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Braintree District Council

**Braintree District Settlement Fringes
Landscape Capacity Analysis For Witham**

November 2007

CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning

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Position: Senior Associate

Date: 22 November 2007

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

1.1.1 In July 2007 Braintree District Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to prepare a detailed landscape capacity analysis (at 1:10,000 scale) of the fringes of eight key settlements to provide an evidence base for informing the preferred options stage of the Core Strategy for the Local Development Framework (LDF). The study has been informed by the following:-

- The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (at 1:25,000 scale), which was prepared by CBA in September 2006.
- Historic landscape characterisation data provided by Essex County Council

1.1.2 The eight key settlements that were selected by Braintree District Council as having the potential for expansion are as follows:

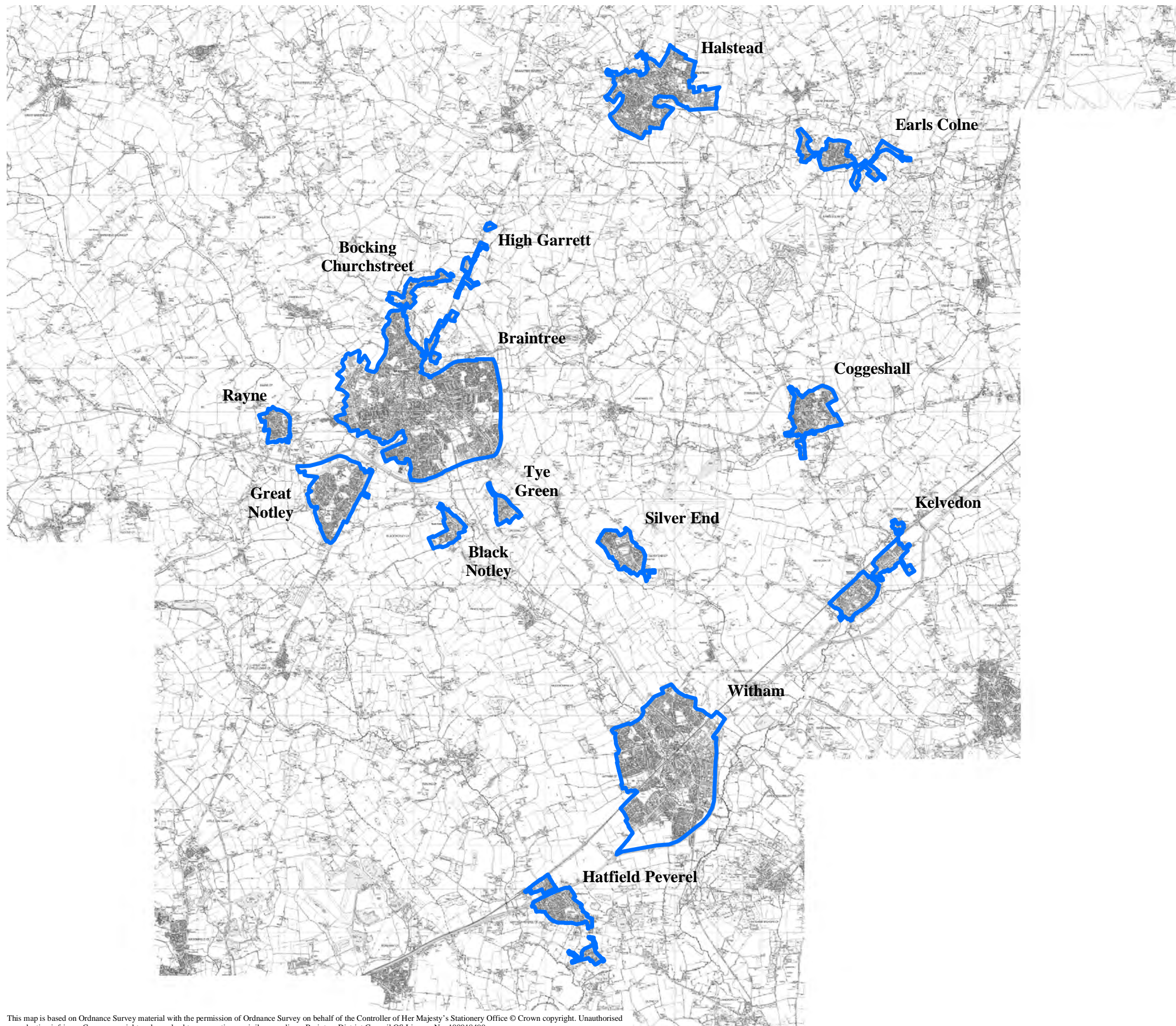
- Braintree and environs (including Bocking Churchstreet, Rayne, Great Notley, Black Notley and Cressing)
- Witham
- Halstead
- Silver End
- Hatfield Peverel
- Earls Colne
- Coggeshall
- Kelveden

