgerow planting.
- Conserve the existing small scale rural pattern of settlement, monitoring edge and expansion and potential suburbanising influences.
- Maintain rural road network and discourage traffic/road widening pressures which could have an urbanising influence e.g. traffic calming, road signage.
- Seek opportunities for creation of cereal field margins to enhance biodiversity of this intensive agricultural landscape.
- Investigate opportunities for heathland/common re-creation to reintroduce this historic land cover element and provide habitat creation opportunities.
- Maintain areas of woodland at their current extent to conserve the historically open character of the plateau.
- Maintain and restore the stock field ponds in this landscape.

3.3 Special Landscape Area

3.3.1 Land to the north of the settlement within the river valley and including Redgrave Park landscape is designated a Special Landscape Area. This is a local landscape designation reflecting attractive combinations of landscape elements. Although the original assessment, which led to this 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;
- Areas of breckland including remaining heathland, and the characteristic lines of belts of Scots Pine;
- 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

3.3.2 In the context of Rickinghall and Botesdale the SLA to the north and northeast of the village comprises a river valley with traditional grazing meadows and the area of Redgrave designed parkland.

4: Settlement Character and Conservation Area

4.1 Settlement Form

- 4.1.1 Today the urban form and layout of Rickinghall's and Botesdale can in simple terms be described as a linear multi focal settlement. The key focal points are associated with the churches and market place. The church of St Mary in Rickinghall Inferior lies in the southwest at one end of the main street and the Chapel of Ease and market place in Botesdale in the northeast at the other end. The church associated with Rickinghall Superior lies in Chapel Street to the south and has a remote location relative to the main settlement, reinforced by its severance as a result of the A143 bypass.
- 4.1.2 There is a clear hierarchy of spaces within the settlement. Around the market place the buildings are of higher status often three stories and help to define the space. Similarly around the churches the church yards and associated mature trees give a strong sense of place. Along the main street the road is relatively wide with properties facing onto The Street either directly or slightly set back with small front gardens. Extending off the main street and frequently at right angles are narrow rural lanes which are comparatively narrow, often with grass verges or banks. Houses face directly onto the lanes particularly close to the main street but further away become more spaced out and set back.
- 4.1.3 Historically development in the settlement has focused around the key focal points and has extended along the main street. Beyond the market place in Botesdale the street pattern radiates out reflecting the central focus of the market place, while towards the southwest development is just one plot deep.
- 4.1.4 Traditionally the settlement has occupied the lower valley slopes overlooking the floodplain to the north. The valley sides on which the settlement sits is incised by minor streams creating notable undulations of small stream valleys and intervening ridges. These variations in topography are notable when travelling along The Street and combined with changes in built form and focal points ensures it has a number of distinct characters. The rural lanes noted above often occur along the small tributary valleys to the south such that development is often located in these gentle dips in topography. Rarely has any development extended beyond the 43m contour.
- 4.1.5 Development in the latter half of the 20th century and early 21st century has departed from this traditional pattern in two significant ways. Firstly in terms of its location on higher land extending onto the upper valley slopes and plateau and secondly the introduction of cul-de-sac layouts which are uncharacteristic. This type of development has resulted in a change to the gateways and sense of arrival in the village, a blurring of the clear hierarchy of lanes and built form and a loss of the landscape setting which helps define the settlement and ensures it nestles into the Suffolk countryside. Despite this the historic pattern and characteristics of the

settlement remain tangible but nonetheless vulnerable to further unsympathetic development.

4.2 Conservation Area

4.2.1 The village Rickinghall and Botesdale is noted for its intactness and concentration of listed buildings and was designated a Conservation Area in 1973, the boundary of which includes almost all of the settlement and is illustrated on Figure 1.

4.2.2 A Conservation Area Appraisal for Rickinghall and Botesdale village was published in 2009. It highlights that Rickinghall and Botesdale is a small linear settlement which contains over 100 listed buildings - a high proportion of the dwellings within the settlement. Almost all the buildings along The Street are listed or buildings of special character.

4.2.3 The Conservation Area Appraisal describes the interest found within the settlement. From this text the following qualities of particular relevance to this study have been noted:

- *The linear nature of Botesdale and the Rickinghalls' settlement pattern means that development is mostly one plot deep;*
- *Views from the countryside are important and can be glimpsed through many gaps between the buildings along The Street;*
- *Retains the feel of small market town;*
- *Many of the unlisted buildings are of traditional form and grouping;*
- *Good mix of...Suffolk vernacular materials;*
- *Numerous pockets of trees punctuate the settlement along The Street;*
- *Scots Pine fronting Highlands and Horse Chestnuts at The Chestnuts are visually important.*

4.2.4 The Conservation Area Appraisal did not identify any important views nor did it define townscape character areas. These gaps in the appraisal have been addressed by the Neighbourhood Planning Team through the preparation of a Heritage Character Assessment and also in this assessment.

5: Detailed Analysis

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section builds on previous sections of this report and seeks to establish more detailed baseline data on village character and its landscape setting. Consideration is first given to establishing the landscape setting of the settlement through an understanding of topography. Secondly key views in and out of the village are identified. These are illustrated on Figure 1. Thirdly, the settlement is divided into village character areas which are briefly described below and illustrated on Figure 2. These areas help to create a picture of the distinctive places within the existing settlement and how they relate to land adjacent. Finally gateways and landmarks are identified and illustrated on Figure 3.

5.2 Extent of Setting

- 5.2.1 The landscape setting of Rickinghall and Botesdale is primarily defined by topography and drainage. The key contours are highlighted in the plan below. Site work has enabled areas of higher land adjacent to the settlement and woodlands, which are important in defining sense of place and constraining views into and out of the village, to be identified. This topographic analysis has also revealed that the village has historically developed on land between the 30m and 43m contour. Below the 30m contour is the river floodplain and development which occurs above the 43m contour comprise more recent housing such as that at Ryders Way and Park View. Where development has extended onto more elevated land the urban/rural interface is not characteristic and often harsh. This presents opportunities for enhancement when considering the future of the settlement and opportunities for reinforcing sense of place.
- 5.2.2 The setting of the settlement to the north is marked by the floodplain of the tributary stream to the Little Ouse known locally as The Swimming Ditch. Development has not occurred below the 30m contour and has focused on the main stream and has not extended into the confluence with, or tributary valley, containing Redgrave Park. The valley floor is characterised by willow and alder as well as areas of poplar plantation and small pastures/meadows. The valley rises on gentle slopes to the north. These slopes are used for arable and define the valley, their undeveloped character reinforcing the rural location of the settlement.
- 5.2.3 To the southwest the landscape becomes more undulating, incised by a number of small tributary streams before rising to form a ridge of higher land known locally as Snape Hill. This area of landscape has a more enclosed and intimate character. On the higher land to the west the woodland at The Grove is visually very prominent and seen from many locations within the village.

