

**SWTC SEPC APPENDIX A4 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE –
LAND SE OF GRIFFIN PLACE**

SWTC SEPC APPENDIX A4 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

- 1 Photographs
- 2 Aerial Photographs
- 3 Landscape Institute Assessing Landscape Value outside National Designations 2021
- 4 Essex Landscape Character Assessment 2022 Extracts

View SWTC SEPC 1 – Radwinter Road.



View SWTC SEPC 1a – Radwinter Road Looking west along Site frontage to Turnip Hall Farm.



View SWTC SEPC 1b – Radwinter Road west of the existing Site entrance, looking west towards View 1a above.

View SWTC SEPC 2 – Long Pasture Field.



View SWTC SEPC 2 – Long Pasture Field from Radwinter Road

View SWTC SEPC 3 – Existing Site Entrance.



View SWTC SEPC 3 – Viewpoint from the existing entrance, near the PROW junction.

View SWTC SEPC 4 – Slade River Valley.



View SWTC SEPC 4 – Slade River Valley

View SWTC SEPC 4 – Slade River Valley.



View SWTC SEPC 4 – Slade River Valley showing detail

View SWTC SEPC 5 – From Linden Homes.



View SWTC SEPC 5 – From Linden Homes SUDS Area.

Scoping Comments on LVIA Viewpoints:

Scoping Viewpoint 2 Proposed Amendment



From Linden Homes showing topography.

Proposed Viewpoint East of Scoping Viewpoint 4:



From PROW directly south of the Site.

Proposed Viewpoint slightly north of Scoping Viewpoint 5

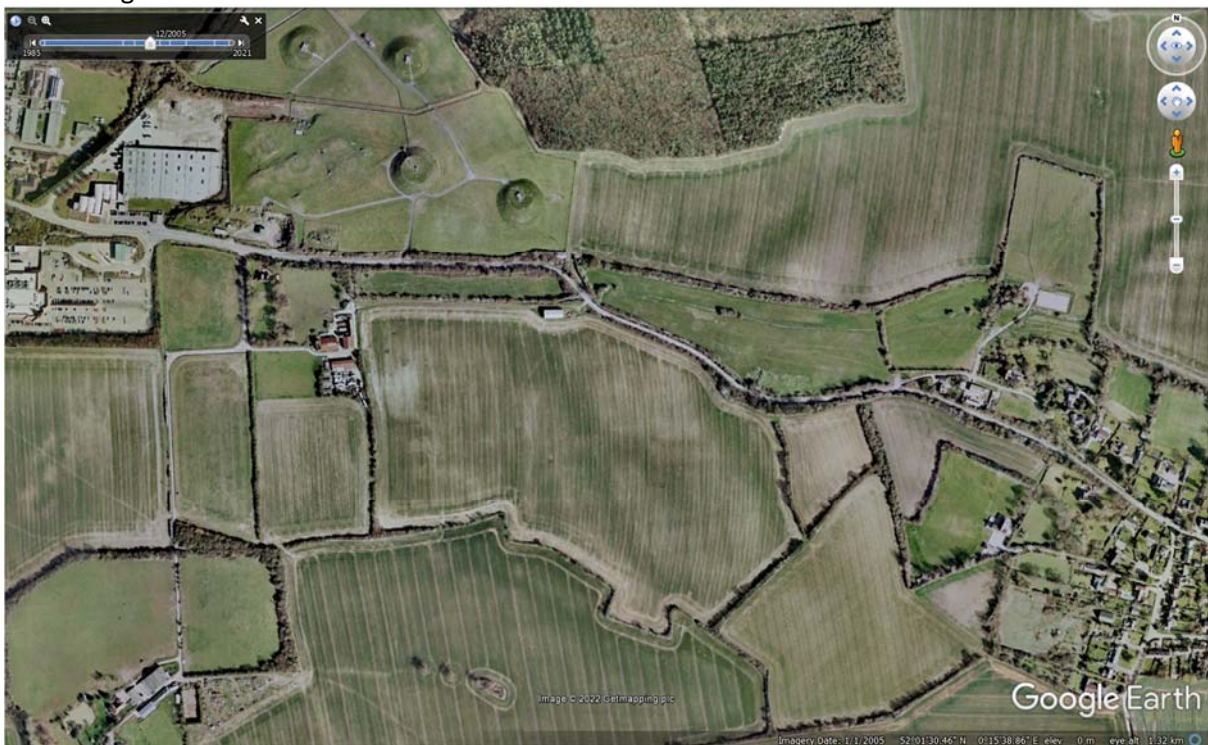


From Cole End Lane, looking towards the Site (left and centre) and Linden Homes (right).

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS LAND SOUTH OF (EAST OF GRIFFIN PLACE) RADWINTER ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN.



2000 Google



2005 Google

APPENDIX A4.2 - AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

APPEAL APP/C1570/W/22/3296426 LAND SOUTH OF (EAST OF GRIFFIN PLACE) RADWINTER ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN. Page 1



2009 Google



2021 Google

APPENDIX A4.2 - AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

APPEAL APP/C1570/W/22/3296426 LAND SOUTH OF (EAST OF GRIFFIN PLACE) RADWINTER ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN. Page 2

Assessing landscape value outside national designations



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- Font cover: Pensford Viaduct viewed across the rural landscape of Bath and North East Somerset, credit LUC.
- Appendices cover: River Findhorn, Strathdearn, credit LUC.



1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose, aims and objectives

1.1.1 This technical guidance note (TGN) provides information and guidance¹ to landscape professionals and others who need to make judgments about the value of a landscape (outside national landscape designations²) in the context of the UK Town and Country Planning system. It is also intended to be of assistance to those who review these judgements, so that there is a common understanding of the approach.

1.1.2 Although the discussion that led to the drafting of this document was prompted by a need to interpret the (England) National Planning Policy Framework February 2019 (NPPF) term ‘valued landscape’, the main body of this TGN is intended to be independent of national policy, which differs across the four nations of the UK.

1.2 Structure

1.2.1 In Part 2, this TGN:

- *identifies the stages in the planning process at which landscape value might be assessed;*
- *reviews the tools available to enable practitioners to assess landscape value; and*
- *presents a list of factors that could be considered when identifying landscape value.*

1.2.2 Appendices provide:

- *a summary of historical background and context;*
- *a summary of the evolution of factors used to describe landscape value;*
- *a summary of policies and guidance relating to designated landscapes in the four nations of the UK;*
- *the Landscape Institute’s understanding of the term ‘valued landscape’ as it is used in the context of the (England) NPPF; and*
- *an analysis of planning decisions and judgements concerned with the [England] NPPF term ‘valued landscape’.*

1.3 Context and relationship to existing UK guidance

1.3.1 The TGN does not seek to provide an evaluative methodology that would replace those provided by other established advisory documents. It is intended to supplement existing advice to practitioners, such as guidance on Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (Natural England, NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales, Marine Management Organisation), Local Landscape Designation (NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment). The TGN acknowledges and reflects all these important sources of guidance.

1.3.2 Although the history of how we value landscape is closely related to the concept of ‘natural beauty’ (summarised in **Appendix A2**), it is not the purpose of this document to define the expression ‘natural beauty’ and this TGN does not apply to national landscape designations.

¹ Some parts of the note are for information, some parts supplement existing guidance and other parts (e.g. **Appendix A4**) provide new guidance.

² Designation of nationally important landscapes is a matter for government and its agencies, some of whom have prepared technical guidance.



1.3.3 There is a difference between landscape value and the wider topic of environment value. For example, the assessment of Ecosystem Services (which combines quantitative and qualitative information) and Natural Capital Accounting (a quantitative approach) are two approaches to valuing the environment, of which landscape forms an important part. More information about these approaches can be found in the following LI Technical Information Notes (TIN):

- [*TIN 02/2016 - Ecosystem Services*](#);
- [*TIN 02/2018 - Natural Capital Accounting*](#).

1.4 Potential future revisions

1.4.1 Landscape offers multiple values, benefits and services and the way in which landscapes are valued by people is a dynamic process that can change over time. The landscape profession's understanding of landscape value is still evolving, particularly in light of the nature and climate emergency. This TGN is the Landscape Institute's current reflection on the subject of landscape value.

1.4.2 The wide range of comments on the consultation draft document suggested that further guidance would be welcome, including:

- *how the landscape design process can respond to value assessments;*
- *how value can be expressed in local plan policy;*
- *how the increased emphasis on 'beauty' in Government papers (in England) relates to landscape value; and*
- *how to interpret value in relation to other aspects of England's NPPF such as Local Green Spaces.*

1.4.3 It has not been possible to address all these as part of this TGN, although they could form topics for future TGNs.

1.4.4 This TGN is written in the context of current policy guidance and evaluation factors that have evolved since 1945 (see **Appendices A1** and **A2**). The LI is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion within the landscape profession and emerging sources of 'evidence' of value, for example from social data, will feed into future revisions to this TGN.





2 Tools to enable practitioners to assess landscape value

This TGN uses the following definitions:

Landscape qualities = characteristics/ features of a landscape that are valued

This term is being used to distinguish landscape qualities from landscape characteristics which are elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to landscape character. Landscape qualities (in the sense meant in this TGN) are usually referred to as 'special qualities' or 'special landscape qualities' in relation to nationally designated landscapes. For example, 'special qualities' is a statutory expression used in relation to National Parks, in policy for Scotland's local landscape designations, and is a term used informally to describe components of natural beauty set out in AONB Management Plans³.

Landscape value = the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities (see Table 1).

The definition of landscape value used in this TGN draws on, and is compatible with, the GLVIA3 definition of landscape value as well as Natural England's [definition](#) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013; Tudor, 2014). The definition makes it clear that it is 'society' that assigns value to landscapes. However, landscape value means more than popularity and the Landscape Institute suggests that value assessments should be undertaken by a landscape professional, drawing on evidence from stakeholders where available.

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Assessments of landscape value (for landscapes which are outside, and not candidates for, national designation) may be required at different stages of the planning process, for example:

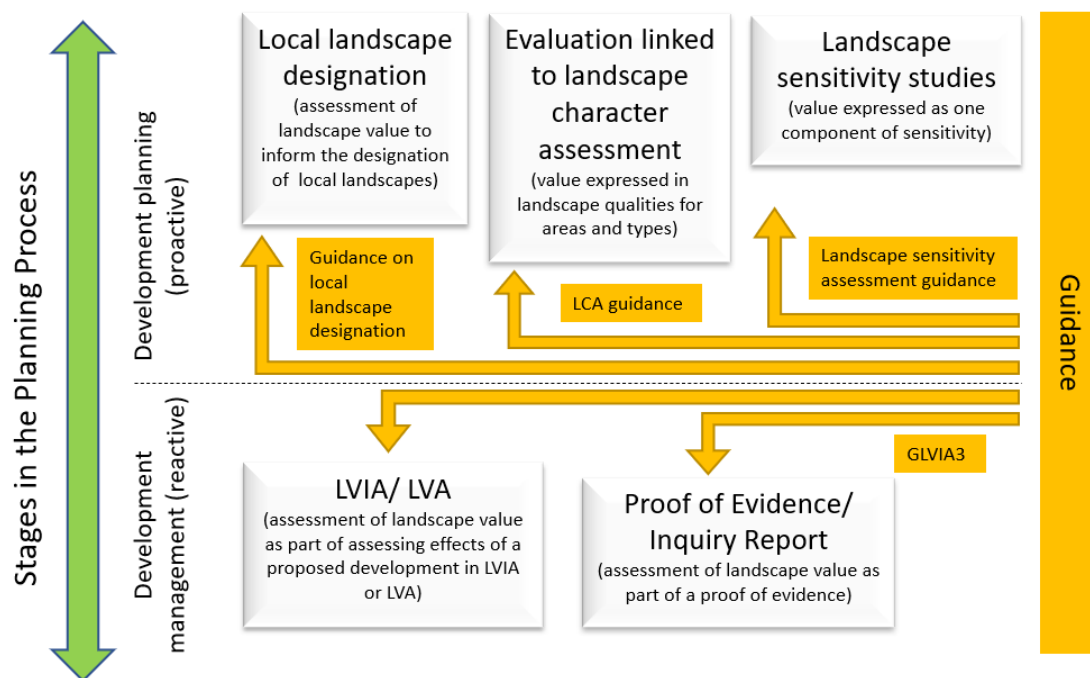
- Local planning authorities (LPAs), neighbourhood planning groups and other parties at the evidence-gathering and plan-making stages;
- LPAs, applicants/appellants and others considering a site on which future development or other form of change is proposed, usually at the planning application or appeal stage.

2.1.2 These scenarios are shown by **Figure 1**, along with the type of guidance that might feed in.

³ National Parks are UK-wide. AONBs are found in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and NSAs are unique to Scotland.



Figure 1: Assessing landscape value at different stages of the planning process



2.2 Assessing landscape value as part of plan making (development planning)

2.2.1 Landscape value at the local authority or neighbourhood level can be assessed and mapped spatially, i.e. through identifying areas for local landscape designation. Studies to support spatial designations should identify the landscape qualities of each area of landscape proposed for designation.

2.2.2 Landscape value can be assessed as an evaluation stage of a landscape character assessment or as a follow-on study. In this case landscape qualities will be identified in relation to individual character areas or types. Currently these are commonly described as 'valued landscape characteristics' or 'landscape qualities'.

2.2.3 Landscape value can also be assessed as part of a landscape sensitivity study, as landscape value is one of the two components of landscape sensitivity (the other being susceptibility). The areas to be assessed will depend on the purpose of the study.

2.2.4 The LI supports all approaches as they are all capable of highlighting the particular aspects of a landscape that are valued. Where value has been placed on a landscape by the local planning authority, this should ideally be defined in the development plan documents. Where value is not defined in the development plan, evaluations undertaken by local planning authorities and neighbourhood planning groups still form part of the evidence base.

Local landscape designations: the spatial approach

2.2.5 Although the guidance in this note is independent of policy, it is worth noting that different parts of the UK currently have different policy approaches to local landscape designations, as described in **Appendix A3**. Local landscape designation is supported by national policy in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but across England local landscape designations have been inconsistently applied due to past changes of emphasis in national planning guidance. Therefore, the absence of local landscape designations in England does not necessarily indicate there are no landscapes worthy of local designation. Additionally, in all nations, the lack of designation does not mean that a landscape has no value.

2.2.6 Guidance on how to identify local landscape designations has been produced in Scotland and Wales. This TGN is intended to support the approach set out in these guidance documents:



- *NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (2020) have jointly produced guidance on designating Local Landscape Areas (LLAs) in Scotland which is intended primarily for local authorities to use in taking forward their own designation process. The guidance acknowledges that local landscape designations are a valuable tool in the development plan toolbox and outlines the process for designating new LLAs and refreshing existing designations, noting that ‘designations do not mean other places are unimportant or not valued’ (paragraph 1.16).*
- *NRW has published LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas (2017)⁴ which sets out an approach for defining Special Landscape Areas in Wales using LANDMAP⁵ information. These areas may be designated for ‘their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical importance, which may be considered unique, exceptional or distinctive to the local area’ and they should be ‘important for their distinctive character, qualities and sense of place’.*

2.2.7 The guidance produced by NatureScot and NRW may be helpful for other nations that do not have their own guidance.

2.2.8 Where local designations are used, the identification of their spatial boundaries and their landscape qualities should be supported by evidence.

2.2.9 **Table 1** of this TGN sets out a range of factors that could be considered to define the value of a landscape⁶ and to inform the designation process. These factors are intended to be consistent with the factors set out in existing guidance in relation to local landscape designations in Scotland and Wales, as well as guidance in relation to national landscape designations (e.g. guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England). However, they are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

2.2.10 Stakeholder engagement and early collaboration with local communities will add depth to the assessment by helping the landscape professional to understand what people value about the local landscape. Community engagement should be encouraged whenever practicable in line with existing planning guidance.

Evaluative studies linked to landscape character assessment

2.2.11 The guidance on Landscape Character Assessment (The Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002), which is still in use in Scotland, acknowledges that ‘most assessments will usually move beyond the characterisation stage to the stage of making judgements to inform particular decisions’⁷. Natural England’s 2014 document, which replaced the 2002 guidance in England, also notes that landscape character assessment can be used to identify special qualities and inform judgements (Tudor, 2014). These evaluative studies can be undertaken as an extension to a landscape character assessment, or as a separate follow-on study. Such studies can include the identification of landscape qualities that contribute to the value of landscape areas or types⁸. **Table 1** of this TGN sets out a range of factors that could be considered as part of the process.

2.2.12 In these types of assessments, information from stakeholders (where available) about what is valued should inform the landscape professional’s consideration of landscape value.

Landscape sensitivity studies

2.2.13 Landscape value is assessed as one of the two components of landscape sensitivity in strategic landscape sensitivity assessments. As explained in [Natural England’s An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management](#) (Tudor, 2019), landscape

⁴ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/680613/landmap-guidance-note-1-landmap-slas-2017.pdf>
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

⁵ LANDMAP is an all-Wales landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated.

⁶ It should be noted that designation is a process that may include factors other than landscape value.

⁷ This is a two-stage process with the landscape character assessment being separate from subsequent assessments of value or sensitivity.

⁸ It should be noted that, in Wales, LANDMAP already includes a range of criteria-based evaluations relating to the landscape.



sensitivity combines judgements about the susceptibility to the specific development type/development scenario or other change being considered together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resource.

2.2.14 Existing guidance on landscape sensitivity assessment should be followed where available. In addition to the guidance from Natural England above, Natural Resources Wales and NatureScot are also preparing guidance documents for Wales and Scotland which should be available soon. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) has also published guidance on seascape sensitivity assessment (see further reading). The factors in **Table 1** of this TGN may be helpful to consider as part of the process of landscape sensitivity assessment.

2.3 Assessing landscape value of a site in its context (as part of development management)

2.3.1 The landscape value of a site in its context needs to be assessed as part of carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)⁹. Most commonly this will be as part of the assessment of a development proposal (for a planning application or appeal). The current guidance for LVIA/LVA is the third edition of *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA3; LI and IEMA, 2013) which states that the value of a landscape should be assessed as one of two components of landscape sensitivity¹⁰. Landscape value is the ‘inherent’ component, which is independent of the development proposal, while the other component, susceptibility, is development specific.

2.3.2 GLVIA3 recognises that landscape value is not always signified by designation: ‘the fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value’ (paragraph **5.26**). GLVIA3 recommends that when undertaking a LVIA/LVA in an undesignated area, landscape value should be determined through a review of existing assessments, policies, strategies and guidelines and, where appropriate, by new survey and analysis (paragraphs **5.27** and **5.28**). It is recommended that the process for identifying landscape value outside nationally designated areas is based upon a structured and transparent assessment process including community-based evidence where practical to do so.

2.3.3 The list of factors set out in Box 5.1 on page **84** of GLVIA3, which is a slightly modified form of the list of criteria from the 2002 landscape character assessment guidance, is described as an example of ‘the range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes’. It should be noted that they are not comprehensive nor intended to be prescriptive. Nevertheless, ‘Box 5.1’ has been widely used to inform judgements about landscape value as part of LVIA/LVA in the planning process.