1.1.3 The locations of these settlements are identified at Figure 1.


1.2 Study Purpose and Objectives

1.2.1 The key objectives of the Study are to:

- provide a transparent, consistent and objective assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of the around the selected eight settlements to accommodate new development;



KEY

 Settlements Within Study

0 1 2 Kilometres
1:90,000

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- identify areas where new development could best be accommodated without unacceptable adverse landscape and visual impacts.

1.2.2 This report sets out the findings of the survey and analysis work for Witham.

1.3 Approach and Methodology

1.3.1 The general approach of the Study has been informed by the Countryside Agency's '*Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland: Topic Paper 6 – Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*' and by other landscape capacity studies undertaken by CBA. The methodology used to make judgements about landscape capacity and sensitivity is set out in Appendix A to this report.

1.3.2 For the purposes of this study, landscape sensitivity and capacity are defined as follows:

- **Landscape Sensitivity** – '*The extent to which a landscape type or area can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character*'. (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2002), based on judgements about landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity.
- **Landscape Capacity** – The relative ability of the landscape to accommodate new urban development without unacceptable adverse impacts, taking account of appropriate mitigation measures. It is a reflection of the interaction between (i) the inherent sensitivity or vulnerability of the landscape resource itself and (ii) the value attached to the landscape or specific elements.

1.3.3 The Study has used desk-based and field survey analysis to identify discrete 'Landscape Setting Areas', which have been primarily defined by the approximate extent of visibility for each settlement fringe, at a scale of 1:10,000. Each area has been analysed in terms of its visual, ecological and cultural sensitivity, taking into account the following three key factors (Refer to Appendix B for the Field Survey Sheet used for this study):

- Landscape Character – the range of natural, cultural and aesthetic factors that are unique to the setting area, and its overall landscape quality / condition;
- Visual Characteristics (Visual Prominence and Intervisibility) – the extent to which an area has prominent topography and/or is widely visible from surrounding areas, as well as its contribution to distinctive settlement setting e.g. the extent to which an area has distinctive backdrops, distinctive approaches/gateways, visually important woodland and trees, prominent skyline/ridgeline views, landmarks, urban edge description, green corridor linkages to the countryside, allows critical outward and inward views.
- Landscape Value – highlight existing national and/or local designations relating to each landscape setting area and any other criteria indicating landscape value e.g. tranquillity, remoteness, wildness, scenic beauty, cultural associations, conservation interests.

1.3.4 In order to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to development, assumptions have been made as to the likely form of any new built residential or employment development. It has been assumed that buildings would be either detached, semi-detached or terraced buildings, mostly 2 or 3 storeys in height. A strong structure of tree/shrub planting would be provided of an appropriate scale, extent and design to help ensure that the development sits well in the landscape. Employment buildings are likely to be large in scale, some 10 to 12 metres high, and again it has been assumed that these would be developed with an appropriate structure of tree/shrub planting to help integrate the buildings into the local landscape. It has not been possible at this stage in the LDF preparation process to make assumptions about the quantum of development required within the study area.