- 5.2.4 To the northeast the setting of the village broadens out at the confluence of the stream valley with that of Redgrave Park and lake. In this area the design of a landscape park has a significant influence on landscape character with prominent landscape features such as the lake and veteran parkland trees. The woodlands associated with this landscape are distinctive e.g. Carpenter's Grove, The Shrubbery and Jacobites Wood forming important treed horizons from the village and surrounding landscape.
- 5.2.5 To the south the land rises to form the upper valley slopes and extends onto the Ancient Estate Claylands through which the A143 cuts. These slopes help define the location of the settlement within the valley and ensure its built form nestles in the landform and remains rarely visible from the wider landscape. It also separates it from the A413.

5.3 Landmarks and Key Views

- 5.3.1 Key features which contribute to sense of place and orientation have been identified and are illustrated on Figure 3 with the exception of The Shrubbery and Carpenter's Grove which are off the map to the north. They include the following:
- Redgrave Park lake;
 - Jacobites' Wood;
 - Tollgate House (Grade II);
 - Market place and war memorial;
 - Chapel of St Botolph, Botesdale (Grade II*)
 - Pine trees on The Street;
 - St Mary's Lower Church, Rickinghall;
 - The Grove woodland;
 - St Mary's Upper Church, Rickinghall;
- 5.3.2 Views are critical in defining and reinforcing sense of place and local distinctiveness, connecting places where people live with the wider environment, providing opportunities to appreciate special qualities and connecting to local landmarks which can aid orientation.
- 5.3.3 Because the village is located primarily on the lower valley slopes many of the views are constrained. Nevertheless from the rising land to the north and higher slopes above the settlement there are some elevated views to parts of the settlement with a backdrop of higher land or trees.
- 5.3.4 The key views are illustrated on Figure 1 and described briefly below:

Views from the edge of the Ancient Plateau Claylands across the valley: In these views the upper storeys and roofscape of buildings which are on the upper slopes of the valley or edge of the plateau landscape are visible. They are often back dropped by woodland in the wider landscape which forms the distant skyline.



a) View looking across Gardenhouse Lane towards Mill Lane
 b) View looking north to Park View with The Shrubbery on the skyline.

Views from the northern valley slopes across the valley floor: In these views the settlement is seen nestled on the valley slopes. Views to development are filtered by vegetation on the valley floor and or vegetation within the settlement. Occasionally there are views to agricultural land on the valley slopes which form a visual contrast and reinforce the rural context of the settlement and location within the valley.



c) View looking south across the valley to northern edge of Botesdale
 d) View looking south across the valley to Rickinghall

Views from within the settlement to the wider landscape: There a number of locations where there are important views from the settlement outwards towards the wider landscape. These include across the playing fields in Rickinghall looking west, looking south from The Street to the wider agricultural valley sides and views north from the access road to the Co-op across the valley floor. These are illustrated on Figure 1.

- 5.3.5 This analysis has confirmed that in many instances the village is not widely visible from the wider landscape. From elevated locations surrounding the village it appears nestled on the valley slopes embraced by a higher wooded skyline to the south. The southern edge of the village is the most visible where 20th century housing has extended the village on to more elevated land such that its location within the valley has been undermined.

5.4 Townscape Character Areas

5.4.1 Nine townscape character areas were defined in this study. These areas are shown on Figure 2 and briefly described in turn below. Further detail can be found in the Neighbourhood Plan Heritage Assessment which helps bridge the current gap between the wider Landscape Character Assessment and the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Back Hills and Diss Road Area

5.4.2 This area lies in the north of the village along Back Lane, Rose Lane, Diss Road and The Drift and comprises a mixture of detached and semi-detached development some of which is relatively recent. Building styles and ages are varied with some areas reflecting the local vernacular styles of the area and others not. Dwellings are predominately set back from the road edge with front gardens defined by stone/brick walls or hedges. The area includes the school and health centre.

Market Place and The Street

5.4.3 This area comprises the historic core of Botesdale focused around the Market Place from which a number of routes fan out. Buildings face directly onto the street with no or little front curtilage and on approaching the core to the village become terraced. This gives rise to a more urban character. On approaching the Market Place the street widens and is flanked with taller buildings of higher status. The buildings in this part of the village have a strong visual unity reinforcing sense of place. This area includes the Chapel of St Botolph which is set within a well wooded grounds.

Fen Edge including Cherry Tree Lane and Fen Lane

5.4.4 This area comprises the linear back plots to dwellings along the Main Street which extend across the lower valleys slopes to the edge of the valley floor and also dwellings along Cherry Tree Lane and Fen Lane. This area is often well vegetated creating a soft edge to development when seen from the north and the lanes have a rural character due to their narrow width and grass verges. Historic dwellings often comprise small rural cottages with thatched roofs, which face directly on to the lane or are orientated gable end on. Land is clearly sloping away to the north and development is often back clothed by vegetation within the valley floor.

Bridewell Lane Area

5.4.5 This area comprises the historic lane of Bridewell Lane which extends southwards from The Street. The lane is narrow and has grass verges and hedgerows. Properties are set back from the lane accessed by private drives. In the medieval period it was called Watersledgeway, possibly meaning water hollow way. Its name today derives from The Bridewell which was built in the early 19th century as a 'house of correction'. A smock mill was also situated opposite on the rising land but this was demolished in the 1930's.

Gardenhouse Lane Area

- 5.4.6 This area comprises development around Gardenhouse Lane. Off this lane there has been some modern housing development including Wheatfields and Ryders Way. These developments comprise discrete small scale housing ‘estates’ which have a visual homogeneity and an urban character due to building and street design and vistas and incidental open spaces can be weakly defined. Housing in large plots off Gardenhouse Lane has started to erode its rural character due to the development of driveways and curtilage treatment.

Rickinghall Superior

- 5.4.7 This part of the village historically related to Rickinghall Superior and forms linear development along the main street which remains just one plot deep. Lands slopes to the north into the valley and housing is often viewed with a backcloth of valley floor vegetation, while to the north a single gap in the building line allows views to the south across the rising valley sides. The dwellings have a strong Victorian cottage character.

Rickinghall Inferior and Water Lane

- 5.4.8 This part of the village historically related to Rickinghall Inferior and focuses around the Church of St Mary’s. It includes the rural lanes of Rectory Hill and Water Lane along which there are rural cottages. Off the main Bury Road dwellings comprise relatively large properties set within generous grounds which are set back from the road giving this part of the village a leafy character.

Church Meadow and Mill Lane

- 5.4.9 This part of the village is located to the north of St Mary’s church off Hinderclay Road and includes the housing estates of Church Meadow. The housing types have a strong degree of homogeneity and feel separate from the main village. There are views out of this area to adjacent parkland landscape and mature trees associated with Snape Hill House. There are also views across the playing fields to the south.

5.5 Gateways

- 5.5.1 Two types of gateway have been identified as part of this study. The first is the initial gateway into the settlement which marks the start of built form. Often this type of gateway occurs where there is more recent 20th century on the outskirts of the settlement along main routes or where new road junctions have been created. These gateways may or may not have a strong character or sense of place.
- 5.5.2 The second gateway is that into the historic core of the settlement. This gateway marks the arrival at an area which has antiquity reflected in the built form, vernacular architecture or street pattern/spaces.
- 5.5.3 The gateways defined in this study are illustrated on Figure 3. Key findings include:
- Gateways occur at the northern or southern end of the settlement but do not occur through the central part of the village due to the severing effect of the

A143 and inaccessibility of the valley floor pastures to the southeast and northwest respectively.