2.3.4 Since GLVIA3 was published in 2013, appeal decisions, high court judgements and practitioners’ experience have provided further information about the factors which can be considered in assessing landscape value outside nationally designated landscapes. These have been incorporated into **Table 1** of this TGN.

2.4 Range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value

2.4.1 **Table 1** sets out a range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value in any of the contexts described above. It also includes examples of potential indicators of value.

2.4.2 This broadly presents the same factors as Box 5.1 from GLVIA3 (and the 2002 Landscape Character Assessment Guidance), with the following changes:

- ‘*Conservation interests*’ is separated into *natural heritage* and *cultural heritage* factors (reflecting the approach in NatureScot’s guidance on local landscape designations and Natural England’s

⁹ Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) form part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVA) are standalone assessments.

¹⁰ This is consistent with the approach set out in Tudor (2019).



Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England);

- The term 'landscape condition' is used in place of 'landscape quality (condition)';
- 'Rarity' and 'representativeness' are combined into a newly-named factor 'distinctiveness'; and
- A new factor, 'function' is included which addresses the value attached to landscapes which perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function.

2.4.3 It should be noted that the factors are not presented in order of importance.

2.4.4 As with Box 5.1 in GLVIA3, **Table 1** is not intended to be an exhaustive list of factors to be considered when determining the value of landscapes, but to provide a range of factors and indicators that could be considered. This TGN is intended to be complementary to GLVIA3.

Table 1: Range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value

Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
Natural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape	<p>Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place</p> <p>Extent and survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type</p> <p>Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features</p> <p>Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks</p> <p>Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/ green infrastructure network</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Geological Landscape and Landscape Habitats Aspects (in Wales)</p> <p>Ecological and geological designations</p> <p>SSSI citations and condition assessments</p> <p>Geological Conservation Review</p> <p>Habitat surveys</p> <p>Priority habitats</p> <p>Nature recovery networks/ nature pathways</p> <p>Habitat network opportunity mapping/ green infrastructure mapping</p> <p>Catchment management plans</p> <p>Ecosystem services assessment/ schemes</p> <p>Specialist ecological studies</p>
Cultural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or	Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies,	Landscape character assessment

¹¹ These examples are not exhaustive.

¹² Evidence may be set out in development plans (or evidence that sits alongside development plans). Online mapping may also provide useful information (see 'useful data links' at the end of this TGN).



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
	cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape	<p>monuments, avenues, tree roundels)</p> <p>Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes</p> <p>Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies)</p> <p>Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth, e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth e.g. presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways, tracks associated with past industrial activity)</p>	<p>LANDMAP Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape Services Aspect (in Wales)</p> <p>Historic environment and archaeological designations</p> <p>Conservation Area appraisals, Village Design Statements</p> <p>Historic maps</p> <p>Historic landscape character assessments¹³ Historic Land Use Assessment¹⁴ and Historic Area Assessments¹⁵</p> <p>Place names</p> <p>Specialist heritage studies</p>
Landscape condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	<p>Good physical condition/ intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g. walls, parkland, trees)</p> <p>Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health</p> <p>Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns)</p> <p>Absence of detracting/ incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence)</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP condition and trend questions (in Wales)</p> <p>Hedgerow/ tree surveys</p> <p>Observations about intactness/ condition made in the field by the assessor</p> <p>SSSI condition assessments</p> <p>Historic landscape character assessments/ map regression analysis</p>
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts	Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape	<p>Information about arts and science relating to a place</p> <p>Historical accounts, cultural traditions and folklore</p>

¹³ Historic Landscape Characterisation has developed as a GIS mapping tool to capture how land use has changed and the 'time-depth' of the present-day landscape.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation/historic-landscape-characterisation/>

¹⁴ Mapping of Scotland's Historic Landscape: <https://hlamap.org.uk/>

¹⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-place-historic-area-assessments/>



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		<p>Associations with science or other technical achievements</p> <p>Links to a notable historical event</p> <p>Associations with a famous person or people</p>	<p>Guidebooks/ published cultural trails</p> <p>LANDMAP Cultural Landscape Services aspect (in Wales)</p>
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	<p>Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of expression of landscape characteristics)</p> <p>Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place</p> <p>Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity</p> <p>Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement</p> <p>Settlement gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic)</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual & Sensory question 3 and 25, – Historic Landscape question 4 (in Wales)</p> <p>Guidebooks</p> <p>Observations about identity/ distinctiveness made in the field by the assessor</p>
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	<p>Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature</p> <p>Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/ inspiration</p> <p>Presence of town and village greens</p> <p>Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is important</p> <p>Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the</p>	<p>Definitive public rights of way mapping/ OS map data</p> <p>National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths, Core Paths</p> <p>Open access land (including registered common land)</p> <p>Database of registered town or village greens</p> <p>Visitor surveys/ studies</p> <p>Observations about recreational use/ enjoyment made in the field by the assessor</p>



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		enjoyment of a recreational activity	
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	<p>Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover</p> <p>Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture</p> <p>Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges)</p> <p>Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape</p> <p>Memorable/ distinctive views and landmarks, or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual and Sensory scenic quality question 46 (in Wales)</p> <p>Protected views, views studies</p> <p>Areas frequently photographed or used in images used for tourism/ visitor/ promotional purposes, or views described or praised in literature</p> <p>Observations about scenic qualities made in the field by the assessor</p> <p>Conservation Area Appraisals</p> <p>Village Design Statements, or similar</p>
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	<p>High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet¹⁶</p> <p>Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness¹⁷, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts)</p> <p>Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness</p> <p>Dark night skies</p>	<p>Tranquillity mapping and factors which contribute to and detract from tranquillity</p> <p>Dark Skies mapping</p> <p>Wildness mapping, and Wild Land Areas in Scotland</p> <p>Land cover mapping</p> <p>Field survey</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect</p>

¹⁶ More about tranquillity can be found in Landscape Institute Technical Information Note [01/2017](#) (Revised; Landscape Institute, 2017).

¹⁷ Relating to extensive semi-natural vegetation, presence of wildlife and presence of natural processes/ lack of human intervention.



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		A general absence of intrusive or inharmonious development, land uses, transport and lighting	
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	<p>Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows</p> <p>Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network</p> <p>Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities</p>	<p>Land cover and habitat maps</p> <p>Ecosystem services assessments and mapping (particularly supporting and regulating services)</p> <p>Green infrastructure studies/strategies</p> <p>Development and management plans for nationally-designated landscapes, Local Plans and SPDs</p> <p>Landscape character assessments</p>

The practical application of factors in coming to a judgement on landscape value

2.4.5 The following bullet points provide some advice on the practical application of the factors in Table 1:

- *The factors to be considered are not fixed as they need to be appropriate to the particular project and location. It is recommended that the factors used to assess landscape value in a particular assessment are, where appropriate, discussed with the relevant planning authority or statutory consultees.*
- *The indicators of value should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account what they contribute (positively or negatively) to a specific landscape. The relative importance to be attached to each indicator is likely to vary across different landscapes. Once evidence for each factor has been collated and assessed, it is important to step back and judge the overall 'weight of evidence' in coming to an overall judgement on landscape value.*
- *There are likely to be overlaps between the factors, as well as overlaps with other specialist studies for example in relation to natural and cultural factors. These overlaps should be acknowledged and considered when presenting conclusions on the overall value of the landscape.*
- *While condition/intactness of a landscape is one factor that can influence value, poor landscape management should not be a reason to deny a landscape a valued status if other factors indicate*



value. Deliberately neglecting an area of landscape and allowing its condition to deteriorate should not be allowed to diminish its value in a planning context.

- *When assessing landscape value of a site as part of a planning application or appeal it is important to consider not only the site itself and its features/elements/characteristics/qualities, but also their relationship with, and the role they play within, the site's context. Value is best appreciated at the scale at which a landscape is perceived – rarely is this on a field-by-field basis.*
- *Landscape function can influence value, but the presence of a spatial designation (e.g. Green Belt or Green Gap) is not in itself an indicator of high landscape value.*
- *The presentation of information about landscape value should be proportionate to the task at hand.*
- *Landscape value, and the way in which landscapes are valued by people, is a dynamic process, and can change over time. Any value assessment will be a snapshot in time.*



3 References and further reading

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Useful data links

England

<https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/>

<https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/access-private-land>

<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

Wales

www.naturalresources.wales/landmap

www.naturalresources.wales/landscape

<http://lle.gov.wales>

Scotland

Landscape Character Assessment <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment> [the general LCA page; links from these pages include Coastal Characterisation guidance]

Local Landscape Areas guidance <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/local-designations/local-landscape-areas>



Wild Land <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-policy-and-guidance/landscape-policy-wild-land>

Historic Land Use Assessment <https://hmap.org.uk/>

Northern Ireland

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/natural-environment-map-viewer>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-and-landscapes/landscape-character-areas>

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/seascape-character-areas>



4 Glossary

Term	Definition
Aesthetics	Philosophical study of beauty and taste
Characteristics (landscape)	Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character (An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment Natural England 2014)
Green infrastructure	The network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. Individually, these elements are GI assets, and the roles that these assets play are GI functions (Green Infrastructure Landscape Institute Position Statement 2013)
Elements	Individual parts which make up the landscape, such as, for example, trees, hedges and buildings (GLVIA3)
Features	Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines (from GLVIA3 and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment 2014)
Landscape	An area as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (European Landscape Convention)
Landscape condition	A measure of the physical state of the landscape (including the intactness of the landscape structure and the condition of individual elements)
Landscape management	Action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes (European Landscape Convention)
Landscape planning	Strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes (European Landscape Convention) The development and application of strategies, policies and plans to create successful environments, in both urban and rural settings, for the benefit of current and future generations (Landscape Institute)
Landscape policy	An expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes (European Landscape Convention)
Landscape protection	Actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity (European Landscape Convention)
Landscape qualities	Characteristics/features of a landscape that have been identified as being valued



Term	Definition
	Landscape qualities are usually referred to as 'special qualities' or 'special landscape qualities' in relation to nationally designated landscapes or 'wildness qualities' in relation to Wild Land Areas.
Landscape value	The relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities (see Table 1).
LVA	Landscape and visual appraisal
LVIA	Landscape and visual impact assessment
Natural beauty	<p>The term 'natural beauty' is enshrined in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (it was also subsequently included in the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) 1985), the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, and the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006). Natural beauty is not exhaustively defined in the legislation, but its meaning has been clarified and interpreted through a series of studies, guidance documents and public inquiries (see 'Further reading').</p> <p><i>N.B. Since the term 'natural beauty' applies to national designation, it is not the purpose of this note to define it.</i></p>
Natural capital	The elements of nature that directly and indirectly produce value or benefits to people, including ecosystems, species, fresh water, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions. (Natural Capital Committee, 2014)
Scenic quality	The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses) (Landscape Character Assessment Guidance 2002)
Special qualities	<p>A statutory expression used in (amongst other places) sections 5 and 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended), section 87 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 (although the term is not defined in legislation).</p> <p>Special qualities are defined by Nature Scot as 'the characteristics that, individually or combined, give rise to an area's outstanding scenery'</p>



Appendices



A1 (Appendix 1) Assessment of landscape value: a summary of historical background and context

A1.1.1 Land has always had a productive value for food and other natural resources, but our appreciation of the landscape has evolved over time. A summary is provided below.

A1.1.2 During the 17th century in Europe, an appreciation of landscape became closely linked to ideas about beauty and aesthetics. In the 18th–19th centuries influential artists writers and thinkers such as Turner, Ruskin, Wordsworth and others publicly described their appreciation of scenic qualities, landform, nature, vernacular architecture, traditional agriculture, tranquillity and wildness, raising awareness of these landscape qualities.

A1.1.3 From the 19th century, the value of access to natural landscapes for recreation and wellbeing was also recognised, partly as a response to industrialisation. The National Trust was the first organisation to use the term natural beauty. Originally called the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, it was established in 1895.¹⁸ Its purpose, confirmed in the first National Trust Act passed in 1907, was ‘promoting the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest and as regards lands for the preservation (so far as practicable) of their natural aspect features and animal and plant life’.¹⁹

A1.1.4 Pressure in the early decades of the 20th century resulted in the establishment of the Addison Committee in 1929 and in 1931 the Addison Report (see Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947) recommended the identification of national parks in England and Wales. However, it was the establishment of the National Parks Committee and the publication of the Dower report (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1945), the Ramsay Report (Department for Health for Scotland, 1945) and the Hobhouse Report (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947) that finally led to the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This Act established a National Parks Commission with the purpose of preserving and enhancing ‘natural beauty in England and Wales’, and particularly in the areas designated under this Act as National Parks or as ‘areas of outstanding natural beauty’, for encouraging the provision of ‘opportunities for open air recreation and the study of nature’.²⁰

A1.1.5 The 1949 Act did not define ‘natural beauty’, but since then its meaning has been debated and tested through a series of studies, guidance documents (see the section on ‘Further reading’), Secretary of State Decision letters, an Appeal Court judgement, and public inquiries. Some clarification has also been provided through legislative amendments to the 1949 Act, e.g. NERC Act 2006 Section 99. Following the 1949 Act national landscape designations were made in England and Wales following advice from experts who relied on criteria originally defined by Hobhouse (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947) to assess the value of an area for its natural beauty and recreational opportunity. The first statutory designations in the UK were the Peak District and Lake District National Parks in England, and Snowdonia in Wales (all confirmed in 1951).²¹ This approach to assessing

¹⁸ For England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The National Trust for Scotland was established in Scotland in 1931.

¹⁹ National Trust Act 1907.

²⁰ National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

²¹ Scotland passed the National Parks (Scotland) Act in 2000 and designated the Loch Lomond and the Trossacks National Park in 2002. Northern Ireland passed the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order in 1985 but has no designated National Parks at present, despite a proposal to designate the Mourne Mountains.



landscape value continued throughout the 1950s and 60s. **Appendix A3** provides a summary of current landscape designations within the UK.

A1.1.6 In the 1970s there were attempts to introduce a quantitative approach to assessing landscape value. These, along with other methods, were tested at the North Pennines AONB Public Inquiry in 1985. The inspector noted the lack of an agreed methodology to evaluating landscape, acknowledged that there was inevitably a degree of subjectivity, and recommended the use of informed opinion, a trained eye and common sense. The quantitative approach was generally considered inappropriate because it reduced complex concepts to a series of numerical values.

A1.1.7 In the 1980s a new methodology for understanding and recording what is important about a landscape began to emerge. Then known as Landscape Assessment, and now known as Landscape Character Assessment (see Landscape Institute, 2015), it was not limited to identifying landscapes worthy of designation but considered all landscapes with the objective of identifying what makes one area 'different' or 'distinct' from another (Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002b). Although the landscape assessment approach covered all landscape, early guidance included advice on evaluating landscapes (Countryside Commission, 1987) by identifying factors for evaluating 'natural beauty' which built on the Hobhouse criteria. The 1993 landscape assessment guidance (Countryside Commission, 1993) was specific in separating the classification and description of landscape character, which concerns what makes one area 'different' or 'distinct' from another, from landscape evaluation, which concentrates on relative value (Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002b). The 1993 guidance included criteria for evaluating 'landscape quality' (particularly in relation to designating landscapes) and identified factors important for evaluating natural beauty (see **Appendix A2**). Historic Landscape Characterisation, piloted at the end of the 1990s, also developed as a way of understanding and mapping the time-depth of places.

A1.1.8 In 1996, the evolving national approach for Landscape Assessment in Wales (Countryside Council for Wales, 1996), LANDMAP, took the strategic decision to include landscape evaluation information. A range of national criteria, grouped under different landscape themes, was developed to provide a relative indication of landscape value to prompt further investigation and consideration as part of planning projects or landscape assessments (see **Appendix A2**).

A1.1.9 The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002a) guidance on Landscape Character Assessment developed the criteria set out in the 1993 Landscape Assessment Guidance further, and these were presented as criteria for making judgements about 'landscape value' more widely (i.e. not just in relation to designated landscapes). These criteria informed subsequent guidance including guidance on [Local Landscape Designations in Scotland](#) (2006, updated 2020), Natural England's *Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England* (2011) and Box 5.1 in the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA3) (LI and IEMA, 2013). **Appendix A2** provides a summary of the evolution of factors used in the assessment of natural beauty and landscape value from 1945 onwards.

A1.1.10 The European Landscape Convention (2000) (ELC) was informed and influenced by the UK's landscape assessment work in the 1980s and 1990s. The first international treaty dedicated to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe, it was signed by the UK government in 2006²². Signatories acknowledge that 'the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas'²³ and that 'the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being'. Article 6 of the Convention places a responsibility on all signatories to increase awareness of 'the value of their landscapes, their role and changes to them'.²⁴ As a signatory to the ELC, the UK has an obligation to enhance the natural and cultural value of all landscapes through a blend of strategies: managing and planning (restoring, creating/enhancing) landscapes.

A1.1.11 The importance of landscape and its value continues to be recognized, for example in DEFRA's 25 Year Environment Plan (HM Government, 2018). There has also recently been a re-emergence of the

²² The UK remains a member of the Council of Europe, which is a separate body from the European Union.

²³ European Landscape Convention – Preamble.

²⁴ European Landscape Convention – Article 6.



word 'beauty' in the field of planning and placemaking (for example in the UK Government's commissioned 'Living with Beauty' report; see Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission/MHCLG, 2020).

A1.1.12 The landscape profession's understanding of landscape value is still developing, particularly in light of the nature and climate emergency (as well as the lockdowns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic). People today value different aspects of landscape than they did in the past or may do in the future, but it is clear that landscape value is more than just beauty and aesthetics.



A2 (Appendix 2) An evolution of factors used to describe landscape value

A2.1 Introduction

A2.1.1 This Appendix summarises the factors used in the assessment of natural beauty and landscape value from 1945 onwards.

A2.2 1945

Report on National Parks in England and Wales (Cmd 6628), John Dower, Ministry of Town and Country Planning

A2.2.1 In 1942 John Dower, a research officer in the Planning Department of the Ministry of Works and Planning, was requested to report on the establishment of National Parks in England and Wales. In his 1945 report, he noted that ‘the task of selecting and delimiting the areas which are to be established as National Parks ... will clearly be no easy matter ... It must rest on an adequate and disinterested survey and investigation of all areas which are, or are claimed to be, in any way suitable, and it must take into account a wide range of factors’ (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1945).