1.3.5 The assessment has comprised the following tasks:

(i) Desk Based Analysis

- Preparation of base maps for each settlement;
- Review of the relevant Landscape Character Types and Areas around each settlement from the Braintree District Landscape Character Assessment at the 1:25,000 contextual scale, and review of the intrinsic landscape qualities, sensitivities/vulnerabilities to change and guidelines as defined by the landscape character area study.

- Mapping of landscape features (vegetation, landform, key heritage features, water bodies/courses, etc.) and wildlife sites/heritage conservation designations. This has been based in part by data mapped in the Braintree District Landscape Character Assessment and from other available sources of data, such as the Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation datasets.
- Defining landscape setting areas by mapping the approximate extent of potential visibility of each settlement fringe (i.e. Landscape Setting Areas) derived from analysis of topography and woodland/tree cover mapping.
- Broadly defining and mapping the townscape character of each settlement at 1:10,000 scale to determine how it has developed and to identify the main features and areas that contribute to the built character of the settlement (e.g. greenspace, built form, viewing experience etc.)

(ii) Field Survey Analysis

- Identifying the extent of the landscape setting area for each settlement, based on the approximate extent of visibility of the settlement fringe, involving the validation and refinement of the preliminary 'Landscape Setting Areas' as necessary. A variety of open and partial views of the settlement fringe may be obtained from within each landscape setting area. It is possible that additional views may be obtained from outside the setting area but, in these cases, the settlement fringe would represent a significantly reduced component of these views compared to those obtained within the setting area. For example, glimpsed views may be obtained through or above trees/shrubs on the edge of the setting area or distant views may be obtained from elevated land located some distance beyond a setting area).
- Identifying and recording key views into and out of each settlement;
- Identifying and recording positive and negative qualities/features that contribute to the Landscape Setting Areas around each settlement – such as skylines/ridgelines, landmarks, visually important trees and woodland, distinctive approaches, tranquil areas, urban edges, green corridors/ 'bridges' to the countryside, urban and urban fringe land uses/activities, etc.
- Identifying and recording strategic opportunities for creating a strong landscape framework to mitigate development impact on landscape character and visual amenity through developing green networks, tree and woodland planting and other landscape enhancements.

(iii) Analysis/Reporting

Assessing the sensitivity/vulnerability of positive landscape qualities that contribute to the Landscape Setting Areas around each settlement to loss or alteration by development.

- Based on the assessment criteria set out in Appendix A, the capacity of each Landscape Setting Area to accommodate new housing and employment development has been identified. Opportunities have also been identified where housing and employment development would be least constrained in landscape and visual terms.
- Preparing a concise report setting out the purpose, methodology, main findings and recommendations as to the capacity of the fringes of each settlement to inform consideration of the general directions of growth to be included in the preferred options for the Core Strategy.

1.3.6 The extent of the study areas around each settlement broadly reflects the extent of visibility of each settlement fringe.

2.0 STUDY CONTEXT

2.1 Planning Policy Context

- 2.1.1 National planning policy relating to landscape sensitivity and capacity is contained in PPS1¹ and PPS7².

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

- 2.1.2 PPS1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It states that one of the Government's objectives for the planning system is that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable urban and rural development by protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and the quality and character of the countryside (para 5). In its key principles, PPS1 states that '*a spatial planning approach should be at the heart of planning for sustainable development*' (para 13.iii) and '*design which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted*' (para 13.iv). When preparing development plans '*planning authorities should seek to enhance as well as protect biodiversity, natural habitats, the historic environment and landscape and townscape character*' (para 27). PPS1 also requires new design to be integrated into the existing urban form and natural and built environments (para 35).

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 2.1.3 The policies in this statement apply to the rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas. Two of the key objectives in PPS7 include the delivery of sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas. In its key principles, PPS7 states that '*All development in rural areas should be well designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness*' (para 1.vi). PPS7 advises that Planning authorities should continue to ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced (para 15).

¹ Planning Policy Statement 1 : Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005).

² Planning Policy Statement 7 : Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004).