- The distance between the initial settlement gateway and the historic core gateway is relatively short giving rise to the perception that the settlement is compact and has a strong sense of place with little indistinct peripheral suburban development.
- Gateways are not defined by road junctions or roundabouts. As a result the settlement retains a rural character with junctions to subsidiary routes occurring within the fabric of the settlement e.g. at the market place within Botesdale.

6: Detailed Assessment of Peripheral Areas

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 This section of the report considers in detail peripheral areas around the settlement in terms of their suitability to accommodate housing development. Within each of these areas there may be sites which have already been approved for housing, are current applications, have been considered in the Mid Suffolk and Babergh SHELLAA and or have come forward as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan call for sites. This assessment 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. As such this assessment supplements and adds detail to previous assessments in the SHELLAA and AECOM.
- 6.1.2 Each Peripheral Area (PA) is illustrated on Figure 3 and described in terms character and context followed by an evaluation of sensitivity and capacity to accommodate housing growth in the context of the character of the village and its setting. The assessment draws on all baseline data set out in this report.

6.2 Analysis Tables

<p>Peripheral Area 1: Redgrave Park Relevant Housing Sites/allocations: SS0098 (suitable for development in SHELLAA); SS0129 (planning application)</p>
<p>Context and Character</p> <p>This area lies along the northern periphery of Botesdale within the Valley Furze and Valley Meadowlands Landscape Types. It comprises the southern slopes of a tributary valley which contains Redgrave Park (designed by Capability Brown). The northern boundary of the Parish originally ran along the tributary stream but the course of the stream has moved further north leaving the Parish boundary and the neighbourhood Plan Area running through the centre of a field. Former drainage ditches across the valley floor have also been lost although they are possible to discern on aerial photographs.</p> <p>The area north of Back Hills lane is designated a Special Landscape Area comprising the valley landscape and former parkland of Redgrave Park. Although Redgrave Park has been altered and has evolved over time, the key elements including veteran infield trees, the serpentine lake and gatehouse off Hall Lane give rise to a recognisable parkland character. The south west boundary of the area butts the Conservation Area of Rickinghall and Botesdale.</p> <p>Land within the Neighbourhood Plan Area ranges from approximately the 41m along Bury Road to 27m AOD along the stream course on the valley floor. The valley sides are gently sloping and comprise small scale arable and pasture fields with hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The area as a whole has an outward facing aspect, away from the existing settlement.</p> <p>The current urban edge is loosely arranged with glimpses to individual dwellings on the upper slopes/skyline set amongst trees on the edge of Diss Road or Rose Lane. The tree group and semi-</p>

mature lime trees within the woodland east of the school is visually significant and screens views to the school and breaks up the urban edge such that development does not feel prominent nor dominant in views but visually recedes, with the rural context remaining dominant.

Back Hills is a narrow back entrance into the village and has retained its intimate and rural character. The current gateway into the settlement on this route is not reached until just before the junction with Rose Lane. Similarly the gateway along Diss Road is at the junction with Hall Lane. Historically the parkland of Redgrave has been perceived as separate from the village of Botesdale and there are notable views into the parkland from the public right of way which stretches from the urban edge to Hall Lane. Other important views looking toward the urban edge are from Hall Lane and public right of way to the north.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- This landscape area comprises a **distinctive setting for Botesdale** derived from the remnant parkland characteristics east of Hall Lane along with the rural tributary valley character;
- **Rural valley character remains dominant** with the **existing urban edge appearing subservient** in views - historically Botesdale was not visible in this landscape and today only a few dwellings along Diss Road and Rose Lane which date to the 20th century are visible;
- **Landscape north of Back Hills is valued for its scenic qualities forming part of the Special Landscape Area** comprising the river valley and parkland;
- The lane of **Back Hills is an important historic feature** and is clearly legible, lined by a hedgerow and hedgerow trees;
- **An historic footpath between Botesdale and Hall Lane** affords **distinctive, elevated views into Redgrave Park** with The Shrubbery woodland forming a skyline feature.
- **Visually significant woodland/vegetation** including the woodland east of the school and vegetation along rear property boundaries and within the valley floor to the west.

Due to topography and aspect, any development within this area will need to consider the landscape and visual effects on areas beyond the Neighbourhood Plan boundary and effects on setting, urban edge character and gateways to Botesdale. The open, exposed and rural character of this landscape, coupled with its inter visibility with Redgrave Park, historic rural qualities of Back Hills lane and the unique character of the landscape in the context of the setting of Botesdale, means that the area has a high sensitivity to development. The landscape immediately adjacent to Hall Lane is particularly visually sensitive with potential to increase the prominence of development extending into the wider valley, altering perceptions of tranquillity and the gateway into the settlement.

Opportunities for Development

Housing development between Diss Road and Back Hills has been approved subject to conditions. This will result in the extension of development into the valley landscape. While the western part of this site has some capacity to accommodate housing development, the eastern part of this site adjacent to Hall Lane is more sensitive potentially altering the gateway of the village and prominence of development in the wider landscape.

Historically development has not extended onto the valley floor or below the 30m contour. Development north of Back Hills below the 30m contour would be inappropriate for reasons of landscape character and settlement form as well as flood risk. Similarly the extension of Botesdale village into Redgrave Park would mark a significant change in the historic relationship between the park and the village which has always been considered as separate and should be avoided.

There is some scope for development north of properties on Rose Lane where the land is more

elevated and where access may be provided off Back Hills and/or as an extension of Cherrytree Lane to the north. Care should be to avoid extending development along Back Lane beyond the visually prominent woodland adjacent to the school, as this would have the effect of pushing the existing gateway outwards.

Guidance

- Avoid development below the 30m contour and onto the valley floor which would appear uncharacteristic and alter settlement form.
- Conserve and enhance Back Hills and ensure development along or adjacent to this lane reflects the traditional relationship of dwellings along lanes within the village.
- Avoid development extending along the length of Back Hills which would urbanise the character of the lane and alter approach routes and gateways into the village.
- Ensure that where new development occurs a new soft planted edge is established as an appropriate interface to the wider valley landscape.
- Avoid development close to Hall Lane where it will extend the urban gateway and sense of arrival into the village.
- Avoid urbanising public right of ways where development occurs adjacent.
- Retain views to Redgrave Park and The Shrubbery woodland on the skyline from public rights of way.
- Retain the perceived separation between the village of Botesdale and wider parkland of Redgrave.
- Plant along existing property boundaries especially where those boundaries currently comprise fencing which is in a mixed state of repair.
- Remove or mitigate conifer planting on the edges of the settlement where they appear stark and uncharacteristic.
- Retain visually important areas of woodland and bring them into community use e.g. forest school.
- Retain pasture land uses within the valley floor.

Peripheral Area 2: Northeast Botesdale

- **Relevant Housing Sites/allocations:** B1113 to Mill Road (planning application; Mill Road to Bridewell Lane

Context and Character

This area comprises the elevated landscape to the east of Botesdale from Bury Road and Bridewell Lane, between the existing urban edge and the A143. The area falls within the Ancient Plateau Claylands landscape type. As such the topography of the area is gently undulating and relatively flat compared to the steeper slopes of the river valleys. Contours range from 44m close to the urban edge to 50m at the junction between Mill Road and the A143.