A2.2.2 These factors were included in **paragraph 6**, as:

- *landscape beauty*
- *wildlife*
- *suitability for rambling access*
- *popularity*
- *existing and potential land utilization*
- *existing or threatened disfigurements*
- *transport and accommodation facilities, and*
- *the financial and administrative strength of the local authorities concerned.*

National Parks: A Scottish Survey, ‘The Ramsay Report’, Department of Health for Scotland

A2.2.3 The Scottish National Parks Survey Committee was set up to advise on areas suitable for National Parks and to supervise a survey of potential areas. The Committee laid down seven selection criteria (see Department for Health for Scotland, 1945):

- *outstanding scenic beauty*
- *accessibility*
- *preservation and preservability*
- *recreational facilities (of an open-air type)*



- *educational, cultural and social interests*
- *flora and fauna, and*
- *accommodation.*

A2.3 1947

Report of the National Parks Committee (England & Wales) (CMD 7121), Sir Arthur Hobhouse, Ministry of Town and Country Planning

A2.3.1 Para 35 - Factors in selection (of National Parks; see Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947)):

Natural beauty	Great natural beauty
Recreation	A high value for open-air recreation
Substantial continuous extent	Distribution so that at least one of them is quickly accessible from each of the main centres of population in England and Wales
Merit in variety	With the wide diversity of landscape which is available in England and Wales, it would be wrong to confine the selection of National Parks to the more rugged areas of mountain and moorland, and to exclude other districts which, though of less 'outstanding' grandeur and wildness, have their own distinctive beauty and high recreational value

A2.4 1986

Wildlife and Countryside Acts 1981 & 1985: Section 3 Conservation Maps of National Parks – Guidelines (CCD6), Countryside Commission (out of print)

A2.4.1 This guidance included a table of 'factors affecting natural beauty' in response to Section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Acts of 1981 and 1985 which placed a responsibility on each of the National Parks of England and Wales to prepare a map showing those areas of mountain, moor, heath, woodland, down, cliff or foreshore, the natural beauty of which the Authority considers it is particularly important to conserve. The same factors were subsequently reproduced in Countryside Commission (1987).

Physiographic	Geology, soils, relief/landform, land use, vegetation, ecological habitats, natural history/wildlife, archaeology, artefacts – buildings, walls
Associations	a. Historical – general history of settlements, special events b. Cultural – well-known personalities, literary, painting, music
Aesthetics	a. Visual – extent/degree of enclosure, form, scale, continuity/harmony/contrast, diversity, colour (hue, time), texture, presence of eyesores, detractors from scene, contribution to wider landscape, views out – length and breadth, views in – length and breadth, boundaries to views b. Other Senses – sounds, smells, tastes, touch
Relative to other areas	Nationally rare, regionally rare, typical/representative of an area



Feelings evoked in the observer	Comfort, awe, remoteness, solitude, joy
Public accessibility	Indirect/visual, direct/actual – by vehicle, bicycle, horse or foot

A2.5 1991

Landscape Assessment: Principles and Practice, Countryside Commission (out of print)

A2.5.1 This Countryside Commission for Scotland (1991) guidance proposed criteria for evaluating landscape quality in Scotland, in relation to designation of National Scenic Areas, which are summarised in **Table 2** (originally **Table 4.2** of Part 4) of the University of Sheffield's 'A Statement on Natural Beauty: A Report to the Countryside Council for Wales' (2006).

Table 2: Proposed criteria for evaluating landscape quality in Scotland:

Main criterion	Factors considered	Explanation
Landscape as a resource	Rarity	Value conferred by virtue of scarcity value either of landscape as a whole or elements within it
	Representativeness/typicality	Value because a landscape is typical or representative of its type demonstrating better than other areas the combination of features and attributes which characterise that type
Scenic quality	Combination of landscape elements	Landscape quality arising from the particular mix of landscape elements in an area of their disposition in relation to each other
	Aesthetic quality	Landscape quality resulting from the interaction of elements in terms of visual characteristics such as form, line, colour, texture, diversity, memorability, intactness and so on
	Intangible qualities	Includes sense of place or the 'genius loci' and ideas from preference theory including ideas of prospect/refuge and landscape legibility
Preference	Evidence on public preference	Ideally based on preference attitude surveys
	Informed consensus on value	Evidence from planners and landscape professionals, interest groups involved with landscape and writers, artists and photographers
Special values	Wild land/wilderness quality	Depends on factors such as apparent naturalness, remoteness, extent and feelings of solitude, escape and exposure
	Cultural associations	Landscape can assume significance because of its special cultural associations with people or events
	Special heritage interests	Landscape cannot be divorced from other interests and wildlife, archaeological and historical features and geological or geomorphological features will make major contributions to landscape character as well as having conservation value in their own right



A2.6 1993

Landscape Assessment Guidance (CCP 423), Cobham Resource Consultants, Countryside Commission (1993)

A2.6.1 The section of the 1993 guidance dealing with landscape evaluation dealt explicitly with the need to evaluate the quality of the landscape, especially where the assessment related to an area of designated landscape. A list of criteria for evaluating landscapes for designation was included, developing the factors contained in the Countryside Commission's 1991 guidance. They were:

Landscape as a resource	Important for reasons of rarity or representativeness
Scenic quality	High scenic quality, with pleasing patterns and combinations of features
Unspoilt character	Unspoiled by large scale, visually intrusive industry, mineral extraction etc.
Sense of place	Distinctive and common character, including topographic and visual unity
Conservation interests	Such as features of historical, wildlife or architectural interest
Consensus	Consensus of both professional and public opinion as to its importance

A2.7 1995

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA1), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995)

A2.7.1 Paragraph 3.41 suggested that a qualitative analysis requires an assessment to be made of landscape condition and importance in the sense of aesthetic or cultural value. It suggested that the analysis may include:

Landscape designations	List of landscape designations that may apply
Reasons for designations	Summary of the reasons for landscape designations, e.g. landscape type is rare in a national or regional context
Scenic quality	Professional judgements as to the scenic quality of the site and its wider landscape context, and to the importance of landscape components
Condition of landscape components	Assessment of the condition of important landscape components, including management of land, and the extent of deviation from the perceived optimum condition
Conservation interests	Details of any notable conservation interests such as features of historical, wildlife or architectural importance
Cultural associations	Reference to any special cultural associations, such as important writing and paintings that feature local landscapes
Local perceptions	Past and present perceptions of local value



A2.7.2 GLVIA1 also referred to Countryside Commission (1993) for further advice on criteria for evaluating landscape quality in England.

A2.8 1999

Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance, C. Swanwick & Land Use Consultants, Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (out of print)

A2.8.1 Criteria for making judgments about landscape value were:

Landscape as a resource	Rarity, representativeness or typicality
Landscape quality	Extent to which typical character is demonstrated in an area and condition or state of repair of the landscape
Scenic quality	Depends upon perception and reflects the particular combination and pattern of elements in the landscape, its aesthetic qualities and its more intangible sense of place or genius loci
Consensus	Consensus of opinion, expressed by the public, informed professionals, interest groups, and artists, writers and other media
Conservation interests	Presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical interest which add to the value of the landscape as well as having value in their own right
Other values	Landscapes may be valued for their wilderness qualities, or particular cultural associations, or because of their tranquillity

A2.9 2001

LANDMAP 2001, and as amended to date. Countryside Council for Wales (2001)

A2.9.1 The LANDMAP assessment for Wales developed a set of evaluation criteria for separate themed layers.

A2.9.2 A method document for each theme set out and defined each criterion²⁵, as follows:

²⁵ LANDMAP [methodology, including definitions of each layer, reports, guidance and interactive map browser](#).



Geological Landscape	Landscape Habitats	Visual and Sensory	Historic Landscape	Cultural Landscape (NB: not evaluated by degree of importance)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research value • Educational value • Historical value • Rarity/uniqueness • Classic example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority habitats • Significance • Opportunity • Expansion rates • Sensitivity • Connectivity/cohesion • Habitat evaluation • Importance for key species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic quality • Integrity • Character (strength of) • Rarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity • Survival • Condition • Rarity • Potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition/transparency • Rarity • Group value • Survival

Further layers, for seascapes and (ecosystem cultural) services are being added. The latter responds to the Welsh policy context, which views landscape value through ecosystem services, well-being and placemaking.

A2.9.3 Not all evaluations will be relevant to all projects, so intelligent selection is needed. ‘Adding up’ evaluations for different themes is discouraged as that masks what is important about a landscape (and would just confirm that all landscapes are very important in some way). Their intended use is to open rather than close discussion of landscape value, by alerting users to topics and areas that may need more detailed enquiry.

A2.10 2002

Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84), Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002a)

A2.10.1 Paragraph 7.22 states, ‘In considering natural beauty and amenity, and in any other situation which requires that a landscape be identified as requiring special attention, judgements must be based at least in part on the concept of landscape value’. The reasons may be set out according to a range of more detailed criteria that may include the following:

Landscape quality/condition	Intactness of the landscape and the condition of features and elements
Scenic quality	The term that is used to describe landscapes which appeal primarily to the visual senses
Rarity	The presence of rare features and elements in the landscape, or the presence of a rare landscape character type



Representativeness	Whether the landscape contains a particular character, and/or features and elements, which is felt by stakeholders to be worthy of representing
Conservation interests	Presence of features of particular wildlife, earth science or archaeological, historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right
Wildness	Presence of wild (or relatively wild) character in the landscape which makes a particular contribution to sense of place
Associations	Associations with particular people, artists, writers, or other media, or events in history

A2.11 2006

A Statement on Natural Beauty, Sheffield University Landscape Department, Countryside Council for Wales (CCW; Selman and Swanwick, 2010)

A2.11.1 This was an academic study commissioned by CCW. Paragraph 6 refers to criteria that can be taken into account in defining landscape value and hence defining landscapes which have outstanding 'natural beauty' as:

Scenic quality	Aesthetic aspects of landscape (those which give pleasure to the senses), its perceptual dimensions and the spiritual or emotional impact that both have on people
Sense of place	Unity and distinctiveness of landscape character
Landscape quality/condition	Intactness of the landscape and its condition, distinctiveness of landscape character in a particular locality
Integrity	Intact rural character and general lack of large-scale, visually intrusive or otherwise inharmonious development
Perceptual qualities	Perceptual qualities which make a particular contribution to sense of place, including wildness and tranquillity
Associations	Important associations of the landscape with people, places or events relevant to a particular place
Cultural descriptions	Expressions or descriptions of the landscape in art, literature, music and other art forms, through language and folklore, and through modern media
Rarity or representativeness	Either of the landscape as a whole, or of individual elements and features within it
Conservation interest	Presence of features of particular wildlife, earth science or archaeological, historical and cultural interest which add value to the landscape as well as having conservation value in their own right



Guidance on Local Landscape Designations, SNH and Historic Environment Scotland²⁶

A2.11.2 SNH and Historic Environment Scotland's (2006) guidance on local landscape designations suggested that local authorities need to identify both the character and qualities of the landscape considered to be of particular value in the local context, and suggested the following aspects/factors could be considered:

	Definition	Description
Aspects of landscape character		
Typicality	Elements of landscape character which are particularly common within the assessment area as a whole	Landscape features or combination of features that recur throughout the area
Rarity or uniqueness	Particular aspects of landscape character which are rare or unique in the area	Landscape features or combination of features which are rare or unique within the assessment area as a whole
Condition or quality	The degree to which individual characteristics of landscape character are in a good state of repair or health	Landscape features or combination of features which are in a good state of repair
Landscape qualities		
Scenic	Aspects of the landscape and our reaction to it which contribute to its natural beauty and aesthetic appreciation	Landscapes with strong visual, sensory and perceptual impacts and experiential appeal. May contain a pleasing combination of features, visual contrasts or dramatic elements
Enjoyment	Aspects of the landscape and our reactions to it which contribute to its potential for recreation and amenity	Landscapes of importance as local greenspace, as tranquil areas and/or for countryside recreation. May contain viewpoints and landmarks
Cultural	Aspects of the landscape and our reactions to it which contribute to the understanding of its historic character and the wider cultural record	Landscapes rich in archaeology, built heritage, literary, artistic and other cultural associations and local history. May include historic gardens and designed landscapes
Naturalness	Aspects of the landscape and our reactions to it which contribute to its naturalness	Landscapes with extensive semi-natural habitat, a lack of human presence and perceived qualities of wildness. May include areas of wild land

A2.12 2011

Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, Natural England (2011)

A2.12.1 Table 3 of this guidance sets out factors that are related to Natural Beauty. These are expanded upon in Appendix 1 to include sub-factors and indicators, as follows:

²⁶ Accessible at <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/local-designations/local-landscape-areas>



Factor	Example sub-factor	Example Indicator
Landscape quality	Intactness of the landscape in visual, functional and ecological perspectives	Characteristic natural and man-made elements are well represented throughout
	The condition of the landscape's features and elements	Landscape elements are in good condition
	The influence of incongruous features or elements (whether man-made or natural) on the perceived natural beauty of the area	Incongruous elements are not present to a significant degree, are not visually intrusive, have only localised influence or are temporary in nature
Scenic quality	A distinctive sense of place	Landscape character lends a clear and recognisable sense of place
	Striking landform	Landform shows a strong sense of scale or contrast
		There are striking landform types or coastal configurations
	Visual interest in patterns of land cover	Land cover and vegetation types form an appealing pattern or composition in relation to each other and/or to landform which may be appreciated from either a vantage point or as one travels through a landscape
	Appeal to the senses	Strong aesthetic qualities, reflecting factors such as scale and form, degree of openness or enclosure, colours and textures, simplicity or diversity, and ephemeral or seasonal interest
		Memorable or unusual views and eye-catching features or landmarks
		Characteristic cognitive and sensory stimuli (e.g. sounds, quality of light, characteristic smells, characteristics of the weather)
Relative wildness	A sense of remoteness	Relatively few roads or other transport routes
		Distant from or perceived as distant from significant habitation
	A relative lack of human influence	Extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation
		Uninterrupted tracts of land with few built features and few overt industrial or urban influences
	A sense of openness and exposure	Open, exposed to the elements and expansive in character
	A sense of enclosure and isolation	Sense of enclosure provided by (e.g.) woodland, landform that offers a feeling of isolation
	A sense of the passing of time and a return to nature	Absence or apparent absence of active human intervention



Relative tranquillity	Contributors to tranquillity	Presence and/or perceptions of natural landscape, birdsong, peace and quiet, natural-looking woodland, stars at night, stream, sea, natural sounds and similar influences
	Detractors from tranquillity	Presence and/or perceptions of traffic noise, large numbers of people, urban development, overhead light pollution, low flying aircraft, power lines and similar influences
Natural heritage features	Geological and geo-morphological features	Visible expression of geology in distinctive sense of place and other aspects of scenic quality
		Presence of striking or memorable geo-morphological features
	Wildlife and habitats	Presence of wildlife and/or habitats that make a particular contribution to distinctive sense of place or other aspects of scenic quality
		Presence of individual species that contribute to sense of place, relative wildness or tranquillity
Cultural heritage	Built environment, archaeology and designed landscapes	Presence of settlements, buildings or other structures that make a particular contribution to distinctive sense of place or other aspects of scenic quality
	Historic influence on the landscape	Visible presence of historic landscape types or specific landscape elements or features that provide evidence of time depth or historic influence on the landscape
	Characteristic land management practices	Existence of characteristic land management practices, industries or crafts which contribute to natural beauty
	Associations with written descriptions	Availability of descriptions of the landscape in notable literature, topographical writings or guidebooks, or significant literature inspired by the landscape
	Associations with artistic representations	Depiction of the landscape in art, other art forms such as photography or film, through language or folklore, or in inspiring related music
	Associations of the landscape with people, places or events	Evidence that the landscape has associations with notable people or events, cultural traditions or beliefs

A2.13 2013

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013)

A2.13.1 Box 5.1 contains a 'Range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes'. These are:



Landscape quality (condition)	A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual area, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements
Scenic quality	The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses)
Rarity	The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type.
Representativeness	Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important examples
Conservation interests	The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape as well as having value in their own right
Recreation value	Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important
Perceptual aspects	A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity
Associations	Some landscapes are associated with particular people such as artists or writers, or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area

A2.14 2017

Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas, Natural Resources Wales (2017)

A2.14.1 Paragraph 6.1.2 states that ‘by definition, an SLA designation usually only applies to areas that are deemed as ‘special’ in terms of their local landscape character. This reflects both local distinctiveness and sense of place, as well as landscape quality in its own right’. Examples of landscape criteria are:

Rarity	A landscape that is particularly rare/unique or special in the local context
Distinctiveness	An area with a distinct landform or topography, forming a discrete and recognisable area in the local landscape
Natural or cultural character	A landscape with strong character linked to natural or cultural factors, which contribute to an understanding of historic character, wider cultural values or create a strong degree of naturalness
Cultural associations	A landscape with particular cultural associations, represented in art, literature, music, language or folklore
Scenic qualities	An area of recognisable character with a strong sense of place and/or scenic qualities

Guidance on Local Landscape Areas (Draft), Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland (now superseded)

A2.14.2 Table 1 of Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland’s (2017) draft guidance set out the common criteria used to define landscape qualities:



Landscape Qualities	Definition	Description
Scenic	Landscape that appeals primarily to the visual senses, appreciated for its natural beauty	Landscapes with strong visual, sensory and perceptual impacts and experiential appeal. May contain a pleasing combination of features, visual contrasts or dramatic elements
Cultural	Landscape with features of archaeological, historical or cultural interest, offering a time-depth to people's experience.	Landscapes rich in archaeology, built heritage, literary or artistic connections, consciously designed (parks and gardens), the scene of historic events (such as battles), other cultural associations and local history. and designed landscapes
Natural	Landscape of strong natural or semi-natural character, with wildlife or earth science features	Landscapes with extensive semi-natural habitat, distinctive topography or geology, a lack of human presence and perceived sense of 'wildness'
Enjoyment	Landscape recognised for recreation and amenity, which evokes pleasure	Landscapes valued as tranquil areas and/or for countryside recreation. May contain viewpoints and landmarks
Rarity or uniqueness	The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or a rare landscape character type	Landscape features or combination of features which are rare or unique within the assessment area as a whole. Landscapes that are distinctive with a strong 'sense of place'
Typicality	A landscape that is a good example of a particular landscape type, and often relatively common within the assessment area	Landscape features or combination of features that recur throughout the area

A2.15 2020

Guidance on Designating Local Landscapes, NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (2020)

A2.15.1 This guidance states, at paragraph 2.4.2: 'Selection criteria are essential. These must be fit for purpose, developed by agreement with interested stakeholders where possible, and applied consistently. The criteria relate to the special qualities of a landscape'. **Table 1** of the guidance sets out the range of evaluation criteria commonly used, noting 'this is not a fixed list as the criteria need to be appropriate to each designation process' (paragraph 2.4.4). The criteria in **Table 3** of the guidance are:

Landscape criterion	Definition	Description
Scenic	Landscape that appeals primarily to the visual senses, and is appreciated for its beauty	Landscapes with strong visual, sensory and perceptual impacts and experiential appeal. May contain a pleasing combination of features, visual contrasts or dramatic elements



Cultural	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interests / associations / significance, offering a time-depth to people's experience	Landscapes rich in archaeology or built heritage, or consciously designed (e.g. parks and gardens), or largely the product of human interaction. May include the scene of historic events (such as battles), have literary or artistic connections, or other cultural associations and local history
Natural	Landscape of strong natural or semi-natural character, with clear evidence of ecological, geological or geomorphological interest	Landscapes with extensive semi-natural habitat, distinctive topography or geology, a general lack of permanent human presence and a perception of wildness
Recreation and enjoyment	Landscape recognised as offering opportunities for recreation and amenity, where experience of landscape is important	Landscapes valued for recreation. May contain viewpoints, landmarks and renowned vistas; paths and trails including core paths, rights of way, long distance trails, national cycle routes; and scenic routes
Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	Landscape features or combination of features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place. Landscapes that are distinctive with a strong 'sense of place'
Health and wellbeing	A landscape which makes particular contribution to both the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of a local community and/or visitors	Landscape facilities and features which are well-used and valued by local communities and visitors
Important spatial function	Landscape that performs a clearly identifiable and valued spatial role	Can include, for example, settlement 'gateways', or separation between developments

A2.15.2 The guidance notes that the list is not fixed as the criteria need to be appropriate to each designation process. It also recognises that not all the criteria need to be met in every case: a landscape might be deemed so valued under one criterion that it merits designation on that basis alone. The guidance explains that the aim is to identify and analyse what the qualities are that, individually or when combined, make the area special in terms of its landscape and scenery.