Regional Planning Context

- 2.1.4 The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) is currently producing the 'East of England Plan'. Once finalised this will guide planning and transportation policy up to 2021 and provide the statutory framework for local authorities such as Braintree District Council to produce more detailed local development plans for their areas. Also known as the 'Regional Spatial Strategy' (RSS), the Plan has a key role in contributing to the development of the region.
- 2.1.5 The RSS is important to Braintree District in that it will determine where development will take place. More specifically, it will consider the amount of housing and employment land needed for each District up to 2021. It will formulate the Regional Transport Strategy which has implications for the local road and rail network, and other forms of transport. It will include policies on the environment, energy and waste, sport and tourism.
- 2.1.6 Policy H1 of the RSS includes guidance for annual provision for net additional dwellings within the East of England. The strategy requires Essex to achieve an annual average rate of 5330 net additional dwellings between 2006 to March 2021.

Local Planning Context

- 2.1.7 Braintree District Local Plan Review, was adopted by the Council on 25th July 2005 and provides a framework for the development of the Braintree District. The Plan will shape the development of the District in the period up to 2011, or until it is replaced in whole, or part, by the Local Development Framework documents as they are produced.
- 2.1.8 One of the key elements of the Plan recognises Braintree, Witham and to a lesser extent, Halstead, as the primary settlements to concentrate new development. In respect to the RSS and the Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan, the Plan aims to achieve completion of 10,300 net dwelling in the District between 1996 and 2011; of which, 60% is targeted for completion on undeveloped land. In addition, the Local Plan Review stresses the importance of protecting the character of rural areas, which include areas that are sensitive to change.
- 2.1.9 This study looks at capacity for new development within the urban fringes of the eight selected settlements and will contribute to the evidence base that will inform the Core Strategy, which is a Development Plan Document forming part of the

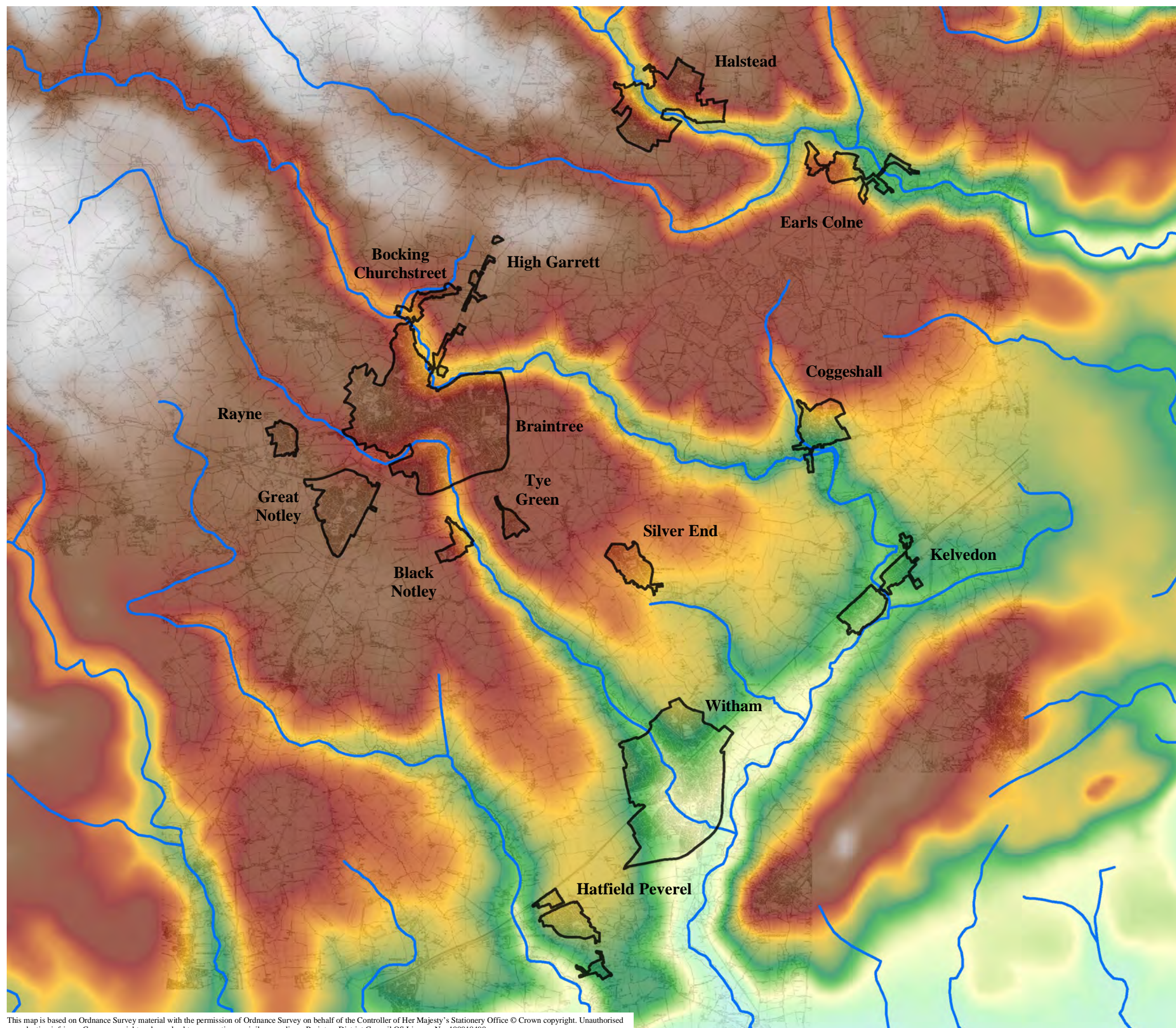
Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy sets out the spatial vision, spatial objectives and strategy for the development of the District.