From this landscape there are elevated views to skyline woodland including The Shrubbery, Jacobites Wood and Carpenter's Grove as well as The Grove in the west looking across the settlement of Rickinghall.

Land use comprises arable farmland in medium scale fields defined by hedgerows and the relatively recent tree belts which have altered the historic field pattern and masked the legibility of the more open plateau landscape close to the village. Whilst this more recent planting has some screening effect, overall the area has an elevated and exposed character and is visually related to the wider plateau landscape with some longer distance views to the south. Historic maps indicate Mill Road connected Botesdale with Botesdale Common (otherwise known as Micklewood Common) to the

south and a windmill was once located along this route. Land at the junction of Mill Road and Chapel Lane was historically a farm complex (Street Farm) and immediately to the north the hard standing associated with the former bus depot is still evident. To the south of Mill Road is a small children's play area set amongst mature trees.

There are no designations within this area although the Conservation Area lies adjacent as do a number of listed buildings. The existing urban edge comprises single storey dwellings along Park View, the roofs of which have solar panels and form an abrupt and uncharacteristic urban edge to the settlement.

The current gateways into the settlement lie adjacent and include that at The Toll House (listed) on Bury Road and also the historic gateway on Mill Road. Along Mill Road there is a strong sense of arrival into the historic core of the village at the junction between Mill Road and Chapel Lane.

Land opposite the Toll House was once called Barley Birch and was used as the village cricket pitch.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- This landscape area **forms the wider setting to Botesdale and Rickinghall** historically providing access to landscape resources on the plateau areas such as common land;
- Botesdale has historically not extended above the 43m contour and development **which is located above the 43m contour appears visually prominent** in views from the surrounding landscape;
- The **traditional settlement pattern** in the Ancient Plateau Claylands landscape type comprises mainly common edge dwellings and often has a **dispersed character**;
- The **hierarchy of lanes** within the settlement of Botesdale reflect a **distinctive 'fan' shape** extending outwards from the marketplace.
- **Historic gateways into the settlement remain intact** but susceptible to change as a result of peripheral development and access to new development, altering perceptions of arrival and historic village form.
- **The Tollhouse on Diss Road forms an important landmark building** within the village, its edge of settlement location, relationship to the main road and to Redgrave Park is important in terms of perceptions of sense of place and arrival/departure.

Opportunities for Development

Whilst development located close to the existing urban edge could be accommodated without wide visual effects on the surrounding landscape, this does not necessarily mean that it is appropriate in settlement character terms. This is because development on the more elevated land above the historic village is not characteristic of Botesdale or other valley slope settlements. Settlement patterns within the Ancient Plateau Claylands are generally focused around greens or tyes and may have multiple focal points and be dispersed in character.

Nevertheless, this area has some limited capacity for development where it lies close to the existing urban edge, is located on the lower topography and where it can positively reinforce the historic gateways into and out of the settlement. Land use change in this area should mitigate the current abrupt edge and uncharacteristic urban edge along Park View and conserve and enhance the rural character of Chapel Lane. Every effort should be made to ensure development has a high permeability, connecting into the existing network of lanes and reflects the 'fanned out' pattern of back lanes within this part of Botesdale.

This area of landscape offers opportunities for the provision of recreation/sports related land use in the northern part of the village and a possible land swap with the existing play area to the south of Mill Road which has a greater capacity to accommodate development without adverse effect.

Development here could positively contribute to the creation of a stronger gateway into the settlement along Mill Road.

Guidance

- Conserve and sensitive reinforcement historic gateways – avoid the creation of new road junctions at existing gateways but seek to provide access into new development from within the settlement.
- Ensure the layout and extent of new development is appropriate to the historic form of the settlement i.e. does not extend onto upper slopes and plateau.
- Ensure integration of new development with the existing settlement through creation of high permeability including through routes and the creation of new back lanes which reflect the ‘fanned out’ layout of Botesdale.
- Incorporate recreation open space in this part of the village and consider a land swap with existing play area to make best use of land available and to create a strong gateway into the village along Mill Lane.
- Care should be taken to introduce development which in its layout and form reflects the rural edge of this landscape i.e. comprises a farm/barn complex, avoids tall structures and gives consideration to roofscapes which are likely to be seen breaking the skyline.
- Seek opportunities to create woodland south of Bury Road/Hall Lane junction to maintain the separation between the village and Redgrave Park, provide a strong terminus to the settlement, reinforce the rural gateway, and provide a strong setting to the Tollgate listed building.
- Avoid urbanising influences such as roundabouts, new junctions, signage, lighting and concrete kerbs especially at existing gateways into the settlement.
- Where new development occurs, carefully consider vistas into the existing settlement and views to new dwellings ensuring they reinforce local sense of place.

Peripheral Area 3: Bridewell Lane to Rectory Hill

Relevant Housing Sites/allocations: Bridewell Lane to Garden House Lane (planning application); Bury Road and Rectory Lane (planning application and SS0091), Rectory Lane (call for sites)

Context and Character

This landscape is located on the southeast side of Botesdale and Rickingham and comprises the valley slopes in which the settlements sit and land that extends onto the more elevated farmed plateau landscape. Land use is predominately arable. The lower slopes of this area fall within the Rolling Valley Farmlands character type while the more elevated slopes form part of Ancient Plateau Claylands.

The area is dissected by small stream valleys creating gentle undulations and visual interest. Within these valleys/gentle folds of landform are the historic lanes of Bridewell and Gardenhouse. In the west Rectory Hill extends up onto the higher land and intersects with the A143. The latter has severed Bridewell Lane and Gardenhouse Lane which are no longer through routes – as such they no longer perform a gateway function, nevertheless the pattern of lanes extending out from The Street/Bury Road at right angles and connecting the settlement to the wider plateau landscape to the south remains strong.

Within the gentle undulations of the landscape and on lower slopes there is a degree of shelter and intimacy. Further up the slopes the landscape is more open and exposed with longer distance views across the valley and settlement and to the wider treed horizon of the plateau. Across the centre of

the area is the Parish boundary between Rickingham Superior and Botesdale which is marked by a right of way, popular with local residents and promoted as part of walks around the settlements.

The existing urban edge comprises historic buildings along Bury Lane and more recent housing estates such as Ryders Way which have extended up on to higher land and. The Conservation Area lies adjacent to this peripheral area in the west where there has been no housing estate development.

A loose pattern of individual dwellings extends along the lanes. For the most part the lanes retain a rural character due to their hedged boundaries and grass verges and lack of concrete kerbs or street lighting, although in places boundary treatment and driveways have fragmented the hedge line and grass verge. The small group of dwellings on the upper slopes along Rectory Hill appear divorced from the main settlement.