A3 (Appendix 3) Designated landscapes: UK policy and guidance

A3.1 Introduction

A3.1.1 This Appendix considers how landscape is valued in UK legislation and in UN, European and UK policy statements, regulations and guidance. It describes the current UK hierarchy of international, nationally protected, and locally designated landscapes, including the different approaches of devolved nation governments.

A3.2 Internationally valued landscapes

A3.2.1 Globally, under the **UNESCO World Heritage Convention 1992**, landscapes may be designated to ensure the protection of their natural and/or cultural heritage. World Heritage Sites must have values that are outstanding and universal, and it is each site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) that is to be protected. Cultural landscapes are said to 'express a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural environment'.

A3.2.2 In the UK there are 32 sites on the current list. The UNESCO 2008 operational guidelines describe categories of 'clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man, organically evolved landscape, and associative cultural landscape, identified on the international list as 'cultural, natural or mixed' sites'. Criteria for selection are described on UNESCO's website²⁷.

A3.2.3 The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** provides a global classification system for Protected Areas. National Parks in England, Wales and Scotland, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are internationally recognised as **Category V Protected Areas**, as living, working landscapes and seascapes. National Parks and AONBs are periodically assessed by the IUCN to ensure continued compliance with the standards and management guidelines²⁸.

A3.3 The European Landscape Convention

A3.3.1 The UK is a member state on the Council of Europe and a signatory to the **European Landscape Convention (ELC) 2004**, which came into effect in the UK in 2007. The first aim of the ELC is to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning landscapes throughout Europe.

A3.3.2 The treaty introduces the concept of all landscapes having value in terms of quality of life and wellbeing. Signatories commit to 'acknowledging that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas.' The ELC's 'all-landscapes' approach is compatible with the identification of 'valued landscapes' as it seeks to promote 'measures to preserve the present character and quality of a landscape which is greatly valued'.²⁹

²⁷ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>

²⁸ <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about/protected-area-categories>

²⁹ www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/176



A3.4 National landscape designations

A3.4.1 Planning legislation and policy in each of the UK's devolved nations recognise landscape value at both national and local levels. England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland each have their own primary planning legislation.

A3.4.2 It should be noted that Green Belt is not a landscape designation and does not denote landscape value, although it does perform a spatial function in the landscape.

England

A3.4.3 Statutory designations of landscapes in England, which are safeguarded by legislation, originated with the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Broads National Park is designated under its own Act of Parliament (the Broads Act 1988). National Park purposes are defined as 'conserving and enhancing its natural beauty³⁰, wildlife and cultural heritage, and promoting understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public'. The 1949 Act also made provision for the designation of AONBs to 'preserve and enhance natural beauty'. This original purpose of 'preserving and enhancing' was subsequently changed to 'conserving and enhancing' (Environment Act 1995).

A3.4.4 The Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 consolidated the provisions of the 1949 Act, enabling conservation boards to be set up for larger AONBs and requiring management plans to be adopted for AONBs. Two AONBs have Conservation Boards, the Chilterns and Cotswolds AONBs.

A3.4.5 AONBs carry the same status and level of landscape protection as National Parks (Defra Vision and Circular 2010). Paragraph 20 states: 'The Government continues to regard National Park designation (together with that for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty ['AONBs']) as conferring the highest status of protection as far as landscape and natural beauty is concerned'.

A3.4.6 In England, Heritage Coasts (from 1973) are protected by policy rather than statute, though many are located within National Parks or AONBs and benefit from their statutory protection. They are defined (rather than designated) by agreement between local authorities and Natural England. The policy framework for Heritage Coasts in England was issued by the Countryside Commission (the predecessor to Natural England) in 1992. Heritage Coasts are defined as coastlines of exceptionally fine scenic quality, which are more than a mile in length, substantially undeveloped and contain features of special significance and interest.

A3.4.7 Historic England maintains a statutory 'Register of parks and gardens of special historic interest in England' and a separate 'Register of historic battlefields'. Although these designations bring no additional statutory controls, they contribute to landscape value as well as being heritage assets which are protected through national policy. National policy also requires local authorities to make provision for the protection of the historic environment in their policies and their allocation of resources.

Wales

A3.4.8 Historically, Wales shared most of the legislation and guidance relevant to landscape with England, notably the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The statutory landscape designations that apply in Wales are therefore the same as in England: National Parks, which are valued for their 'natural beauty and recreational value', and AONBs, valued for their 'outstanding distinctive landscape character and natural beauty'. In Wales, National Parks and AONB authorities are legally required to produce a management plan which sets out the Special Qualities of the area and policies to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designation. As set out in Planning Policy Wales, National Parks and AONBs are of equal status in terms of landscape and scenic beauty, and must both be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate developments.

A3.4.9 In 2014 Welsh Government commissioned a Review of Designated Landscapes and the 'Marsden Report' was published the following year. The review concluded in 2018 with Welsh

³⁰ The term 'natural beauty' is enshrined in the 1949 Act. The 1949 Act did not define what 'natural beauty' actually meant. Since then, its meaning has been clarified and interpreted through a series of studies, guidance documents, Secretary of State Decision letters, an Appeal Court judgement and public inquiries. Some clarification has also been provided through legislative amendments to the 1949 Act, e.g. NERC Act 2006 Section 99. Today, it is understood that natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value: it is to do with the relationship between people and place, and encompasses everything - 'natural' and human - that makes an area distinctive.



Governments response: 'Valued and Resilient' (Welsh Government, 2018). This sets out Welsh Governments priorities for the National Parks and AONBs in Wales.

A3.4.10 Non-statutory landscape designations valued at a national level include Heritage Coasts, which represent the most scenically outstanding stretches of undeveloped and unspoilt coast in Wales. Cadw, the historic environment service of the Welsh Government, in partnership with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS UK) compiled (in 2014) a Register of landscapes of outstanding or special historic interest in Wales. This is a non-statutory register, 'intended to provide information and raise awareness of an initial selection of the most important and significant historic landscape areas in Wales in order to aid their protection and conservation'.³¹

Scotland

A3.4.11 Scotland's two National Parks (Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the Cairngorms National Park) are designated under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Scotland also has National Scenic Areas (NSAs), designated as '*areas of outstanding scenic value in a national context*'³², and broadly equivalent to AONBs in England and Wales. NSAs were first described in 'Scotland's Scenic Heritage' (CCS 1978) and have been recognised within the planning system since 1980. As explained on the Scottish Government's website³³, in 2010, Scottish Ministers issued directions to local authorities under provisions in section 263A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (inserted by section 50 of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006) to designate the current suite of NSAs. The NSAs include areas of landscape described variously on the www.nature.scot website as 'spectacular, dramatic, picturesque and richly diverse'.

A3.4.12 Wild land is not a statutory designation but the third National Planning Framework (NPF3, 2014) 'recognises wild land as a nationally important asset and indicates that Scotland's wildest landscapes merit strong protection'. NatureScot has identified 'wild land areas' – nationally important extensive areas of semi-natural landscapes that show minimal signs of human influence.³⁴ Historic Environment Scotland maintains the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes and the Inventory of Historic Battlefields. The cultural significance of sites can be taken into account in the planning process.

Northern Ireland

A3.4.13 In 2015, a new two-tier planning system came into force under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. It introduced a sharing of planning responsibilities between eleven Councils and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). The new planning system involved a move away from a suite of Planning Policy Statements (PPS) to a single Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS 2015). However, a transitional period is in operation until local authorities adopt their Local Development Plans (LDPs). The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has two Executive Agencies, namely Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and Northern Ireland Forest Service.

A3.4.14 The main legislative basis for DAERA NIEA in relation to landscape and amenity protection is the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) 1985 (NCALO). Through this, the former Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (DOE NI) designated the seven landscape areas with the highest amenity value as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), although the Lagan Valley AONB remains designated under an earlier act, The Amenity Lands Act 1965.

A3.4.15 'Shared Horizons' (2003) is the former DOE NI's Statement of Policy on Protected Landscapes, relating to the protection and sustainable use of Northern Ireland's finest landscapes. Such areas are usually recognised by some form of designation, which sets them apart from the wider countryside. Whilst the only designation currently in use in Northern Ireland to identify areas of high landscape

³¹<https://lle.gov.wales/catalogue/item/RegisteredLandscapesOfOutstandingHistoricInterestInWales/?lang=en>

³² Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 2006 asp 17.

³³ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/landscape-and-outdoor-access/natural-heritage-designations/>

³⁴ <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-policy-and-guidance/landscape-policy-wild-land>



quality is that of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) provision has been made for the potential designation of National Parks in future.³⁵

A3.5 Local landscape designations

England

A3.5.1 England has seen a rise and fall in the use of local landscape designations over the years. In line with the Town and Country Planning Act 1968, many county councils adopted some form of non-statutory landscape designation when preparing their structure plans. Local designations had various names such as Areas of Great Landscape Value, Special Landscape Areas, Areas of Special Landscape Value, Undeveloped Coast and Coastal Preservation Areas.

A3.5.2 In 2004 national guidance in Planning Policy Statement (PPS 7): Sustainable development in rural areas (ODPM 2004) (now cancelled and superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019)) advised local planning authorities only to rely on statutory designations when seeking to conserve 'specific features and sites of landscape, wildlife and historic or architectural value'. Paragraph 25 stated that 'Local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection'. This resulted in a decline in the use of local landscape designations in England, and in many places they were replaced by criteria-based local plan policies linked to local landscape character assessments.

A3.5.3 NPPF paragraph 171 requires development plans to 'distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites'; but does not make any specific reference to local landscape designations. However, national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Paragraph: 036 [Reference ID: 8-036-20190721] makes it clear that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes and that this can include locally designated landscapes. The NPPF also enables land to be designated as a 'Local Green Space' through local and neighbourhood plans – these are areas that are special to a local community or have particular local significance, for example because of their beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife.

A3.5.4 Future changes in the planning system are proposed in the Government's draft planning white paper: *Planning for the Future* (2020), but it is not yet clear how 'valued landscapes' may be interpreted within the proposed categories of 'growth', 'renewal' and 'protected' areas.

Wales

A3.5.5 Since the establishment of the Welsh Assembly Government in 1999, and following the 2011 referendum and the Wales Act 2017, Wales has been developing its own regulatory framework for landscape. Planning Policy Wales (PPW10 2018) currently sets the context for planning in Wales. Para 6.3.3 explains that 'all the landscapes of Wales are valued for their intrinsic contribution to a sense of place'.

A3.5.6 PPW10 supports local landscape designations and advises (para 6.3.11) that 'Planning authorities should provide for the conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of local landscapes. This may include policies for landscape features, characteristics and qualities of local significance, and the designation of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). Planning authorities should state which features, characteristics or qualities require extra protection, and explain how the policy or designation will achieve this protection'. Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in Wales are non-statutory local landscape designations used by some local authorities to define areas of high landscape importance and to provide for their conservation and enhancement through policies in their local plans and supplementary guidance. SLAs are defined using LANDMAP, and mainly include landscape areas evaluated as Outstanding and High (of national or county importance). In June 2020, 17 local authorities out of 22 had SLAs linked to a local policy plan.

A3.5.7 LANDMAP is the all-Wales GIS based landscape resource that records and evaluates landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape for the purposes of landscape assessment. LANDMAP Guidance Note 1 (Natural Resources Wales, 2017) sets out an approach for defining Special

³⁵ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/shared-horizons>



Landscape Areas (SLAs). These may be designated for ‘their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical importance, which may be considered unique, exceptional or distinctive to the local area’. They should be ‘important for their distinctive character, qualities and sense of place’.

Scotland

A3.5.8 National policy in Scotland is set out in NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP 2014). SPP states that the planning system should ‘facilitate positive change while maintaining and enhancing distinctive landscape character’ (paragraph 194), and the ELC is listed as a key document. Paragraph 197 advises that ‘Planning authorities are encouraged to limit non-statutory local designations to areas designated for their local landscape or nature conservation value: the purpose of areas of local landscape value should be to safeguard and enhance the character and quality of a landscape which is important or particularly valued locally or regionally; or promote understanding and awareness of the distinctive character and special qualities of local landscapes; or safeguard and promote important local settings for outdoor recreation and tourism’.

A3.5.9 Local Landscape Area (LLA) designations (previously Special Landscape Area; prior to that a variety of names was used), are used in local development plans across Scotland. NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (2002) jointly published *Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas* (LLAs) is a revised and updated version of guidance originally produced in 2006). This is intended primarily for local authorities to use in taking forward their own designation process. The guidance acknowledges that local landscape designations are a valuable tool in the development plan toolbox and outlines the process for designating new LLAs and refreshing existing designations.

Northern Ireland

A3.5.10 Planning Policy Statement 2 (PPS2 2013) sets out policies for the conservation, protection and enhancement of Northern Ireland’s natural heritage. Local authorities are responsible for zoning a variety of landscape related areas as part of their Local Development Plan process. The designations that may be used for local landscapes include Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) and Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSVs), although Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs), Areas of Village Character (AVCs) and Countryside Policy Areas (CPAs) may also be designated.

A3.5.11 Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6 1999) explains that ‘Environmental assets, identified as part of the process of Countryside Assessment, will normally form the basis for the designation of local landscape policy areas. These consist of those features and areas within and adjoining settlements considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and therefore worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development’.

A3.5.12 The Department of the Environment’s ‘Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland’ (SPPS 2015), which will supersede PPS6, highlights Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) stating that Local Development Plans should, where appropriate, designate LLPAs and bring forward local policies and guidance to maintain the intrinsic landscape, environmental value and character of such areas.



A4 (Appendix 4) The valued landscape ‘policy test’ in England

A4.1 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

A4.1.1 In 2012, the first version of the NPPF was published. It included a policy (paragraph 109) which stated that ‘The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: [inter alia] protecting and enhancing valued landscapes’.³⁶ No definition of a ‘valued landscape’ was given in the NPPF³⁷. Planning Practice Guidance paragraph 036 Ref ID:036-20190721 provides advice on the use of policies for landscapes of a particular local value but there is no guidance on how to identify such landscapes.

A4.1.2 The term valued landscape appears in the 2002 landscape character assessment guidance and in the title of GLVIA3 Box 5.1 (‘Range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes’) which was published in 2013. However, the reference in GLVIA is a quote from the 2002 guidance and not a response to the use of the term ‘valued landscapes’ in the 2012 NPPF.

A4.1.3 Following the 2012 NPPF the identification of ‘valued landscapes’ took on a new level of significance in planning appeals. Methods used to identify ‘valued landscapes’ in the context of the NPPF began to emerge, based on evidence presented by expert landscape witnesses at inquiry, Inspectors’/Secretary of State’s decisions, and court judgements. The evolution of approaches to the identification of ‘valued landscapes’ is summarised in **Appendix A5**. The ‘preferred’ approach that has emerged is based on the value factors set out in GVLIA3 Box 5.1.

A4.1.4 One particularly influential judgment³⁸ accepted an approach which identified whether a landscape had sufficient ‘demonstrable physical attributes’ to take it beyond ‘ordinary landscape’. This judgment also found that the 2012 NPPF was clear that ‘designation’ and ‘valued’ in relation to landscapes do not mean the same thing. Although this approach is still widely accepted the particular term ‘demonstrable physical attributes’ is not used in this TGN because it can be misunderstood as focusing exclusively on physical factors and excluding the perceptual and associative factors that may contribute towards the value of a landscape.

A4.2 2018/9 NPPF

A4.2.1 In July 2018, the NPPF was revised, and the 2012 ‘valued landscape’ paragraph 109 was transposed, with modifications, to paragraph 170. The NPPF was revised again in February 2019³⁹ but paragraph 170 remained unchanged. There is still no definition of ‘valued landscapes’.

A4.2.2 Paragraph 170 a) qualifies the term ‘valued landscapes’ as follows (qualification underlined): ‘Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

³⁶ Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas P24 introduces the idea of valued landscapes which can be protected via of criteria-based policies rather than local designations.

³⁷ The Landscape Institute is aware of the lack of clarity regarding the expression ‘valued landscapes’. The LI drew attention to this wording in a response to the government consultation on the draft NPPF 2012, and again on the draft revised NPPF 2018 (in 2017). The LI continues to respond to all relevant government consultations, in particular those issued by MHCLG and DEFRA. The LI uses these invitations to comment and draw attention to any perceived lack of clarity or inconsistencies in the text of consultation drafts, making suggestions for revised wording where appropriate.

³⁸ Stroud DC v SoSCLG [2015] EWHC 488 (See Appendix 2 for further discussion of this judgement).

³⁹ The current consultation draft of a proposed revision to the NPPF (2020) does not include any changes to the wording of paragraph 170.



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*)’.

A4.2.3 The precise meaning of *in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan* has been the subject of much debate, especially at planning inquiries, since 2018. **Appendix A5** refers to a number of decisions relating to its interpretation which provide an indication of the issues inspectors have considered to be relevant in the light of this qualification. However, there is no consensus on the meaning of the qualification and the interpretation of policy intentions and meanings can only be determined by the Courts. At the time of writing there have been no court judgments, post the 2018 revision, that have addressed the issue of ‘valued landscapes’.

A4.2.4 This Appendix sets out the Landscape Institute’s guidance on how landscape professionals should identify ‘valued landscapes’ and in particular how landscape professionals might interpret the phrase ‘in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan’. It is intended to:

- *guide landscape professionals undertaking landscape assessments in England, so that their judgments about landscape value are based on a transparent and structured approach such as the one set out in Table 1 above; and*
- *assist decision-makers in England who have to interpret and balance the judgments made by different landscape professionals.*

Statutory status

A4.2.5 The interpretation of the phrase ‘in a manner commensurate with their statutory status’ is relatively straightforward. Where a landscape has a statutory status, such as a National Park or AONB, it is self-evident that it is a valued landscape⁴⁰. The great weight that should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in nationally designated landscapes is set out at NPPF paragraph 172 and relates to the statutory requirements with regard to natural beauty and (for National Parks only) the opportunities afforded for open-air recreation. Paragraph 170 a) does not alter those requirements.

Identified quality in the development plan

A4.2.6 The interpretation of ‘identified quality in the development plan’ is not clear. There are two fundamentally different interpretations that have been adopted by inspectors, which are considered below in more detail:

1. It means non-statutory, locally designated landscapes;
2. It means any landscape where there is evidence to justify the identification of a ‘valued landscape’. Local designation alone may not be sufficient evidence.

In both cases it is assumed that the word ‘quality’ means degree of excellence.