2.2 Landform and Drainage (See Figure 2)

- 2.2.1 Landform within the Braintree District is predominantly elevated gently rolling Boulder Clay/Chalky Til plateau landscape, incised by v-shaped or u-shaped shallow river valleys, which cut through flat or gently undulating valley floor. The Colne, Blackwater, Pant and Stour river valleys are major landscape features, comprising locally significant scenic qualities.
- 2.2.2 The meandering River Colne runs in a southeasterly direction through Halstead, towards Colchester. It is characterized by a shallow river valley with relatively steep valley sides, which varies in width throughout its length. There is a dense network of roads dissecting the river valley and bridging the river itself, providing access and creating interesting views along the river corridor.
- 2.2.3 The River Blackwater meanders from Braintree through Stisted, Bradwell, Coggeshall, Coggeshall Hamlet, Feering, Kelvedon, near Witham, Wickham Bishops, Langford to Beeleigh where it meets the Chelmer. As the river meanders down the valley, the valley floor becomes more wooded especially south of Coggeshall. The valley floor has large settlements such as Braintree and Witham along industries centered on the river such as watermills. Many of these mills have been converted to tourist attractions but maintain original features.
- 2.2.4 The River Stour is one of the County's earliest navigable rivers forms most of the County boundary between Essex and Suffolk. Running in a southerly direction through a wide pastoral and wooded valley in the north of the District, the river is an important recreational asset and forms a key focal point throughout the valley and surrounding slopes.

2.3 Landscape Character

- 2.3.1 A large proportion of the rural area in Braintree District consists of distinctive and attractive landscapes, which derive their intrinsic quality from a combination of natural and cultural features including topography, vegetation cover, river systems and historic features.