There are views into this landscape both from the plateau landscape to the south and from the valley sides to the north. In the latter views, the upper valley slopes form an important setting to the village and views are filtered by maturing poplar plantations within the valley floor. More recent development has occurred on the higher land between the lanes forming skyline housing at Ryder's Way which is visible from the landscape immediately adjacent but also from the wider landscape south of the A143.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- This landscape has ***historically formed the rural setting to the village of Botesdale and Rickingham.***
- Development has historically not extended above the 43m contour and development ***which is located above the 43m contour can appear visually prominent*** in views from the surrounding landscape;
- The ***upper slopes of this landscape are highly visible*** as a result of their elevation and openness.
- ***Changes in vegetation on the valley floor to the north may open up views to development on the valley sides*** and higher slopes.
- ***Historic lanes which extend out from the settlement retain a strong rural character.***
- The ***landscape around Bridewell Lane has a particular sensitivity due to its distinctive valley topography/slopes, intact character and historic landscape features*** such as Bridewell Lane/greenway and woodland blocks.

Opportunities for Development

The relatively recent expansion of housing onto upper slopes in this area has resulted in the village being visible from the south in a way that previously it would not have been. These urban edges can appear stark and abrupt. Appropriately designed new development on lower slopes could help to mitigate the current raw urban edges and along with the reinstatement of hedgerows and woodland planting, helping to provide a more appropriate built edge and rural interface than currently exists.

There are some limited opportunities for small scale infill development along the rural lanes or along the southern side of Bury Road where it is currently only one plot deep. Here it will be important to retain the linear character of the settlement and to create parallel lanes which reflect the traditional hierarchy of routes in the village and connect any new development into the heart of the settlement.

Overall much of this landscape should remain open, providing a valuable rural setting to the settlement, ensuring that the settlement retains its valley side location and sense of place. Opportunities exist to enhance this rural setting through the reinstatement of field boundaries, reinforcement of the Parish boundary and woodland planting on the upper slopes in keeping with the Ancient Plateau Claylands. These initiatives would strengthen the character of the landscape and enhance biodiversity networks as well as recreation experience.

Guidance

- Avoid urbanisation of the rural lanes where they extend out of the village within the gentle folds of the valley sides through careful boundary character, retention of hedgerows and grass verges. Where development occurs along the lanes closer to the A143 it should be rural in character reflecting isolated cottages or farm buildings found more typically on the plateau landscape.
- Avoid development on the highest parts of the site above the 43m contour which could be highly visible from the surrounding landscape and would be uncharacteristic of the village form and position in the landscape.
- Should any of the lanes be connected to the A143 in future then careful consideration would need to be given to the creation of an appropriate gateway into the village, reinforcing sense of place. The use of vegetation/planting, creation of open space, vistas and landmarks as well as built form and layout would all need to be considered.
- Avoid development which breaks the skyline which can appear harsh and uncharacteristic.

Peripheral Area 4: Rickinghall Valley

Relevant Housing Sites/allocations: Water Lane (SS0030); Bury Road (SS0013); Candle Street

Context and Character

This area is located in the upper valley landscape associated with The Swimming Brook where the valley narrows, and its two tributaries which form gentle depressions extending into the plateau landscape to the south.. The settlement of Rickinghall Inferior is located on lower land around the St Mary's Church of Rickinghall Inferior, while Rickinghall Superior is located further upstream in one of the tributary valleys. The rising land of Snape Hill defines this area to the west and The Grove woodland, Calke Wood and Westhall Wood form important treed horizons in wider views. The churches associated with Superior and Inferior are set amongst trees and form important landmark features.

Within Rickinghall Inferior dwellings are loosely arranged comprising larger houses in generous plots as well as small cottages along Water Lane. The staggered junction created by Rectory Hill/Hinderclay Road and Bury Road, forms a central fulcrum with a distinctive character associated with the church and its leafy grounds.

More recent development has occurred off Hinderclay Road on the northern valley slopes at Church Meadow. This is the only development on this side of the valley and has created a new gateway into the settlement at East Lodge. Between Church Meadow and the church are recently established sports pitch, cricket pitch and hard courts. The gateway into the settlement along Bury Lane is leafy and green with larger dwellings set back from the road. The historic gateway is reached on arrival at the church.

In contrast Rickinghall Superior forms a separate cluster of dwellings comprising a handful of dispersed rural cottages and a farm along Kiln Farm Lane. This settlement cluster has a strongly rural character.

Rectory Hill and Water Lane used to connect the Rickinghalls but both have been severed by the A143 which is closest to this part of this village.

Land adjacent to the streams is liable to flooding and comprises a mixture of meadows and pastures,

while arable is dominant in the wider landscape.

There are views into this landscape from the A143 and more elevated land to the west.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- The ***distinctive qualities*** of this part of the village relate to the ***churches and the shallow valleys associated with the tributary streams***.
- The leafy ***character of the area, and dispersed pattern of dwellings along Bury Road is unique*** in the context of the wider village.
- This part of the village is ***well treed and dwellings are not especially visible*** from the wider landscape.

Opportunities for Development

There is capacity for some infill development within the grounds of some of the larger properties along Bury Road. There are also opportunities for some development to the west of the sports pitches where it can reinforce the form of dwellings clustered around St Mary's Church, Rickinghall Inferior. Access would need to be provided off Bury Road and would need to give careful consideration to the character of the village gateway. Opportunities should also be taken to connect any new development to Church Meadows. New dwellings could face onto the playing fields and have views towards the church.

There is also some scope for limited development to the east of Water Lane on the lower slopes comprising rural cottages. Any development here should be considered in conjunction with potential development along Rectory Hill.

Guidance

- Avoid extension of the settlement as far as the A143 and protect perceptions of the shallow stream valleys.
- Fell and prune trees within the grounds of the churches to enable their landmark functions to be more evident in surrounding areas.
- Conserve pastures and meadows on lower land adjacent to stream courses.
- Plant woodland along the A143 reduce noise intrusion and maintain separation between the village and the by pass.

Peripheral Area 5: Northern Valley Slopes

Relevant Housing Sites/allocations: Mill Lane (Call for Sites)

Context and Character

This area comprises the valley slopes north of The Swimming Ditch extending between 30 and 40m AOD and falls within the Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape character type. Land use is predominately arable with allotments associated with the edge of the village of Rickinghall Inferior in the west. Field sizes are medium in scale and the enclosure pattern of hedgerows with hedgerow trees has altered little over the last few centuries.

Mill Lane follows the contours northwards along the mid slopes, connecting the village with Mill House and Broomhills. There are a number of public rights of way which connect Mill Lane with the valley floor and which historically would have connected to Fen Lane and Lizzies Lane to the north and form part of a network of recreational routes around the settlement. Historic maps also indicate a windmill once stood close to Mill House from which the dwelling and associated lane have derived their name.

Development has not extended into this area of landscape except in the western end of the valley where the valley narrows and Hinderclay Lane approaches Rickighall Inferior. This area has a strongly rural character and forms an important setting to the settlement reinforcing its location within a stream valley.

This landscape offers views along the valley and also south across the settlement of Botesdale and Rickinghall set within the valley.

Key Landscape Sensitivities

- The open rural valley slopes form an **important undeveloped setting to the village** of Rickinghall and Botesdale.
- **Intact historic landscape** where field boundary enclosures and historic routes/tracts remain evidence in the present day landscape pattern.
- This landscape offers **rare opportunities to appreciate the form and location of the village of Rickinghall and Botesdale on the valley slopes** and it is from here that the linear nature of the settlement is most readily perceived.