Locally designated landscape

A4.2.7 The phrase ‘identified quality in the development plan’ was interpreted by one inspector as meaning a locally designated landscape. This interpretation was accepted by the Secretary of State, although the acceptance was implicit not explicit.⁴¹ However, this interpretation has not been adopted by subsequent inspectors who have identified problems with this approach, in particular:

⁴⁰ In cases where a particular area within a National Park or AONB may not demonstrate the level of quality expected of its designation status, this does not mean that its value is diminished. Such an area is still a component of the nationally designated area with the characteristics associated with the park or AONB as a whole, and the aim should be to bring it back or much closer to the quality and character of the wider designated area so that it can be a positive contributor to the statutory purpose (to conserve and enhance the area’s natural beauty).

⁴¹ App 3197293 Pods Brook Road, Braintree, Essex (June 2019).



- *that many planning authorities, following previous policy guidance,⁴² no longer have local landscape designations; and*
- *that some local designations do not have an underlying evidence-base.*

A4.2.8 At least one inspector has disagreed with the interpretation that any locally designated landscape must automatically be a valued landscape because in that case the parties agreed there was no evidence base to support the designation.⁴³

Development plan policy support

A4.2.9 Many inspectors have continued to consider evidence presented to support the identification of a 'valued landscape' whether a local landscape designation exists or not. Evidence that has been used in reaching judgements about whether a landscape should be considered to be a valued landscape includes:

- *factors that are generally agreed to influence landscape value as set out in GLVIA3 Box 5.1;*
- *the presence of qualities in the landscape that are identified in the development plan (which includes neighbourhood plans) as requiring protection, such as in policies that require development to respect key aspects of a local landscape identified in the local landscape character assessment; and*
- *when a local designation exists, whether the landscape in question demonstrates the landscape qualities that are identified as important for that designation.*

A4.2.10 The Landscape Institute supports the evidence-based approach. The Landscape Institute does not consider that planning authorities which removed local designations following previous policy guidance, or those which never had local landscape designations, should be considered to have no 'valued landscapes' outside nationally designated areas.

A4.2.11 Where a landscape has a statutory status, it will not be necessary to undertake an assessment based on Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 or the factors identified in Table 1 of this TGN. It may also be unnecessary where a local designation is supported by a strong evidence base. However, where there is little published evidence to support existing local landscape designations, an assessment based upon these factors would be helpful to support planning decision making.

Valued landscape definition

A '**valued landscape**' is an area identified as having sufficient landscape qualities to elevate it above other more everyday⁴⁴ landscapes.

A4.2.12 Where possible the development plan should be referenced to support the value placed on the landscape. Where the development plan is silent, evidence should be provided in the form of professional analysis. Key points to note are as follows:

- *It is not possible to set a definitive threshold in this TGN above which a landscape is considered to be a 'valued landscape'. It is a judgment that must be made on a case-by-case basis, based on the evidence. There should be a weight of evidence that supports the recognition of a landscape as valued above more everyday landscapes.*
- *The character and quality of landscapes across England are variable and what may be defined as reaching the 'valued landscape' threshold/criteria in one part of the Country may be considered to be an 'everyday landscape' in another.*
- *It would be expected that a 'valued landscape' would demonstrate the presence of a number of indicators of landscape value, as set out in Table 1, although it is possible for one indicator to be of*

⁴² Planning Policy Statement (PPS 7): Sustainable development in rural areas (ODPM 2004) – see Appendix A3.

⁴³ App 3215534 Tuffs Road and Maple Way, Eye, Suffolk (March 2020) The local plan policy was based on an old structure plan and the parties agreed there was no evidence base for that.

⁴⁴ 'Everyday' landscapes may nevertheless have value to people.



such importance (e.g. rarity, association or perceptual aspects) that the landscape is judged to be a 'valued landscape' even if other indicators are not present.

- *The identification of landscape value needs to be applied proportionately ensuring that identification of 'valued landscape' is not over used.*
- *In line with the ELC's approach, landscapes that are not judged to be 'valued landscapes' may still have value, and NPPF paragraph 170 b) requires planning policies and decisions to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is well-established that a landscape does not have to be a 'valued landscape' to be afforded protection from inappropriate development (**see Appendix A5**).*



A5 (Appendix 5) Inspectors' decisions and case law in relation to the interpretation of 'valued landscapes' in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England

A5.1 Introduction

A5.1.1 This Appendix summarises how inspectors' decisions and case law have dealt with the interpretation of 'valued landscapes', first set out in Paragraph 109 of the NPPF 2012 which referred to 'protecting and enhancing valued landscapes'. This was subsequently updated in Paragraph 170 of the revised NPPF 2018 (with the addition of the qualifying phrase 'in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan') and carried forward to the 2019 NPPF.

A5.1.2 The aim of this Appendix is to demonstrate some of the permutations of the arguments and evidence presented in relation to valued landscapes. Planning appeal decisions, by Inspectors and the Secretary of State, must be read as a whole to understand the full context of decisions, noting that Appeal decisions are made independently and on the basis of the evidence before the Inspector or Secretary of State at that time. Interpretation of policy intentions and meanings can only be determined by the Courts.

The 'Stroud Judgement'

A5.1.3 The 'Stroud' Appeal decision in 2014 is of significance because it became the subject of the first definition of 'valued landscape' (in relation to Paragraph 109 of the NPPF) by the courts. An Appeal was made by Gladman Developments Ltd against Stroud District Council's refusal of planning permission for 150 houses at the foot of the escarpment to the Cotswold Hills (Appeal reference APP/C1625/A/13/2207324). In his decision, the Inspector acknowledged that there was no agreed definition of 'valued' as used in Paragraph 109 of the NPPF and that in the absence of any formal guidance on the point, he considered that to be valued would 'require the site to show some demonstrable physical attribute rather than just popularity'. He went on to say that 'In the absence of any such designation, I find that paragraph 109 is not applicable to the appeal site' (Paragraph 18). In this instance, the Inspector found that the site was not a 'valued landscape' and allowed the Appeal.

A5.1.4 Stroud District Council challenged the Inspector's decision (summarised above) in the High Court on four grounds including the Inspector's approach to valued landscape. During the hearing between Stroud District Council and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Gladman Developments Limited, the Council suggested that the Inspector equated valued landscape with designated landscape. In his judgement (dated February 2015) Mr Justice Ouseley stated that if the Inspector had concluded that designation was the same as valued landscape he would have been wrong because in the NPPF, 'the word "designation" is used when designation is meant and "valued" is used when valued is meant and the two words are not the same'. Mr Justice Ouseley then considered whether the Inspector really meant that he equated designation with valued landscape and concluded that he did not. He judged that the Inspector knew that designation was not the start and finish of the debate. He concluded that '... in the end I am satisfied that the Inspector did not make that error. In particular, the key passage is in the third sentence of paragraph 18, in which he said that the site to be valued had to show some demonstrable physical attribute rather than just popularity' (Paragraph 14).



A5.1.5 In Paragraph 16 of the judgment he explains the Inspector's reasoning: 'It is not difficult to see that the sort of demonstrable physical attributes which would take this site beyond mere countryside, if I can put it that way but into something below that which was designated had not been made out in the Inspector's mind'.

Demonstrable physical attributes

A5.1.6 Following this judgment a number of Inspectors have considered the issue of what constitutes a valued landscape by reference to 'demonstrable physical attributes' that take the landscape beyond ordinary countryside and this phrase was taken as a general principle by many. However, in a later judgement (CEG Land Promotions II Ltd v SoS HCLG 2018 EWHC 1799), Mr Justice Ousley made it clear that he was not laying down any general principles when he concluded that it was reasonable for an Inspector to look for such demonstrable physical attributes in reaching a conclusion on valued landscape (Paragraph 58).

The role of the site in the wider landscape

A5.1.7 When assessing landscape value, there has been a growing consensus regarding the importance of looking at the role that a site plays in the wider landscape and not limiting the assessment to the site itself. The Inspector for APP/Z1510/W/16/3160474 (West Street, Coggeshall, July 2017) concluded at Paragraph 30 of her decision as follows:

'Whilst the Framework paragraph 109 test based on the Stroud case (which I shall consider later) refers to "this site" I consider that it would be too narrow to just consider the appeal site. A site might have a variety of characteristics but, taken in isolation, for some sites it would be difficult to assess whether those characteristics have any particular value or importance. Moreover, a site might be important because of its position in the landscape as part of it rather than being important in its own right, rather like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Further, as my colleague in the Nanpanton Road appeal sets out, the interactions between people and place are important in the perceptions of landscape and people will perceive the site in a wider context'.⁴⁵

A5.1.8 While this decision pre-dates the amendment of the NPPF, its approach to assessing landscape value remains relevant.

Does a lack of local landscape designation preclude the presence of a valued landscape?

A5.1.9 An Inspector in his report for Appeal 3197293 (Pods Brook Road, Braintree, Essex) concluded that 'A straightforward reading of paragraph 170(a) does not lead to the view that there are other categories of valued landscape (which are not statutorily designated or identified in a development plan)'⁴⁶ and he equated this with some form of protection in the development plan. This interpretation was accepted by the Secretary of State, although the acceptance was implicit not explicit. However, this interpretation has not been adopted by other inspectors as set out in the following paragraphs.

A5.1.10 An inspector in a decision letter for APP 3200335 (Watlington Road, Lewknor) made clear that he considered the lack of a local landscape designation should not preclude the presence of a valued landscape: 'It would be wrong in my view to conclude that a landscape cannot be considered as valued simply because it was not identified in a development plan formulated at a time when no such requirement existed'.⁴⁷

A5.1.11 In this instance the inspector was not persuaded that the landscape in question was a 'valued landscape' but this judgement was based on the evidence the parties had put to him about the value of the landscape rather than lack of a local designation.

A5.1.12 In relation to App 3207509 (Land off Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet) the Inspector concluded 'Neither, having regard to Paragraph 127, do I consider that the exhortation to protect and enhance "valued" landscapes is necessarily limited to landscapes that have either a statutory designation or a local designation in the development plan' (Paragraph 21). In this case an evaluation for potential

⁴⁵ APP 3160470 West Street Coggeshall Inspector Hill Paragraph 30 2017

⁴⁶ Appeal 3197293 Pods Brook Road, Braintree, Essex Inspector Clegg Paragraph 185 June 2019

⁴⁷ APP 3200335 Watlington Road, Lewknor Inspector Baugh-Jones Paragraph 40 January 2019



extension of the Dedham Vale AONB to include the land in question had been undertaken and so there was a detailed evidence base to demonstrate landscape value despite the lack of designation.

A5.1.13 In relation to App 3214324 (Poplar Hill, Stowmarket, August 2019) the inspector concluded that the development would harm a valued landscape even though the site was not located within a nationally or locally designated area. Additionally, it was in a district that still had local landscape designations. The inspector was concerned with the harm that would arise to features in the landscape surrounding the appeal site as a consequence of development on the appeal site, stating:

‘Although the site is not recognised in published documents as an exemplary or outstanding component of the Suffolk landscape and its development would in some ways be consistent with characteristic patterns of development along valley sides, the appeal proposal would compromise the appreciation of sufficiently impressive examples of other characteristic features of the landscape as to cause an unacceptable effect on the landscape character and appearance of the area. These characteristic features are Combs Wood and St Mary’s Church both of which have statutory status and so would qualify the landscape to be regarded as valued, to be protected and enhanced in terms of NPPF paragraph 170(a)’.⁴⁸

Implication of the NPPF wording for local landscape designations?

A5.1.14 There has been some speculation as to whether the addition of the qualifying phrase ‘in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan’ to the 2018 version of the NPPF (and carried forward to the February 2019 version) will result in a resurgence of local landscape designations. In his decision letter, the Inspector for App 3207509 (Land off Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet) concluded:

‘22. The Framework does not provide a definition of a valued landscape. However, *I consider it improbable that the addition of the words in brackets to paragraph 170(a) which occurred in July 2018 was intended to encourage policy makers to revive the practice of creating local “Special Landscape Areas” or similar designations in development plans* as a means of identifying a valued landscape. Previous advice had sought to discourage such designations in favour of landscape character assessment which would identify the distinctive and valued qualities of landscapes’⁴⁹ (emphasis added).

A5.1.15 Other inspectors suggest the local plan process is the proper forum for landscape value to be considered and for designations to be made. For example, the inspector for App 3200409 (Old Street, Stubbington, January 2019) concluded:

‘30 a . . . the landscape is not specifically recognised for its quality in the current development plan. This is because local landscape designations fell from favour in national planning policy. Previously, the Lower Meon Valley had been identified as an Area of Special Landscape Character.

31. *In view of para 170 the matter of landscape value will no doubt be considered through the emerging Local Plan process. That is the proper forum for any designation to be made.* However, until that time it is difficult to understand why there would be a change in terms of intrinsic value’⁵⁰ (emphasis added).

If a landscape is not a ‘valued landscape’ can it still have value?

A5.1.16 At the appeal in relation to Bayley Gate Farm, College Road, Cranfield Appeal 3190779 neither the council’s nor the appellant’s landscape architect considered that the site was a valued landscape. Nevertheless, the inspector concluded that this did not mean it had no value, stating:

27. ‘The site does not form a valued landscape for the purposes of paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), a position accepted by both parties. *That however does not mean that it has no value* and although it may not be rare or have significant conservation interest or have any known associations it is very representative of the wider landscape, has a pleasant and attractive scenic quality and is in good condition. Its arable

⁴⁸ App 3214324 Poplar Hill, Stowmarket Inspector Clark Paragraph 81, August 2019.

⁴⁹ App 3207509 Land off Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet, Inspector Mellor, Paragraph 22, March 2019.

⁵⁰ App 3200409 Land west of Old Street, Stubbington, Hampshire, January 2019.



nature, strong boundary hedge and tree treatment ensure that it, along with the surrounding fields, narrow country lanes, bridleway and public rights of way create a strong rural character'⁵¹ (emphasis added).

⁵¹ App 3190779 Bayley Gate Farm, College Road, Cranfield Inspector Stone Paragraph 27, July 2018.

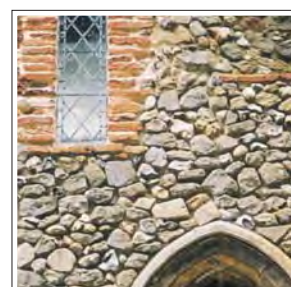


Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan Review

ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Final Report

2003



CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning

Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan Review

ESSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Approved By: Dominic Watkins

Signed: _____

Position: Senior Associate

Date: 2003

Final Report

2003

CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES
Environment Landscape Planning

Welcome

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

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

Other Files reproduce

- the Assessment's cover and frontispiece
- [the Preface Summary and Contents](#).
- and a series of better quality image files of the individual character areas

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February 2003

PREFACE

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

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

- Crispin Downs (Landscape Consultancy Manager, Essex CC)
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Chris Blandford Associates

July 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

USER'S GUIDE

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

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

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This study is one of a series informing the review of the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan (RSP), leading to a First Alteration to be prepared in 2002 by Essex County Council & Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (the Joint Structure Plan Authorities – JSPAs). Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was commissioned in April 2001 by the JSPAs to undertake this study.
- 1.1.2 The study area is shown on Figure 1. It comprises the area covered by the Replacement Structure Plan, namely the administrative areas of Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council. For the avoidance of any doubt, this area excludes Thurrock Council.
- 1.1.3 The study area borders Suffolk and Cambridgeshire to in the north, Hertfordshire to the west and Greater London to the southwest. The Thames estuary marks the boundary with Kent to the south. The coast forms the eastern boundary of the study area, extending from the Thames in the south to the Stour Estuary in the north.

1.2 Study Context

- 1.2.1 Following the Countryside Agency/English Nature/English Heritage *Character Map of England* produced in 1997, Government policy set out in PPG7 *The Countryside; Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* has supported the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the intrinsic character of the countryside, identifying areas where conservation or restoration of existing character should be given high priority and guiding sustainable development.
- 1.2.2 The *Character Map of England* identifies five broad character areas in which the study area falls: the Greater Thames Estuary, the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, the Northern Thames Basin, the East Anglian Chalk and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths. The scale of this national study is useful as a regional planning tool but lacks the detail to feed into county-level strategies.
- 1.2.3 Character studies of parts of the study area have already been produced at a greater level of detail than the *Character Map of England*. These studies do not, however, necessarily use the same methods, nor are they at the same level of detail. This county-wide study provides the framework for future District and single-purpose studies, while providing a landscape character assessment in greater depth than the Countryside Agency's.



Figure 1 Study Area and Context

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 The purpose of the study is to:

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

1.3.2 The key objectives of the study are to:

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

1.4 Approach and Methodology

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

Landscape Characterisation

- 1.4.2 Characterisation involves identifying, classifying and describing areas of distinctive character, i.e. what makes one landscape “different” from another. A landscape can be assessed by disassembling and analysing its component parts. Such an assessment makes it easier to subsequently evaluate what is important in a landscape, why it is important and how best to accommodate change and identify enhancement needs for the future.
- 1.4.3 The landscape includes visible, physical components (e.g. landform, vegetation, land use, settlement), visible, spatial components (e.g. scale, pattern, texture) and non visible components (e.g. sound and cultural associations). Whilst these do not lend themselves to accurate measurement, they can be easily described to give descriptions that are both relatively objective and are meaningful, avoiding value judgements.
- 1.4.4 From an understanding of the component parts of the landscape, it is possible to identify how particular combinations of these interact to create distinctive character. This then allows the classification of the landscape into areas that share common combinations of components (Landscape Character Types), and single, unique areas which are discrete geographical areas of a landscape type (Landscape Character Areas).

Landscape Evaluation

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

Assessment Methodology

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

Desk Study

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

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

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

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

Field Survey

- 1.4.9 Field surveys were undertaken to test, validate and refine the preliminary/draft Landscape Character Areas identified through the initial desk studies. This involved two assessors systematically assessing each draft Landscape Character Area in the field from publicly accessible locations in sufficient detail for the purposes of the County-level assessment. In some areas, it was necessary to observe the landscape from a number of ‘checkpoints’ prior to the completion of a field survey sheet in order to adequately assess the draft Landscape Character Area. Further desk studies were undertaken as required during this period to inform the ongoing field surveys. As the field survey work was conducted during July and August, the influence of seasonal and meteorological variations on the character of the landscape was limited to references in existing literature.
- 1.4.10 The field survey information was systematically recorded on structured field survey sheets (included as Appendix B – see separately bound report). The survey sheets were structured to include:
- description of overall character
 - checklist of dominant landscape elements
 - checklist of characteristic features (landform, land use, field boundaries, historic features, vegetation cover)
 - checklist of aesthetic/perceptual factors (views, scale, enclosure, variety, movement, unity)
 - description of land use and settlement
 - description of tree cover and field pattern
 - description of recreation and amenity
 - description of sensitivity to change/management issues.
- 1.4.11 In addition to the survey form, the field surveyors also recorded their observations on a map to show refinements to draft Character Areas, identify key visual relationships within and between areas, and the location of survey points.