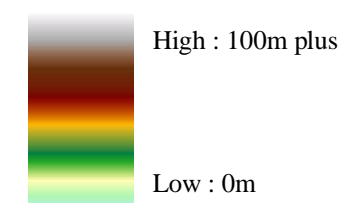


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KEY

Elevation (Indicative)



— Rivers

□ Settlements Within Study

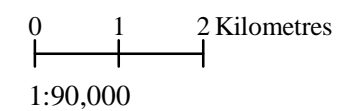
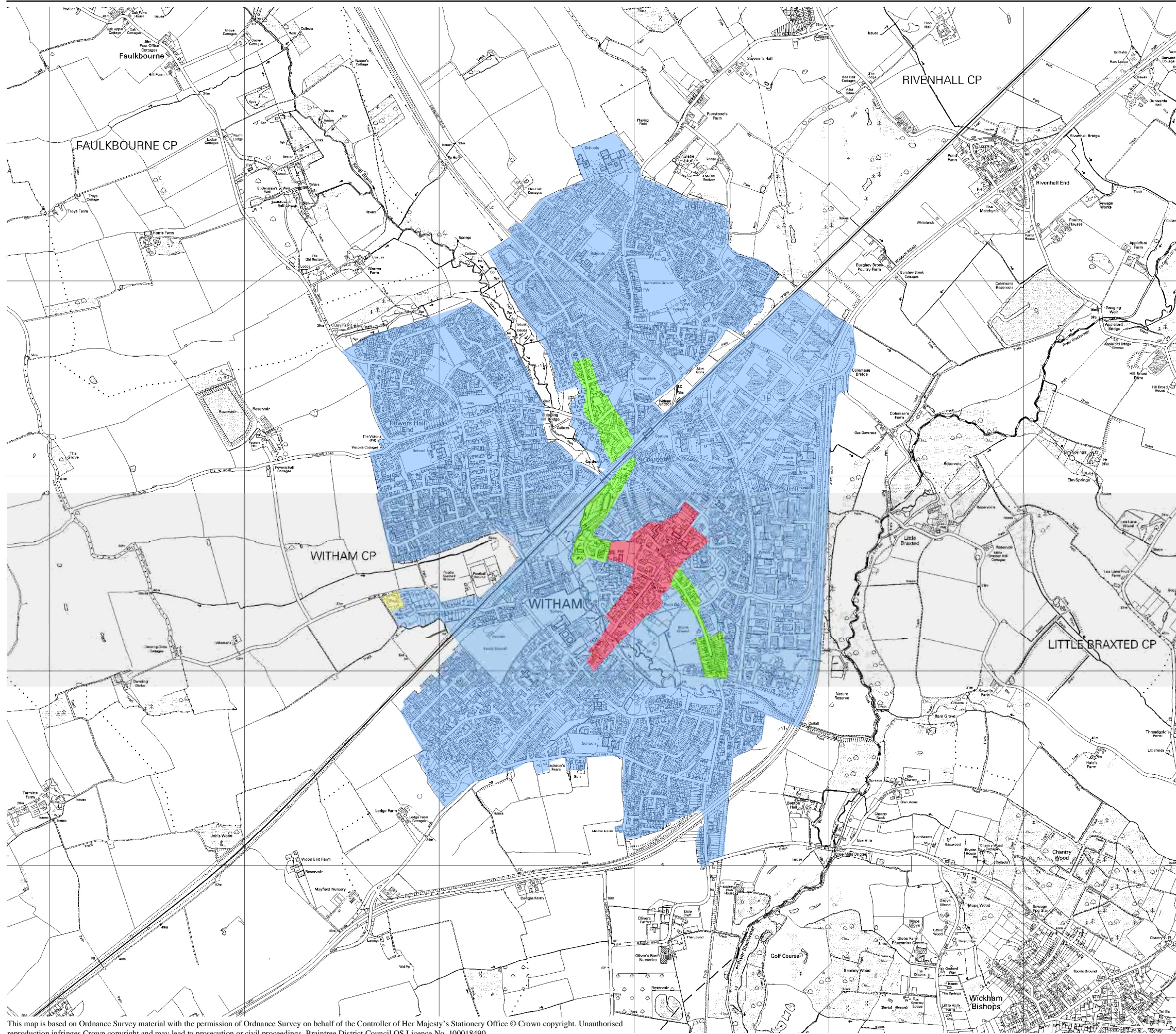