Opportunities for Development

This landscape has limited capacity for development without fundamentally changing the historic form of the village and its relationship to the valley. This landscape also has a predominately open character and is visually sensitive in views from the settlement and wider area.

Guidance

- Conservation of field boundary pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees through appropriate management.
- Creation of field margins particularly along public rights of way to improve habitat networks.
- Development of some views and vistas to local landmarks such as the church towers of Rickinghall Superior and Inferior both of which could be visible from this landscape and would improve legibility.
- Care should be taken to protect this landscape from intrusive views of any new development on the valley slopes to the south.

Peripheral Area 6: Valley Floor Relevant Housing Sites/allocations: None

Context and Character

This landscape comprises land on the valley floor which is, or has been poorly drained, and used for animal grazing and the cutting of peat which has accumulated in places as a result of waterlogged conditions. Over recent decades poplar plantations have developed and this along with areas of willow scrub have given rise to an often wooded and enclosed character which filter views to the urban edges of Botesdale and Rickinghall.

This area is dissected by a series of small drainage ditches as well as The Swimming Ditch and abuts the rear of properties along The Street and Fen lane. This area has historically been an important landscape resource to the adjacent community. The only lane to extend into this area is Ferry Lane, otherwise this landscape is only accessible on foot.

The linear plots associated with dwellings along The Street can be seen extending onto the valley floor and reflect the importance of this landscape in providing a local resource for the local community.

Key Landscape Sensitivities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong <i>valley floor character and traditional meadows and drainage ditches acts as an important setting to the village</i> of Rickinghall and Botesdale and bolstering sense of place. • <i>Intact pattern of boundary plots between properties along The Street and valley floor</i> reflecting the former relationship between the settlement and wider landscape resources. • Valued landscape for local <i>resident recreational use enabling access to and enjoyment of open countryside</i> close to home.
Opportunities for Development
<p>This landscape has no capacity for development due to its low lying nature, poor drainage and risk of flooding. Development here would also fundamentally alter the historic relationship between built form and the local landscape resource of the valley floor.</p>
Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive management of valley floor pastures through appropriate grazing regimes. • Felling of poplar plantations ensuring consideration is given to the character and quality of views which will be created. • Management of areas of scrub development to improve biodiversity and watercourses and furthering the Parish initiative 'Botesdale Community Streams Project'.

6.3 Development within the Wider Parish

- 6.3.1 Beyond the settlement of Rickinghall and Botesdale the settlement pattern is dispersed reflecting a pattern of former common edge dwellings. Three distinct clusters of development occur at Candle Street, Botesdale Common and Allwood Green. These clusters of dwellings comprise a number of rural farm complexes reflecting the former agricultural focus of settlement in these areas. These farm complexes in more recent years have become a focus for small scale employment development in the form of industrial units e.g. Rickinghall Business centre at Allwood Green or small enterprises associated with existing farms including engineering and steel fabrication, cattery and taxi businesses.
- 6.3.2 Some of the farms in the area have also expanded with the development of large scale barn buildings for storage and chicken sheds.
- 6.3.3 There is some scope for further residential and commercial development in these areas however where new commercial development is proposed it is important that buildings reflect the rural and agricultural building styles typically found in the area. Care is also required to ensure new buildings are not seen breaking the skyline which can make them appear visually intrusive. Wherever possible care should be taken to ensure they are back clothed by vegetation. Buildings tend to be arranged along the main routes and have a loose arrangement where the wider landscape flows between building groups. This low density and loose arrangement should be retained.

7: Summary of Findings

7.1 Special Qualities to Conserve and Enhance

7.1.1 The following conclusions can be reached as to the special qualities of Rickinghall and Botesdale and its setting which wherever possible should be retained and enhanced. Special qualities include:

- The form and fabric of the settlement which has altered little since the 19th Century with evidence of its agricultural origins and turnpike route influences remaining apparent;
- The linear form of settlement on the lower valley slopes between the 30m and 43m contour lines with strong linear street pattern and hierarchy of routes;
- The distinctive orientation and relationship of buildings to The Street;
- The use of coloured render and brick buildings and detailing typical of Suffolk vernacular results in a strong uniformity and visual cohesiveness to the village;
- Village edges are predominately indented and organic in character;
- Late 20th century housing is small scale and on the whole well integrated;
- Key built and natural landmarks reinforce sense of place and orientation within the landscape;
- Views out of the settlement and towards the settlement from surrounding areas reveal its location on the lower valley sides with distinctive groups of woodland on the skyline;
- The topography, stream valley and peat floodplain form a unique and defining rural context and setting to the settlement.
- Exceptional historical intactness evident in the unity of building material and styles and group value of listed buildings, buildings of special character, and natural features which have shaped the history of the village and are easily 'read' within the present day village/landscape.

7.2 Changes to Avoid

7.2.1 This detailed analysis has noted some changes which have resulted in minor loss of the distinctive qualities of the village. It is useful to highlight these as it may inform decisions regarding any future development or environmental initiatives/management of the village setting.

- Development which rises up the valley slopes and especially above the 45m contour;
- Development which extends below the 30m contour onto the lower valley sides/valley floor landscapes;
- Use of inappropriate building materials and building forms;
- Urban and engineered road layouts which do not reflect the existing hierarchy of routes;
- Cul-de-sac road layouts;
- High density and abrupt urban edges;
- Positioning new development behind existing rural lanes such that there is a poor relationship between historic routes and new development;
- Potential loss of key views to surrounding landmarks affecting visual and physical connectivity between the village and wider landscape;
- Loss of hedgerows and woodland;
- Loss of meadows close to the rivers and conversion to arable use.

7.3 Management and Development Guidelines

7.3.1 The following management and development guidelines have been identified as a result of this detailed settlement and landscape analysis. 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

7.3.2 Management guidelines seek to reinforce local character and improve legibility. They include:

- improve urban edges where development forms hard edge and is visually intrusive;
- open up views to churches so they act as stronger landmarks;
- create new woodland (community woodland) on upper slopes close to A143 to form new skyline woodland which is characteristic, increase capacity for development and reduce visual effects of existing urban edges;
- improve pastures on valley floor and valley sides strengthening valley character;
- reinstate parish boundaries where they have become lost or poorly defined.