Stakeholder Involvement

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

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

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

Characterisation

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

Evaluating Sensitivity of Landscape

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

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

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

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

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL	SENSITIVITY CRITERIA	ABILITY OF THE LANDSCAPE TO ABSORB IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER CHANGE
HIGH	<p>The landscape is very sensitive to this type/scale of development/change due to the potential for very adverse impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive physical and cultural components or key characteristics • Strength of character/condition of the landscape. • AONB Landscape • Landscape of high intervisibility/visual exposure • Tranquil area <p>with very limited opportunities for mitigation.</p>	<p>Unlikely to be capable of being absorbed. Presumption against development unless over-riding need.</p>
MODERATE	<p>The landscape is sensitive to this type/scale of development/change due to the potential for some adverse impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive physical and cultural components, or key characteristics • Strength of character/condition of the landscape • Landscape of moderate intervisibility/visual exposure. • Area of fragmented tranquillity <p>but there may be more opportunities to overcome these through appropriate siting, design and other mitigation measures.</p>	<p>May be capable of being absorbed. Developments to be considered on their individual merits.</p>
LOW	<p>The landscape is less sensitive to this type and scale of development/change due to the potential for only slight, or no damaging impacts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive physical and cultural components or key characteristics • Strength of character/condition of the landscape • Landscape of low intervisibility/visual exposure • Area with an absence of tranquillity <p>and there are likely to be considerable opportunities for mitigation and/or landscape enhancement.</p>	<p>Likely to be capable in principle of being absorbed.</p>

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

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

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

2.0 EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Since the end of the last ice-age over 10,000 years ago, the processes and patterns of landform, land cover and land use change have combined to create the contemporary appearance of the Essex landscape. Successive phases of human activity and settlement have influenced the development and character of the landscape in different ways. In particular, changes in the landscape since the war reflect the demands placed by society on land for agriculture and forestry, for housing, transport and minerals, and increasingly for recreation and leisure.
- 2.1.2 This section provides a summary of the physical and cultural influences on the evolution of the Essex landscape. A list of key references suitable for further reading can be found in the bibliography. Of particular relevance is *The Essex Landscape - A Study of its Form and History* (Hunter, 1999).
- 2.1.3 As this study has not attempted to pre-empt the results of the forthcoming *Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Study*, only a brief overview of the historic landscape is provided in this section. The Historic Landscape Characterisation Study will provide detailed documentation of the influence that patterns of historical land use have had on the present character and development of the entire study area. It is expected that the study will be completed in late 2001/early 2002.
- 2.1.4 This section also reviews the current planning policy framework for landscape protection, conservation and enhancement within the plan area.

2.2 Physical and Cultural Influences

Topography and Drainage

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

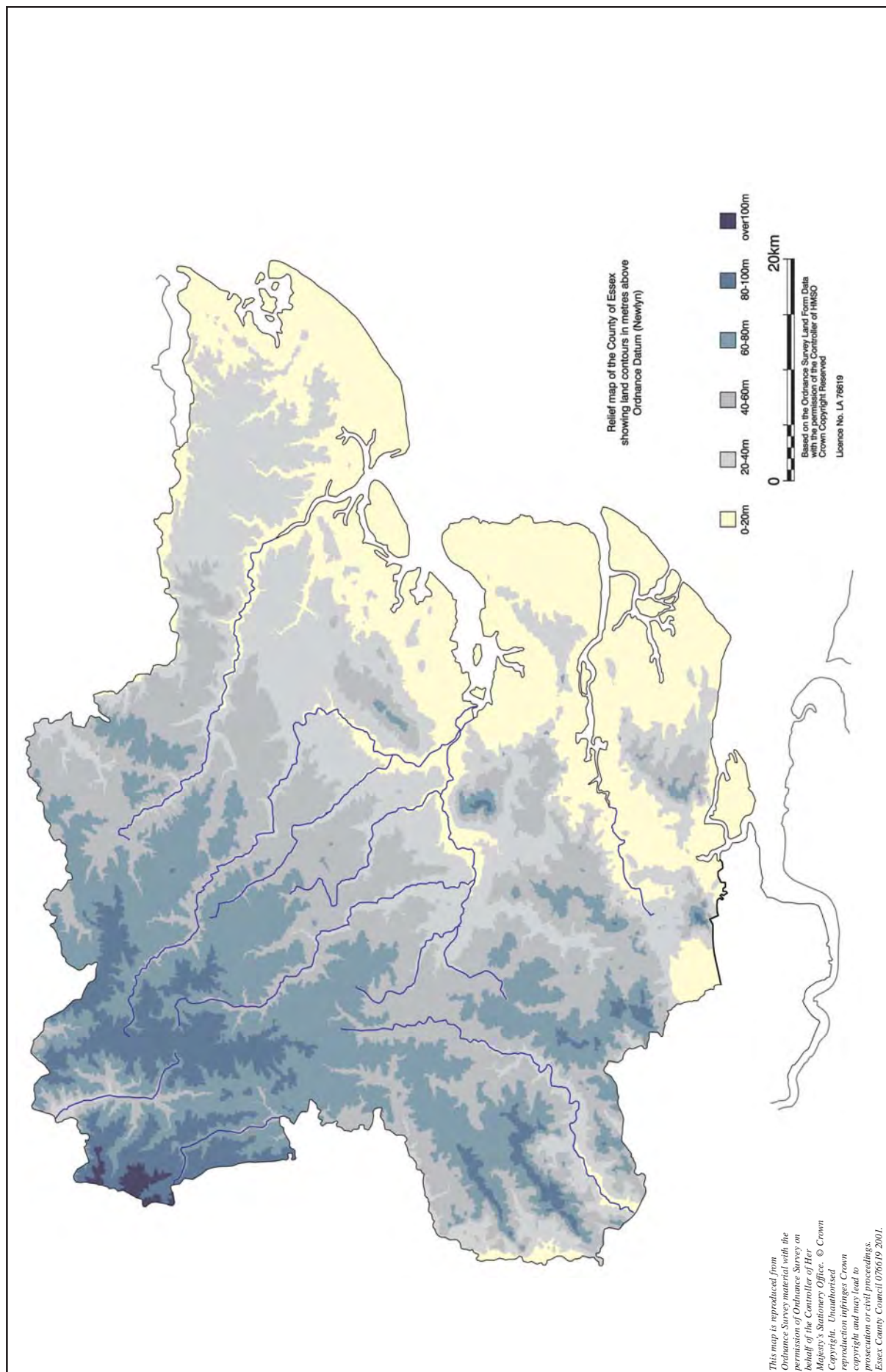


Figure 2 Topography and Drainage

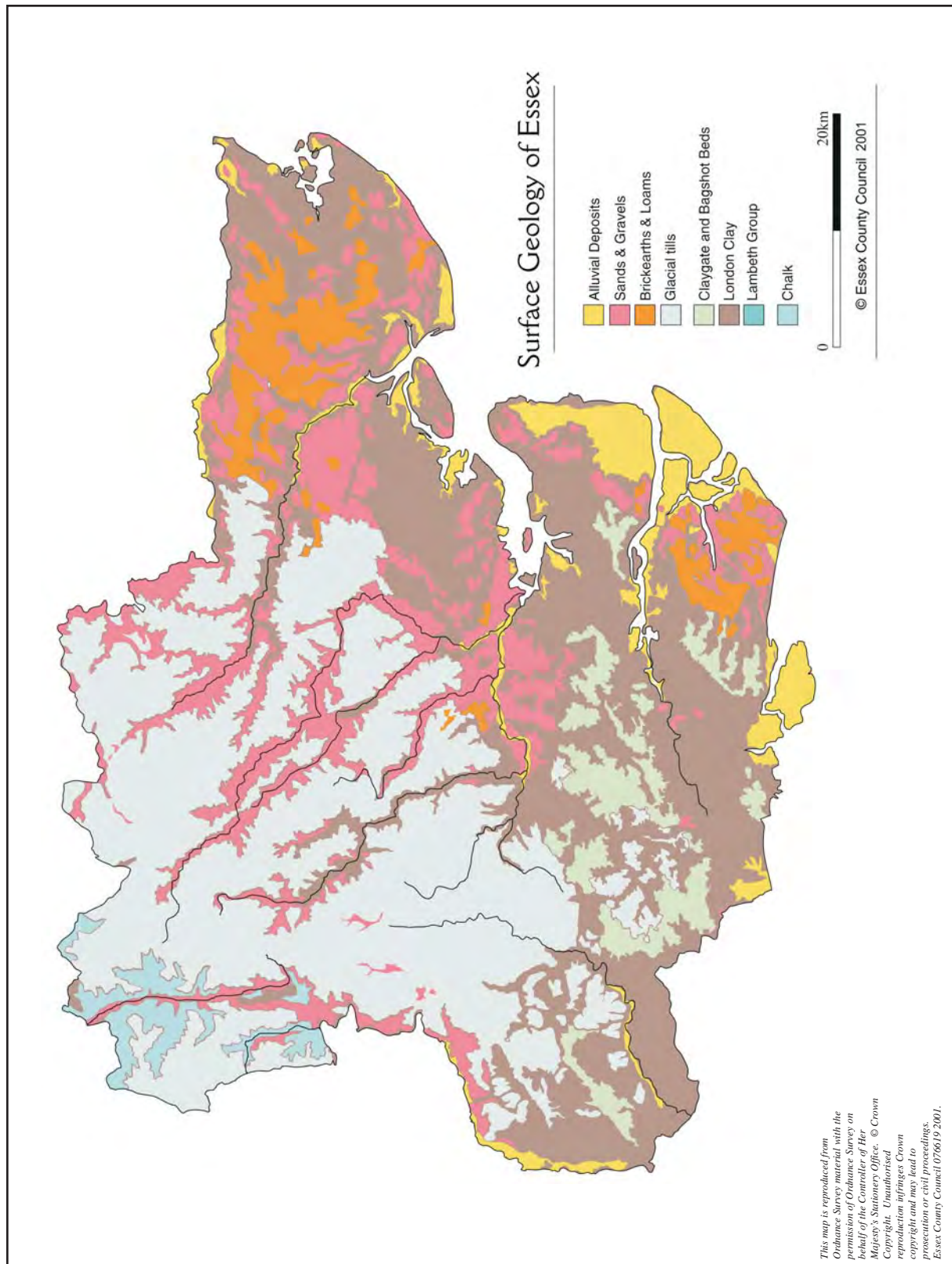


Figure 3 Geology

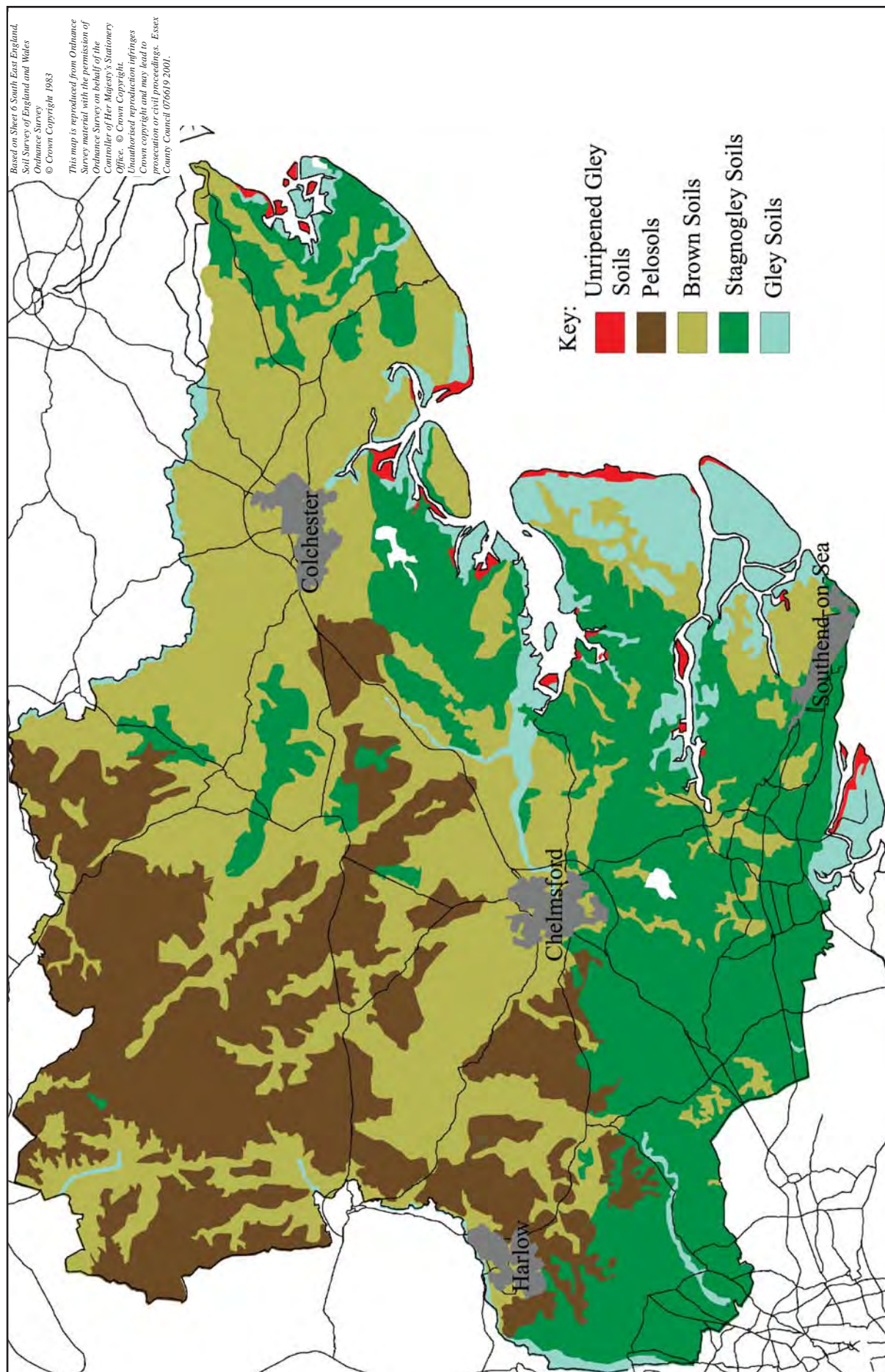


Figure 4 Soils

- 2.2.8 In the Anglian period, ice from the north covered Essex to a line running from Brentwood to Billericay to Colchester. Upon melting the ice left the vast sheet of Boulder Clay, which contains clay, flints and chalk, over central and northern Essex. The climatic fluctuations that followed led to periods of vegetation establishment, first woodland and then heathland, interrupted by colder periods with sea level falling. The ground has been disturbed by solifluction and windblown silts accumulated to form the brickearths and loam deposits.
- 2.2.9 Following the periods of glacial advance and retreat there have been continuous periods of sea level rising, with the rate fluctuating. Extensive deposits of sand and gravel are known to have come from former courses of the Rivers Thames and Medway. There are eight terraces of these sand and gravel deposits known as the Kesgrave Formations. Three further diversions of these rivers left the high-level East Essex Gravels on the Dengie peninsula, the low-level East Essex Gravels at Rochford and Shoeburyness and the lower Thames Terraces at Orsett Heath, Little Thurrock and Mucking. It is thought that sea levels stabilised in the medieval period.
- 2.2.10 In general, it is the nature and the quality of the Essex soils that has contributed to the success of the county in agricultural terms. Over half of the agricultural land in Essex is of 'best and most versatile' quality (Grade 1, 2 or 3A).
- 2.2.11 On the coastal marshes much of the land has been reclaimed. The soils are heavy gleys that undergo periodic waterlogging from fluctuations in the ground water table. Good arable yields have resulted from under-draining, levelling and liming. Grazing has been important on these soils, although problems can arise when the soils are wet in winter.
- 2.2.12 Inland from the marshes the soils that occur on the river terraces make up some of the best agricultural land in Essex. They are easy to work and naturally free draining brown soils, especially where Brickearth is present.
- 2.2.13 Soils on the London Clay are seasonally water-logged slowly permeable heavy clay soils. There are some lighter soils on foot slopes. The soils shrink and crack on drying, swelling on rewetting. When they are wet they are very sticky and plastic. They are not easy soils to cultivate; drainage is needed to grow arable crops.
- 2.2.14 On the hills that rise above the London Clay the capping of the fine sands of the Bagshot Beds by the pebbly clay drifts have led to soils that are easily cultivated, but they are acidic with low natural fertility. The soils on the boulder clay plateau to the north range from wet acidic clay soils to dry neutral/alkaline soils. All of these require under-draining for modern arable farming, making valuable corn land. The valley soils are complex but tend to be better

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

Land Use, Farming Pattern and Vegetation

- 2.2.15 Essex is one of the largest and most densely populated counties in England. In spite of this 75% of the county is farmed and agriculture is the major land use in rural areas. This means that farming practices have considerable influence on landscape character and natural habitats. With over half of the agricultural land being on high-grade soils there is an emphasis on cereal production in favour of livestock farming. Winter wheat is the main crop, but in recent years oil seeds and pulses have grown in importance. Dairy farming has declined to 80 herds with beef and other livestock also in the decline. Sheep farming has however increased by 25%. The change toward arable farming accelerated during the 1950's and 1960's.
- 2.2.16 The pattern of the Essex landscape is complex and varied. The changes can be subtle, influenced by the changes in soil or geological structure as much as by the land use. There is a rich legacy of ancient woodlands, hedgerows, tracks and archaeological sites, due to early enclosure in Essex. The only substantial area where this was not the case is in the chalk lands to the north west of the county, with its large fields and intermittent hedgerows.
- 2.2.17 There are rich corn growing areas on the boulder clays, with intersecting river valleys, woodlands and hedgerows. Ancient royal forests are still dominant at Epping, Hatfield and Writtle. The hills of Danbury and Little Baddow Ridge are well wooded.
- 2.2.18 There are also degraded areas of the county where excessive removal of trees, woodlands and hedgerows has opened the landscape wide. Intrusive man-made features, such as overhead power lines, industrial complexes and oil refineries are a major element in the landscapes of South Essex and the Lee Valley and in between Brightlingsea and Clacton.
- 2.2.19 There have been several initiatives aimed at encouraging farmers and landowners to plant up small woodlands and tree belts, through grant aid. This is particularly the case in the Thames Chase Community Forest area where the aim is to provide extensive opportunities for forestry and farming activities, outdoor recreation, education, new habitats for wildlife and a visually interesting landscape. So far 115ha of new woodland, 245ha access land, 214ha non woodland habitats have already been created, as well as 14km of new hedgerows.

- 2.2.2 Most Essex rivers flow towards either the Thames or the North Sea. Only the Cam flows northward. The rivers Stour in the north, Lea and Stort in the west and the Thames to the south, form the county boundary. Principal rivers within the county are the Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer, Crouch, Mardyke and Roding. The Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and tributaries rise in the plateau to the north and flow south where their estuaries are extensive and contribute to the deeply indented coastline. The Crouch flows east across the undulating lowland to the south of the plateau and when joined by the Roach forms an estuary complex that includes the islands of Wallasea, Pottton and Foulness. The Mardyke and Roding flow southwards into the River Thames estuary.
- 2.2.3 The coastline is mainly marshland with short stretches of cliff between the Colne and Stour estuaries and at Southend. Shingle spits and shellbanks are also a feature of the estuaries.