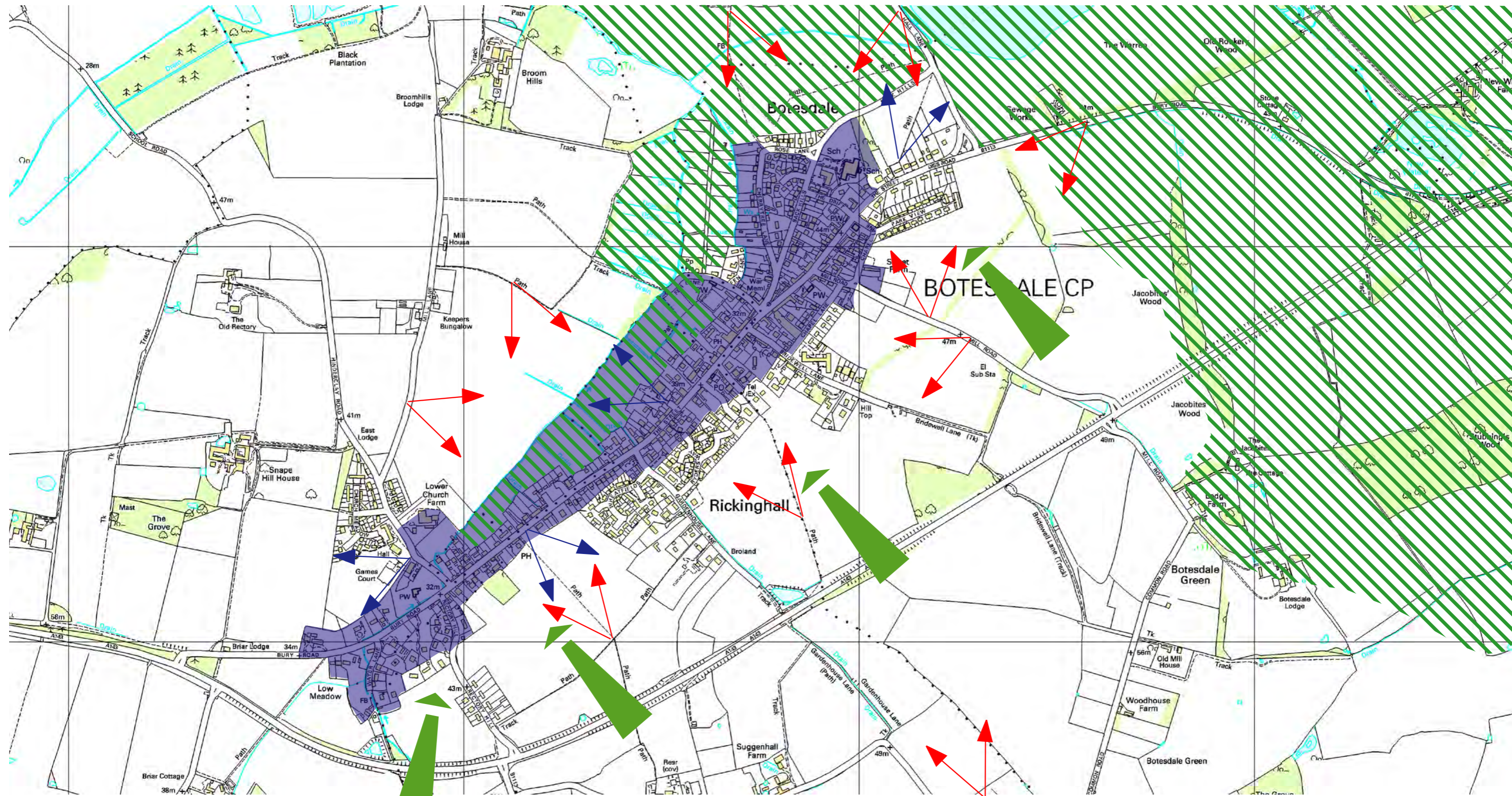
- ensure Rickinghall and Botesdale remain as valley side settlements and avoid expansion onto the plateau landscape which can undermine these perceptions and sense of place.

7.3.3 Development guidelines seek to inform new development and include:




- Avoid cul de sac developments which do not reflect lane hierarchy and form of the settlement;
- Seek always to ensure permeability through new housing areas, connecting any new development into the heart of the existing settlement;
- Allow some 'fanning out' of development of Botesdale where it respects the settlement form and lane hierarchy;
- Wherever possible ensure that development faces onto existing lanes retaining the rural character and creates cross streets or new back streets in keeping with the settlement's hierarchy of routes;
- Retain linear character of central portion of village allowing some limited infill development on lower slopes. Retain open slopes visible from the north and creation of wooded skylines and ensure agricultural land is retained between urban edge and A143;
- Avoid extending gateways into the wider landscape where new village development is proposed - avoid the development of roundabouts at the junction of the settlement with major roads which are uncharacteristic and undermine the rural 'village' character of the settlement;
- Avoid cumulative effects of small housing schemes which collectively, over time, extend the urban edge and relate poorly to one another – seek wider masterplans and visions for broader areas linking in aspirations for open space, reinforcement of rural landscape setting, views and vistas, public rights of way/circular countryside walks and recreation;
- Avoid creation of new routes and junctions at the gateways into the village.



7.4 Conclusions

- 7.4.1 In conclusion this assessment has revealed that Rickinghall and Botesdale has some capacity to accommodate appropriately designed development. To ensure a good fit between new and old it is important that any new development seeks to conserve and enhance the character of the existing settlement in terms of urban form as well as character. The settlement has a number of sensitivities related to its special qualities and as a result of this is most able to accommodate small scale developments rather than a single or couple of larger scale schemes.



Key

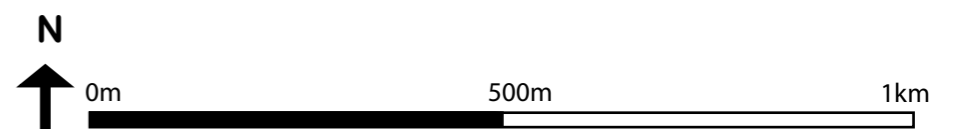
-  Important Views Towards Settlement
-  Important Views Out of Settlement
-  Elevated Land Extending Towards Settlement