Geology and Soils

- 2.2.4 The underlying geology of the Essex landscape has been dominated by the events in the Quaternary period, primarily by the Pleistocene Ice Age, but also by the climatic oscillations that have occurred before and since. These have generated deposits that have a strong influence on the landscape and overly much of the area. The geology and soils in the study area are shown on Figures 3 and 4 respectively.
- 2.2.5 The solid geology of Essex forms part of the eastern sector of the London Basin chalk syncline. Chalk outcrops in the north west of the county, near Saffron Walden. Tertiary deposits such as the Thanet Sands, Woolwich and Reading Beds and the Blackheath Beds (known as the Lambeth Group) are buried by Quaternary deposits. London Clay is the thickest Tertiary deposit, with an extensive outcrop across the centre of the county running east west, capped locally by the loamy Claygate and sandy Bagshot Beds. This is a stiff, dark, bluish-grey clay that weathers, on exposure, to brown and shrinks and cracks in dry weather.
- 2.2.6 Throughout the Quaternary Essex has been subjected to periodic ice advances and retreats as the climate has cooled and warmed. This has led to a complex mix of glacial, proglacial and periglacial deposits overlying each other.
- 2.2.7 Extensive sands and gravels were deposited in the Pleistocene ice age. Succeeding deposits have overlaid these, but exposures are common on the valley sides and on the Tendring plateau. Soil forming processes in the succeeding interglacial left the upper part of the sands and gravels reddened and clay enriched. Periglacial structures commonly disturb the layers.

Settlements, Buildings and Communications

- 2.2.20 The county is primarily characterised by a pattern of dispersed settlement, primarily of medieval origin, with only limited nucleation and urbanisation. The principal towns tend to have identifiable historic cores and in the case of Colchester, and other smaller settlements, these can be traced back to at least the Roman Period. The study area contains many historic buildings and this is reflected in the 14,000 plus listed structures currently identified within the area.
- 2.2.21 Up until the 19th century, the principal building material in Essex was timber, and timber frame buildings are of great importance in the development of the county's buildings. Timber frames were typically infilled with wattle and daub, and later often coated with limewash plaster. In the south east weatherboarding was more common. The predominant building material today is brick, and London Clay still provides a source of red bricks and tiles. Other important historic building materials include clay lump, puddingstone in coastal areas and clunch and flint from the chalk in the north west of Essex.
- 2.2.22 The proximity of Essex to London and to the coast, with the natural harbours of Harwich and Ipswich bringing trade and goods to the region has meant that for centuries the communications across the county have been of great importance. The road that runs from London to Ipswich, via Chelmsford and Colchester represents a travel route that dates at least to the roman period and may be earlier. The line of the road has altered, but the communication corridor remains an important one. Other major connections with London include those to Southend and to Cambridge. A number of trunk roads in Essex across the county. The A12 runs past Brentwood, Chelmsford and Colchester and out of the county through Dedham Vale. The A120 runs across the northern centre of the county from Stansted Airport through Colchester to Harwich. The motorways of the M25 and the influence of the M11 cut a band through the western edge. An extensive network of railway lines also crosses the county. This busy network of transport corridors stands in contrast to the more tranquil character of the Essex countryside.

2.3 Historic Landscape

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

- 2.3.2 The study area contains a diverse and substantial resource of archaeological deposits ranging from 250,000 year old stone and wood tools from Clacton, through extensive prehistoric and roman remains, on to Saxon and Norman settlement and military sites, through numerous deserted medieval and later settlements to the industrial remains from the last 200 years. This diversity reflects the full range of human occupation in the British Isles and is realised in both sub-surface and above ground remains.
- 2.3.3 Particularly notable elements include the vast cropmark landscapes of the sand and gravel soils in places such as the Stour Valley and Tendring plain; the Roman city of Colchester with its early '*colonia*' and associated pre-roman Iron Age settlement is of international significance, whilst the coastal regions contain buried archaeological evidence relating to human occupation stretching back prior to the end of the last glaciation. Other notable features include the 900 or so medieval moated sites across the Glacial Till aream (chalky boulder clay), the extensive remains of salt making and wildfowl management features in the coastal zone and the numerous roman villa sites found throughout the study area.
- 2.3.4 The landscape of Essex is best described, for the most part, as 'ancient countryside' characterised by small irregular fields interspersed with commons, woods and a generally dispersed settlement pattern. This a complete contrast to the medieval open field landscapes of the Midlands with their nucleated and centralised village settlement systems. This ancient countryside has been well studied and documented by authors such as Hunter (2001) and Rackham (1976).
- 2.3.5 Essex contains areas of ancient managed woodland such as Hatfield Forest and Epping Forest. It also contains a diverse range of designed landscapes such as parks and gardens from a range of periods, including the exceptional Audley End. Another, often neglected, element of the historic landscape is the marshland grazing landscapes of the coastal zone. These have severely reduced in extent and it has been estimated that since the 1930's almost 60 per cent of marshes have been lost in Greater London, the Thames Estuary and adjacent coastal areas of Kent and Essex.
- 2.3.6 Despite the effects of agricultural intensification and urban development over the last 50 years, it is the overall complexity and intricate nature of the ancient countryside that gives the Essex landscape its distinctive character.
- 2.3.7 Particularly noticeable built elements of the historic landscape within the study area include dispersed rural post-medieval and medieval farmsteads, historic centres of many towns and villages, coastal heritage features including harbours and boatyards, industrial sites such as Waltham Gunpowder Works, and the Second World War defence networks, such as the General Headquarters Defensive line.

2.4 Planning Policy Framework

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

Landscape Planning Context

- 2.4.2 Attractive landscape settings, where a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness is maintained and enhanced, are essential to economic and social development and prosperity. Balancing the demand for land for housing, economic activity, transport infrastructure and recreation with the long term sustainable maintenance of natural resources, including landscape character, is a key role of the planning system.
- 2.4.3 The Government is committed to the protection of the countryside and sees it as a vital part of our environmental heritage, to be passed down to future generations. This is reflected in the placement of the concept of sustainable development firmly at the heart of the UK approach to planning. The foundations of Britain's approach to sustainable development was set out in 'This Common Inheritance' in 1990, and developed into a clearly defined policy framework in 'Sustainable Development - The UK Strategy' (1994). Practical guidance as to how to implement sustainable development through the planning system is given in 'Planning for Sustainable Development - Towards Better Practice', DETR, 1998.
- 2.4.4 In 'special areas' of the countryside with valued features of conservation interest, new development is often constrained by land use planning policies within development plans. Conservation and development may be compatible where the potential for conflict can be reduced through policies that encourage sensitive development (in terms of location, scale and design), minimising landscape impacts whilst also maximising countryside benefits. In both urban fringe and rural areas, new development can provide the opportunity to regenerate and enhance severely degraded landscapes through land rehabilitation and the creation of new or improved landscapes and habitats, with access arrangements for public enjoyment where appropriate.
- 2.4.5 Designating 'special areas' in development plans in the absence of positive policies for managing change in the wider countryside is increasingly regarded as an unsatisfactory way in which to meet sustainability aims and objectives (see PPG7 below). Local landscape designations may not necessarily ensure the enhancement or restoration of landscape character, and can often lead to the devaluation of other non-designated landscapes elsewhere in the plan area. Increasingly, the challenge is to develop policies that recognise and respect

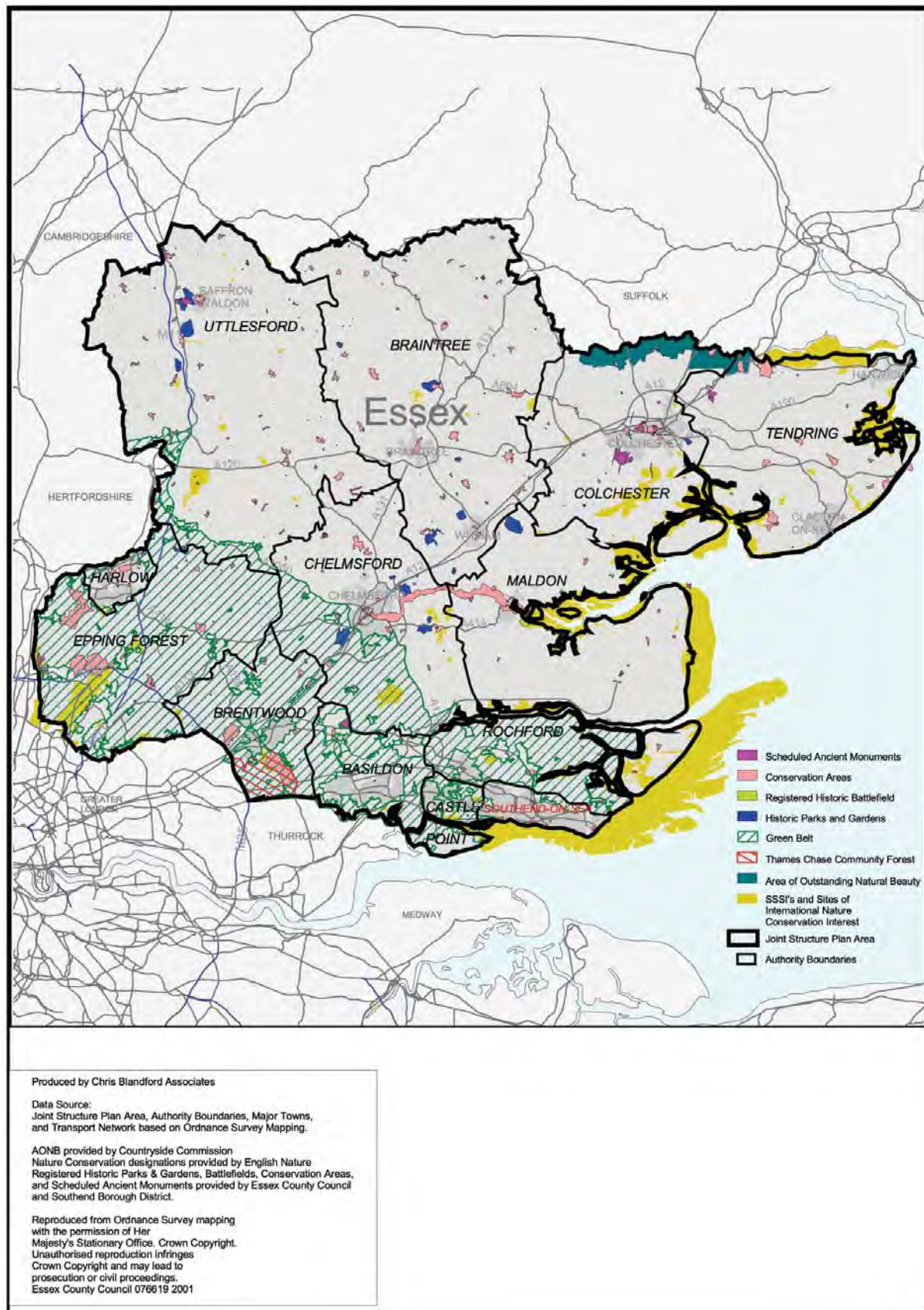


Figure 5 Planning Context

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

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

- 2.4.6 Planning Policy Guidance Notes set out the Government’s policies on planning issues and the operation of the planning system. PPG7, *The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (February 1997; as amended March 2001) gives guidance on how the Government’s objectives for rural areas should be reflected in development plans and planning decisions. It aims to ensure both rural prosperity, and protection and enhancement of the countryside. PPG7 places emphasis upon safeguarding the countryside for its own sake, and as a national asset, whilst acknowledging that different areas exhibit different characteristics and abilities to accommodate essential change.
- 2.4.7 PPG7 requires a fundamental reassessment of local countryside designations (such as *Special Landscape Areas*). The guidance indicates that designations should only be maintained or extended where there are good reasons to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. In reviewing development plans, PPG7 advises that the function and justification of existing local countryside designations should be rigorously considered, and where these are retained, planning authorities should ensure that they are soundly based on a formal assessment of the qualities of the countryside or the contribution of such areas to urban form.
- 2.4.8 The need for planners and other policy makers to be more proactive in managing change, rather than simply trying to prevent it, is reinforced by PPG7, and in Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice (DETR, 1998 para. 4.3.2). This states that the priority now is to find new ways of enriching the quality of the whole countryside whilst accommodating appropriate development, in order to complement the protection that designations offer. This guidance is in line with the ‘character approach’ to planning advocated by the Countryside Agency (Planning Tomorrow’s Countryside, 2000).

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

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

- 2.4.10 In its Environmental Strategy and the Countryside, RPG9 states that ‘a high quality environment is essential to the future prosperity of the South East’. Furthermore, the Guidance notes that ‘the effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources are fundamental aspects of the vision for this Region which is highly urbanised and subject to development pressures.’ In this context, RPG9 encourages ‘positive planning’ for the care and maintenance of the Region’s environment.
- 2.4.11 In addition to nationally and internationally designated areas, RPG9 specifically recognises that ‘the wider countryside of the South East is valuable in providing countryside around and between towns, undeveloped coast, extensive open space and river corridors.’ Protection and enhancement of the region’s landscape, biodiversity and the built and historic heritage is a core principle of the Guidance in this respect.

Structure Plan Policy

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

Statutory Landscape Designations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Landscape Conservation and Enhancement Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy NR10 (Thames Chase Community Forest)

The establishment of a Community Forest at Thames Chase is supported for the purposes of landscape improvement, outdoor recreation, nature conservation, forestry and farming. Any development proposals within the Forest area will be subject to other policies in this Plan for controlling development in the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Policy NR11 (The Urban Fringe)

The local planning authorities will work together and with other agencies to provide opportunities for the enhancement and effective management of land in the urban fringe through, for example, such measures as landscape improvement, habitat creation, enhanced public access and improving damaged or degraded land. Any development proposals will be subject to other policies in this Plan for controlling development in the Metropolitan Green Belt and the rural areas beyond the Green Belt.

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

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

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

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

Summary

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

3.0 LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

3.1 Introduction

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

3.2 Regional Character Areas

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

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

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

Greater Thames Estuary

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

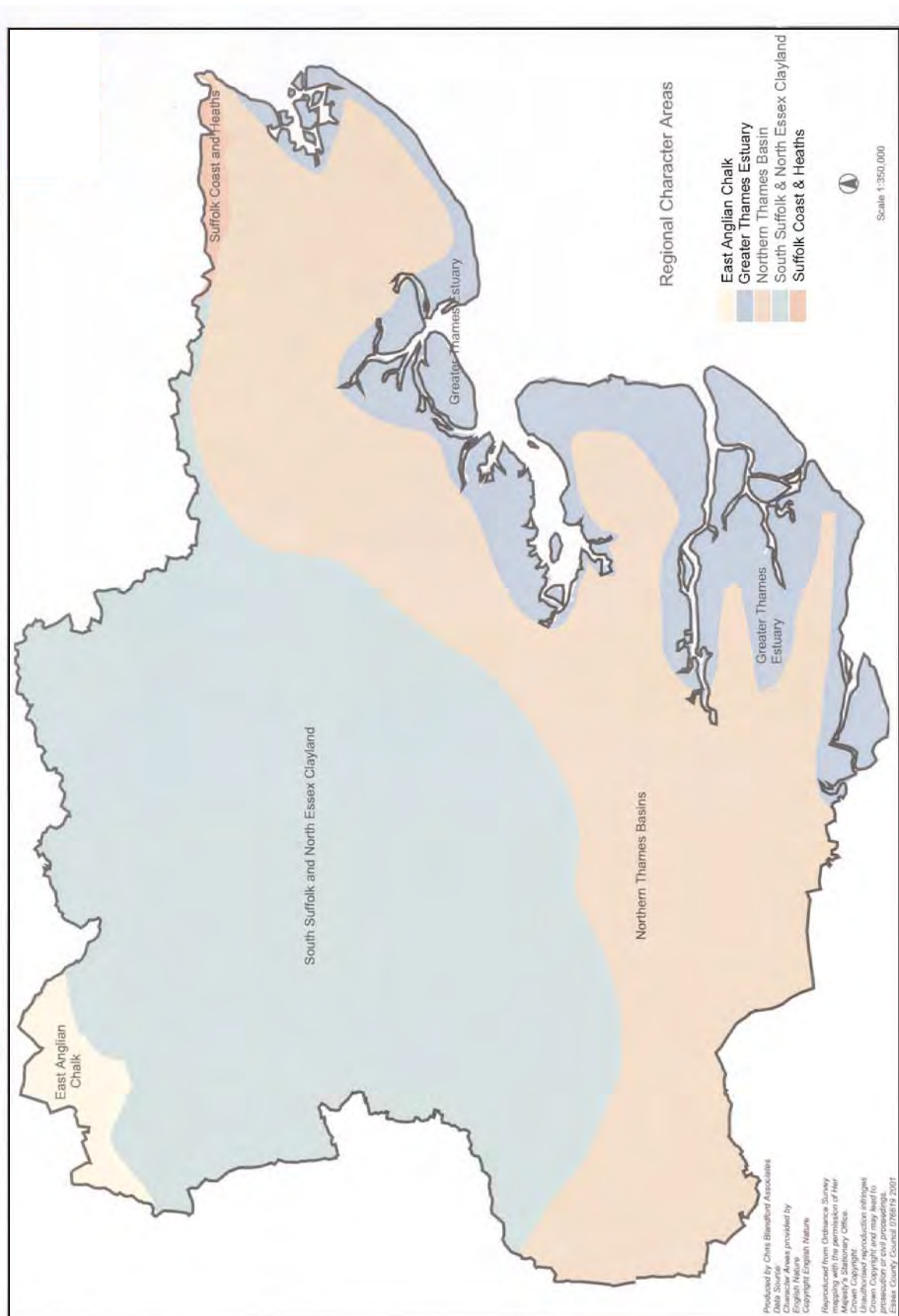


Figure 6 - Regional Character Areas

4.4 River Valley Landscapes (C)

- 4.4.1 The River Valleys are a significant component of the county's topography, character and identity. The valleys to the north are steeper and more deeply cut, becoming shallower as the rivers flow either south into the Thames or east into the North Sea. Only the Cam flows northwards. The Stour, Colne, Blackwater, Chelmer and their tributaries rise in the Glacial Till Plateau to the north, and flow east to form extensive estuaries at the coast. The Crouch flows east across the south of the county, and joins the Roach to form a further estuary. The Rivers Lee, Mardyke and Roding flow southwards into the River Thames estuary. The valleys contain river corridors that are frequently of landscape, nature conservation and heritage value.



- 4.4.2 The key characteristics of this division can be summarised as:

- The river valleys dissect the boulder clay plateau. They are smaller and steeper in the upper valley reaches, revealing underlying gravel and sand deposits on the valley sides.
- Parts of the valleys are extensively modified by reservoirs, current and reclaimed gravel pits, landfill sites, artificial wetlands, river realignments and canals.
- Smaller, intimate tree-lined valleys with small rural settlements contrast with the more developed major river valley floodplains.

- Organic field shapes are common as they are defined by the valley topography.
- The high ground of the plateau allows ‘tunnelled’ views through deciduous woodland to the valley bottom.
- The river courses are often marked by their associated vegetation.
- Settlements along the valleys reflect the historic use of them for access into the county.

4.4.3 Typical hedgerow species are Hawthorn, Oak, Ash, with occasional White Poplar, Crack Willow, White Willow, Alder, Oak, Field Maple, Goat Willow, Black Poplar, Elm.



4.4.4 The River Valleys comprise eight Landscape Character Areas within the study area:

- Cam Valley (C1)
- Stort Valley (C2)
- Lee Valley (C3)
- Roding Valley (C4)
- Chelmer Valley (C5)
- Blackwater & Brain Valley (C6)
- Colne Valley (C7)
- Stour Valley (C8)

4.4.5 *Cam Valley (C1)*

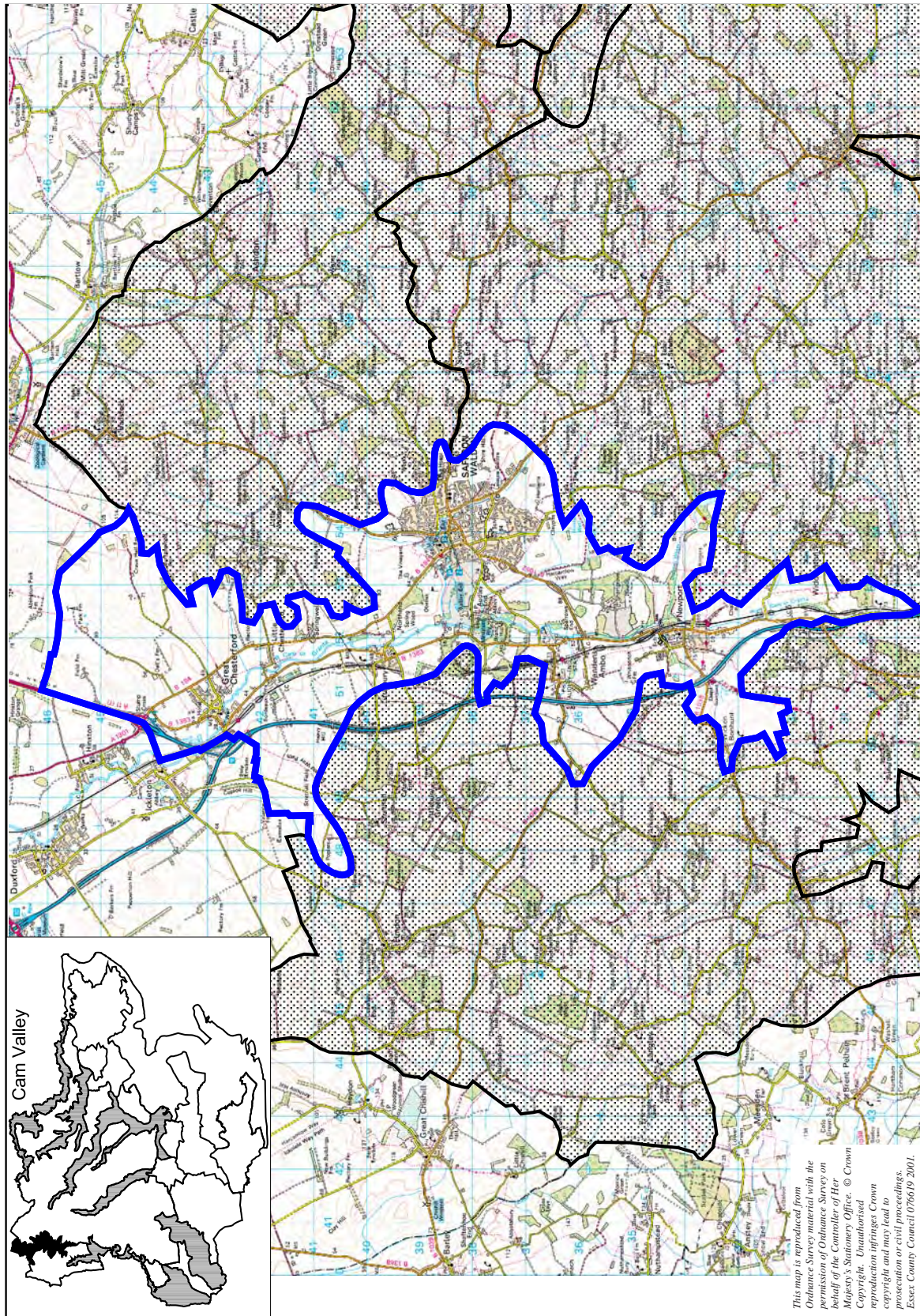


Key Characteristics

- Broad valley. Strongly rolling valleysides in the north, gentler slopes to the south.
- Predominantly large scale, open arable farmland on the valley slopes.
- Enclosed character of the valley floor with lush riverside vegetation
- Nucleated settlement pattern.
- Extensive historic parkland between Littlebury and Newport.

Overall Character

The Cam Valley is a wide and relatively deep valley, with distinctive smooth undulating chalkland hillslopes in the north, becoming shallower and gentler to the south. Large regular arable fields on the valleysides are divided by very broken hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. In contrast, the valley floor has a more enclosed intimate character with dense riverside trees/woodland and small fields. Historic parks such as Audley End and Shortgrove introduce a strong pastoral character to the valley between Littlebury and Newport with sweeping grasslands studded with parkland trees, as well as boundary woods and treebelts following the contours. A string of small villages are situated along the lower slopes of the main valley, and the small town of Saffron Walden occupies a tributary valley to the west. The M11 and a pylon route are locally visually prominent in the landscape.



Character Profile

Geology

- Upper/Middle Chalk, Sand and Gravels.

Soils

- Well drained brown calcareous soils and flinty sandy loams. Seasonally waterlogged alluvial soils.

Landform

- Broad valley up to 1.5 km wide/65 m amplitude of relief. Strongly rolling valleysides with a flat valley floor in the north. Tributary valleys create marked spurs and ridges. Gentler slopes south of Newport with a narrow valley floor.

Semi-natural vegetation

- Remnant chalk grassland in roadside verges on the valleysides. Calcareous fen/marsh, alder carr woodland on the valley floor.

Pattern of field enclosure

- Large scale mostly regular field pattern on the valleysides, and low trimmed or fragmented hedges. Small linear fields on the valley floor divided by drainage ditches or hedges.

Farming pattern

- Arable land use on the valleysides, pasture and arable on the valley floor.

Woodland/tree cover

- Typically open valleysides, with a few isolated plantations and treebelts. However, between Littlebury and Newport a much higher tree cover associated with parkland woods/treebelts.
- Strongly vegetated river course with strips of wet alder/willow woodland and poplar plantations.

Settlement pattern and built form

- Strong nucleated settlement pattern (unusual in Essex). Small to medium size villages, single small town of Saffron Walden, and only a few isolated farms on the valleysides.
- Historic vernacular varies from brick and flint, more common in the north, to pink, white and green colour wash plastered timber frame buildings, some with decorative pargetting.
- Wealth and variety of architectural detail in the historic core of Saffron Walden.

Communications

- Historic roads and lanes skirt the edge of the floodplain/lower valleysides, only crossing the valley at a small number of bridging points.
- The present day M11 follows higher parts of the western valleysides and crosses the valley in the far north.

Other landscape features

- Two very large historic parks of Audley End and Shortgrove Park (18th Century Capability Brown landscapes) occupy the valley between Littlebury and Newport.
- Saffron Walden Church tower/spire is an important local landmark dominating the town and the surrounding landscape.
- Large common with maze in Saffron Walden.
- Iron Age hillfort of Ring Hill.
- A few disused chalkpits. Active chalk quarry near Newport. (Sand and gravel workings near Little/Great Chesterford).
- Pylon route crossing the valley near Littlebury is visually prominent.

Landscape Condition

- Hedgerows on some valleysides are in poor condition due to lack of management and intensive arable farming practices.
- Some valley floor pastures are in poor condition due to overgrazing.
- The extensive areas of historic parkland are in good condition.
- The condition of the settlements is good.
- Gravel workings, chalk pits, pylons and the M11 currently create some localised visual intrusions in the landscape.

Past, Present and Future Trends for Change

- Significant past influences on the development of the landscape include its early use as a communications route, late enclosure of the valleyside open fields, and the establishment of large, parkland estates.
- Intensification of arable farming since the Second World War has led to the loss/fragmentation of hedgerows on the valleysides.

- Commons, meadows, parkland and visually prominent chalkland slopes surrounding Saffron Walden are an important part of its setting and character, and would be vulnerable to large scale development.
- Small scale infill and expansion of the smaller settlements is also a likely pressure for change, and respect for their landscape setting and character is an important issue.
- Continuing decline in traditional grazing of riverside meadows due to expansion of horsiculture is a current and likely future trend.

CAM VALLEY (C1) SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some visually exposed valleysides. Integrity of undisturbed valley floor and of historic parklands. Coalescence of small settlements. 	H
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape setting of towns. 	M
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some visually exposed valleysides. Integrity of valley floor and of historic parklands. <p><i>Alignment and appropriate design of landform would be critical.</i></p>	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some visually exposed valleysides. Integrity of undisturbed valley floor and of historic parklands. 	H
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some visually exposed valleysides. <p><i>Siting, massing, form and colour are critical.</i></p>	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some visually exposed valleysides. Integrity of valley floor. <p><i>May be opportunities for restoration of hedgerows and chalk grassland.</i></p>	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visually exposed valleysides. Landform character. Integrity of undisturbed valley floor and of historic parklands. 	M
8. Incremental small scale developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character and setting of the smaller settlements. Some visually exposed valleysides. 	M
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some visually exposed valleysides. 	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condition of valley floor meadows and valley side hedgerows. 	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

**COLCHESTER AND ENVIRONS (G4)
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION**

TYPE/SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	KEY LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION OF CHANGE ISSUES	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY LEVEL
1. Major urban extensions (>5 ha) and new settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands. 	M
2. Small urban extensions (<5 ha)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands. 	L
3. Major transportation developments/improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands. 	M
4. Commercial/warehouse estate/port development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Landscape setting of large open spaces and woodlands. 	M
5. Developments with individual large/bulky buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate intervisibility. • Some visually exposed valleysides. 	M
6. Large scale 'open uses'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landform character. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. 	M
7. Mineral extraction/waste disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate intervisibility. • Integrity of the Colne Valley floor. • Some visually exposed valleysides. 	H
8. Incremental small scale developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely urban character. 	L
9. Utilities development, i.e. masts, pylons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate intervisibility. • Some visually exposed valleysides. 	M
10. Decline in traditional countryside management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland and hedgerow condition. 	M

Table to be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 – 1.4.17

5.0 LANDSCAPE ISSUES IN ESSEX

5.1 Introduction

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

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

5.2 Countywide Landscape Issues

Climate Change

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

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

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

5.2.3 However, key issues may include:

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

Urban Development and Urban Fringe

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

5.2.5 The key issues include:

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

Transport

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

5.2.7 The key issues include:

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

Tranquil Areas

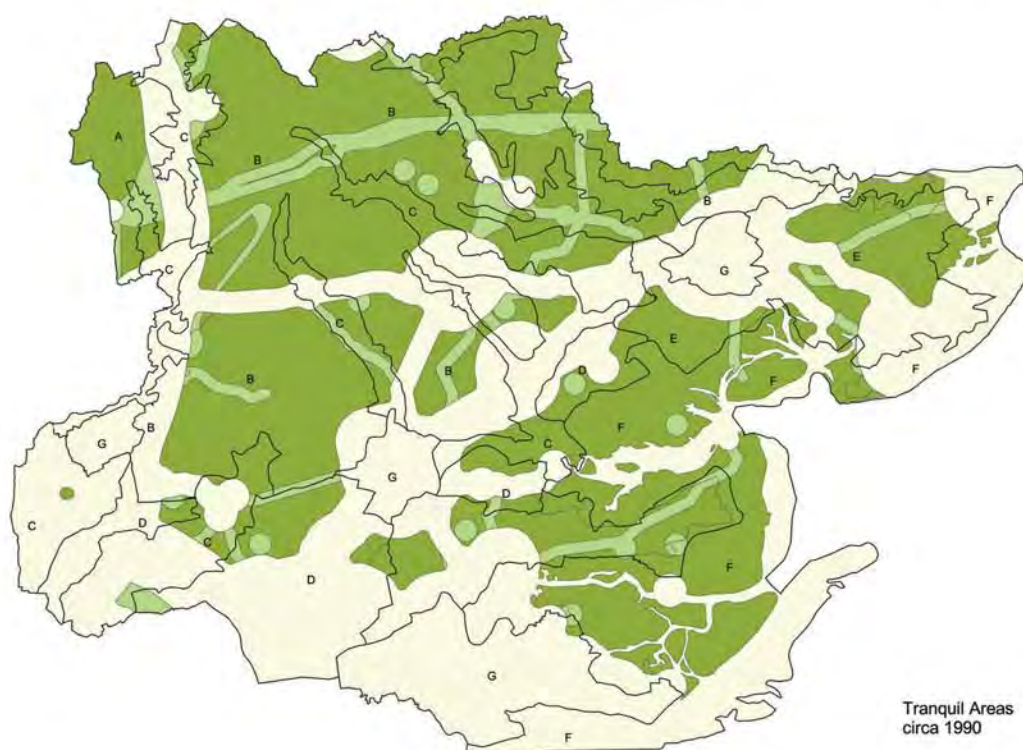
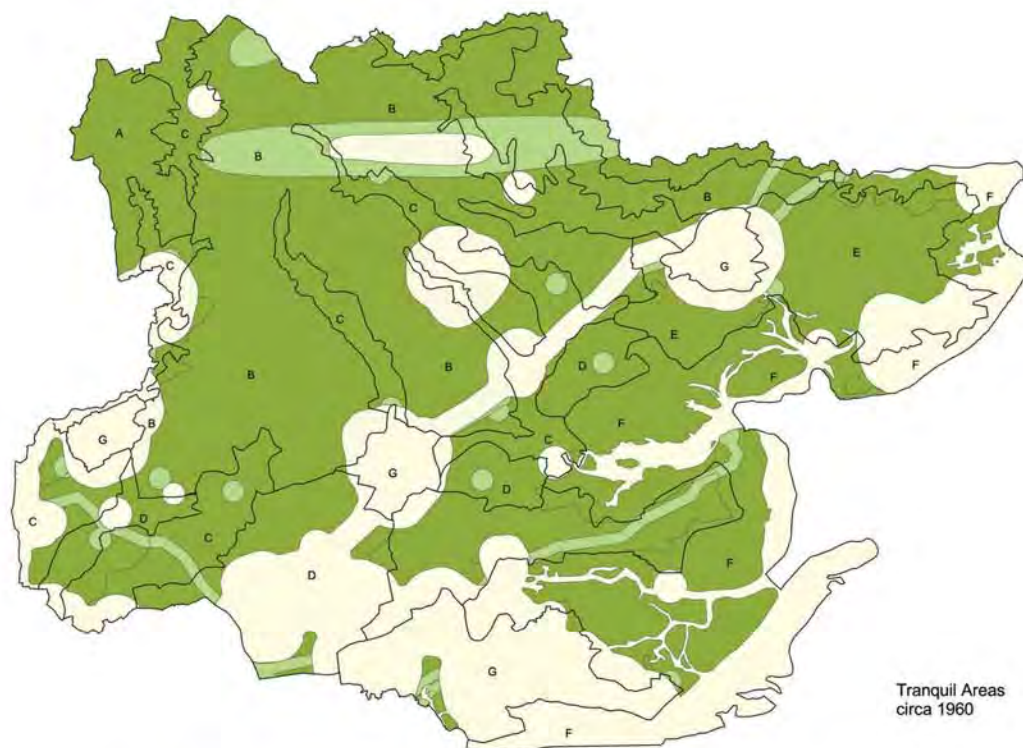
5.2.8 Nationally, extensive tracts of tranquil and undeveloped countryside are becoming an increasingly limited resource: maintaining extensive areas of tranquil countryside largely free from the influence of urban intrusion and major transport corridors is of critical concern to the protection of the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

5.2.9 The key issues include:

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

Mineral Extraction & Waste

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



Produced by Chris Blandford Associates
Data sources:
Landscape type boundaries
based on Ordnance Survey Mapping
Tranquil Areas provided by HTS Consultants Ltd & ASH Consulting Group

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Semi Tranquil Areas
Tranquil Areas
Landscape Types



Landscape Types
A Chalk Uplands
B Glacial Till Plateau
C River Valley Landscapes
D Wooded Hill Ridges
E London Clay Landscapes
F Coastal Landscapes
G Urban Landscapes

Figure 9 Tranquil Areas

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

5.2.11 The key issues include:

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

Agriculture and Agricultural Diversification

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

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

5.2.14 The key issues include:

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

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

Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows

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

5.2.16 The key issues include:

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

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

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

5.2.18 The key issues include:

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

Historic Landscapes

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

5.2.20 The key issues include:

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

Recreation and Tourism

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

5.2.22 The key issues include:

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

5.3 Landscape Character Type Issues

Coastal Landscapes

5.3.1 The key issues for the coastal landscapes include:

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

Glacial Till and London Clay Plateau Landscapes

5.3.2 The key issues for the clay plateau landscapes include:

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

River Valley Landscapes

5.3.3 The key issues for the river valley landscapes include:

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

Urban Landscapes

5.3.4 The key issues for the urban dominated landscapes include:

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

Wooded Hill and Ridge Landscapes

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

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

Chalk Upland Landscapes

5.3.6 The key issues for the chalk upland landscapes include:

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

5.4 Landscape Character Area Issues

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

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APPENDIX A - RECORD OF STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Initial Stakeholder Workshop (15th June 2001)

Attendees

Melvyn Crow	Braintree District Council
David Churchill	Brentwood District Council
Derek Stebbing	Chelmsford Borough Council
Terry Bailey	Chelmsford Borough Council
Adam John	Colchester Borough Council
Tim DeKeyzer	Countryside Agency
Peter Ennis	Dedham Vale Project
Kim Pearce	DEFRA
Martin Barrell	Environment Agency
Chris Neilan	Epping Forest District Council
Roy Lewis	Essex County Council
Martin Wakelin	Essex County Council
Crispin Downs	Essex County Council
Wendy Frost	Harlow District Council
Simon Odell	Hertfordshire County Council
Peter Holborn	Suffolk County Council
Phil Green	Tendring District Council
Sarah Nicolas	Uttlesford District Council
Jamie Cole	Rochford District Council

Facilitators

Dominic Watkins	Chris Blandford Associates
Justine Dowsing	Chris Blandford Associates

Second Stakeholder Workshop (20 March 2002)

Attendees

Melvyn Crow	-	Braintree District council
Paul Munson	-	Braintree District Council
David Churchill	-	Brentwood District Council
Paul MacBride	-	Chelmsford Borough Council
Katherine Blake	-	Dedham Vale & Stour Valley Project
Martin Barrell	-	Environment Agency
Chris Neilan	-	Epping Forest District Council
Martin Wakelin	-	Essex County Council
Crispin Downs	-	Essex County Council
Peter Holborn	-	Suffolk County Council
David Pugh	-	Tendring District Council
Jamie Cole	-	Rochford District Council
Andy Day	-	Castle Point Borough Council
Mike Stranks	-	Castle Point Borough Council
Nigel Cowlin	-	Maldon District Council

Facilitators

Dominic Watkins	-	Chris Blandford Associates
Matthew Bright	-	Chris Blandford Associates

APPENDIX B - SUMMARY MATRIX OF CHARACTER AREA SENSITIVITY EVALUATIONS
To be read in conjunction with paragraphs 1.4.15 - 1.4.17

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