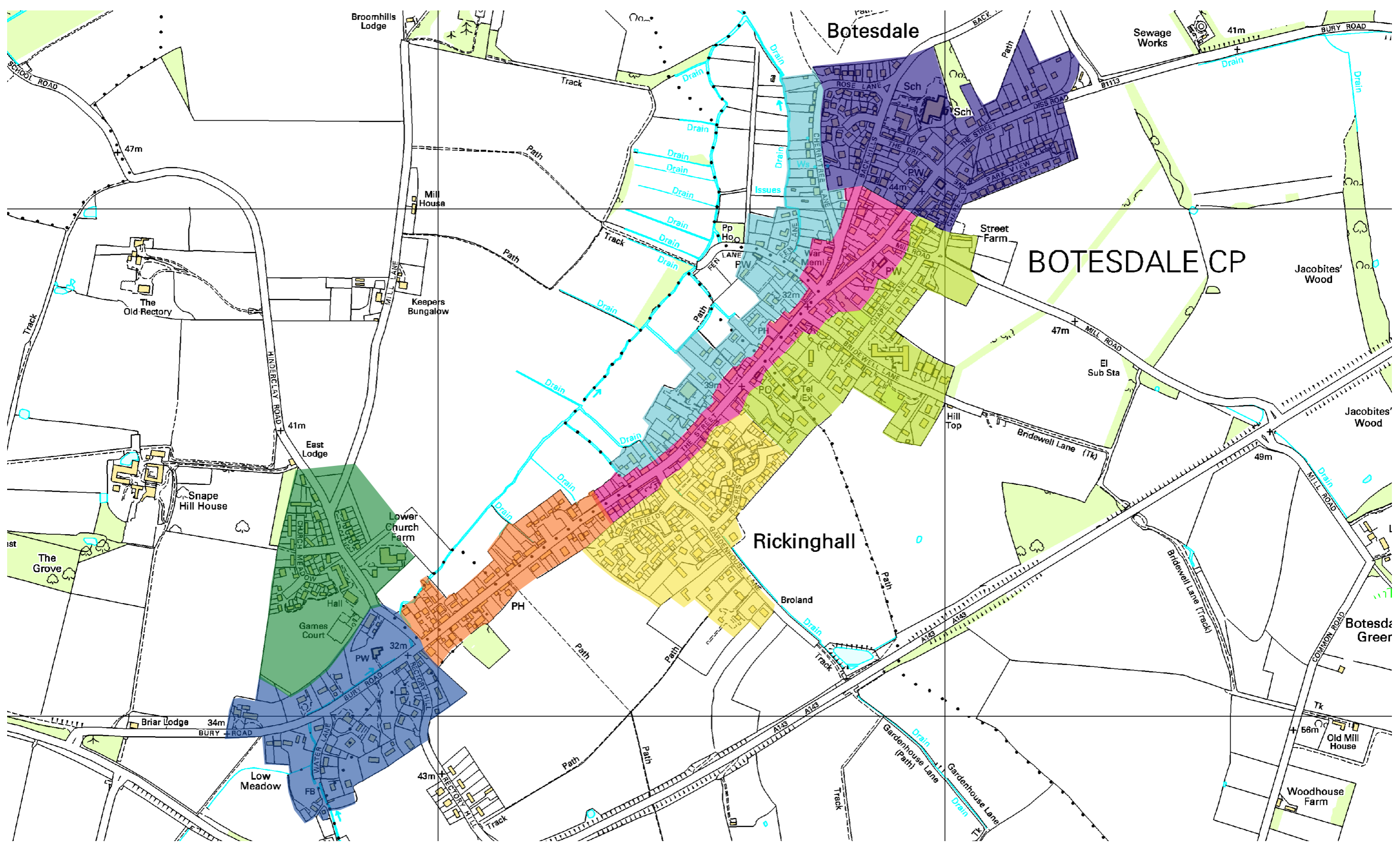
-  Special Landscape Area
-  Conservation Area

**Rickinghall and Botesdale Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Character Assessment**

December 2017

Figure 1: Designations and Views





Key

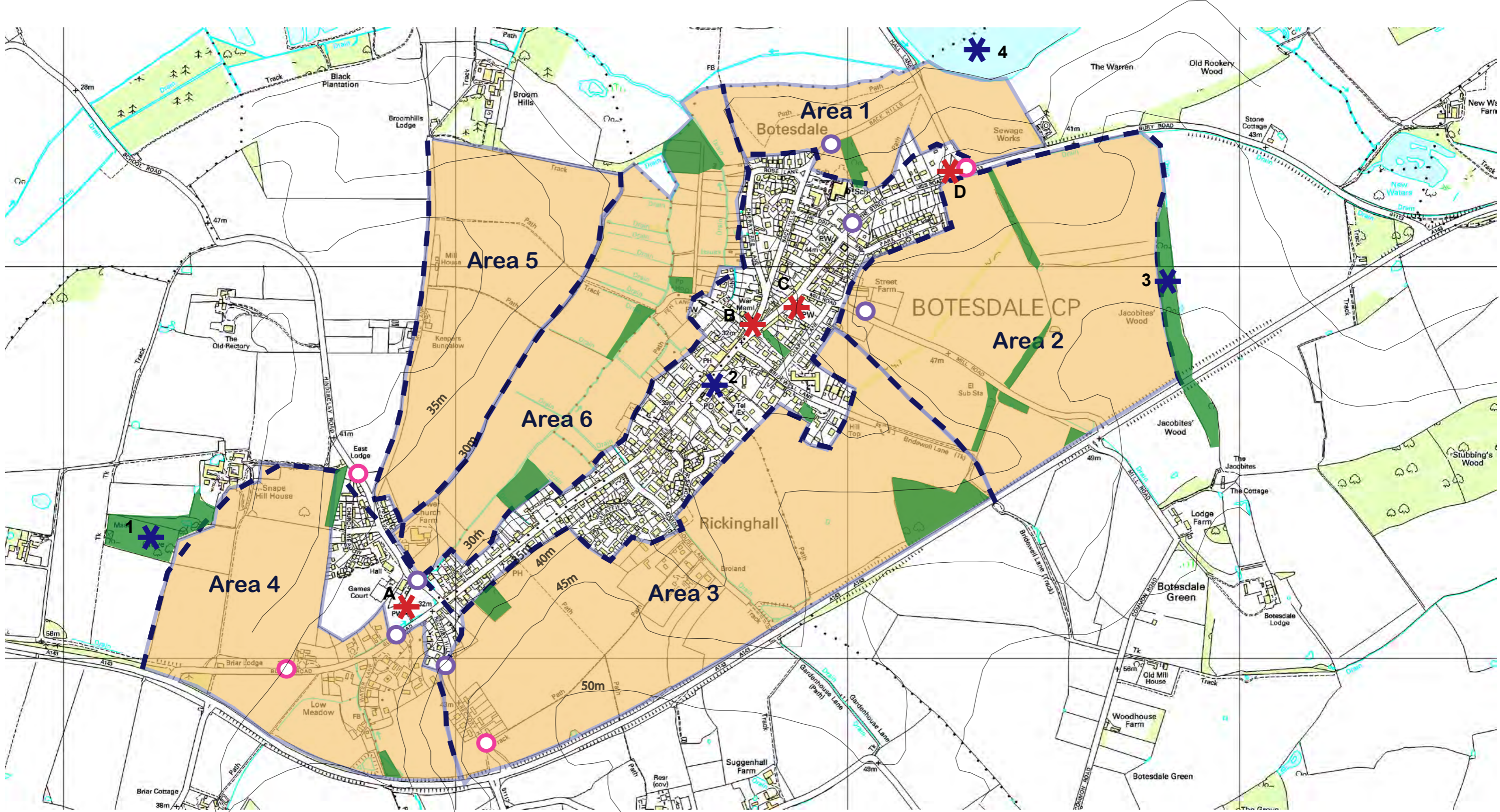
- Back Hills
- Fen Edge
- Market Place and The Street
- Bridewell Lane Area
- Gardenhouse Lane Area
- Rickinghall Superior
- Rickinghall Inferior and Water Lane
- Church Meadow Area

**Rickinghall and Botesdale Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Character Assessment**

December 2017

Figure 2: Village Character Areas





Key



Peripheral Areas



Visually Significant Woodland



Outer Gateway



Historic Gateway



Landscape Features

1. The Grove Woodland
2. Pine Trees on The Street
3. Jacobites Wood
4. Redgrave Serpentine Lake



Built Features

- A. Rickingham Inferior Church
- B. Market Place and War Manorial
- C. Chapel of St Botolph
- D. Tollgate House



Contours

**Rickingham and Botesdale Neighbourhood Plan
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December 2017

Figure 3: Peripheral Areas