Figure 2
Landform and Drainage

- 2.3.2 The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken to inform land use planning and land management decisions. The Study involved the combination of desk study research and field survey analysis that identified and mapped generic Landscape Types and geographically unique Landscape Character Areas at 1:25,000 scale.
- 2.3.3 Three different Landscape Character Types were identified in Braintree District: River Valley Landscapes, Farmland Plateau and Wooded Farmland Landscapes; all of which contribute to a varied landscape setting to settlements within the district.
- 2.3.4 The character of the landscape with Braintree district is predominantly elevated gently rolling Boulder Clay/Chalky Til plateau landscape, incised by shallow river valleys, which create subtle variety. Although the valleys are not prominent in terms height or steepness, they provide a distinct contrast to the flat or gently undulating landscape generally characteristic of the valley floor. The Valleys also give rise to variations in land use, such as traditional grazing pastures in the floodplain and arable cultivation on the drier slopes. Such variations contribute to the visual interest of the landscape setting to settlements within the District.
- 2.3.5 Many of District's settlements are multi-period in date and some have been occupied more or less continuously since the Late Iron Age or Roman period. However, they can be broken down into the following main period groupings:-
- The Roman towns fall into two groups; those founded on sites previously occupied in the Late Iron Age and those that appear to have been 'greenfield' sites. They are nearly all at important points on the communications network, and often take the form of ribbon development along a routeway with little planned internal layout.
 - The Saxon towns fall into two groups, those that were founded as *burhs* by Edward the Elder at the beginning of the 10th century and those that were monastic foundations. The Domesday Book shows that many of the medieval towns were thriving villages by the end of the Saxon period, although not necessarily urban in character.
 - The medieval towns are mainly small market towns, but within that group there are variations on this theme. A number of medieval towns failed to develop in

the later medieval and early post-medieval, and are now no more than villages, whilst others prospered and grew.

- 2.3.6 Essex is fortunate in the quality of its historic towns, particularly in regard to the built environment. Many still retain a definite 'historic' identity and show clearly the stages of their development through the centuries. The key stages in the evolution of Witham are illustrated on Figure 3.
- 2.3.7 The historic landscape setting to Halstead and the form and character of surrounding settlements in the District are strongly related, both having developed over many centuries in response to changing patterns of land use. A mixture of settlement sizes characterise the District from farmsteads to large sprawling settlements with modern extensions and industrial units and derelict water mills. Settlements are generally aligned along the river, with some clustering at crossing-places, as at Earls Colne, Halstead, Sible Hedingham and Great Yeldham. On the valley sides, traditional small settlements and isolated farmsteads with limited modern development occur. Church towers, traditional villages, farmsteads, barns and mills form distinctive features. Away from the larger settlements, there is an overall sense of tranquility, with a network of quiet rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.
- 2.3.8 The vernacular architecture of settlements present important features in the landscape, including timber frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs found along the river valley floor as well as the top of the valley sides. Ancient churches within small settlements or isolated amongst farmlands are a key characteristic of the district. Halls are often associated with villages such as Black Notley, Bocking Churchstreet, Maplestead Hall and Twinstead Hall, contributing to the character and overall strong sense of place within the area. The villages and hall provide landmarks in the views across the farmland. However, in some cases, the integrity of vernacular buildings is diluted by more recent encroaching developments.
- 2.3.9 The woodlands are a strong and unifying characteristic in the District, with blocks of mature mixed and deciduous woodland (including areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland); copses, hedges and mature single trees. Visibility within the District is commonly influenced by a combination of topography and woodland distribution. For example, views west of Halstead tend to be framed by the hedges



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KEY

- Modern Expansion
- Victorian Expansion c1880
- Historic Core
- Scheduled Monument

0 250 500 Metres
1:20,000

Figure 3
Witham Settlement Evolution

and woodland, creating a mixture of enclosed and open views, with some distant channelled views to Halstead.

- 2.3.10 Trees, hedgerows and woodland make a significant and positive contribution to the appearance of the landscape in the strategy area. They help to break up extensive tracts of land into a more human scale, thus creating greater visual interest. They also provide valuable screening for new developments, allowing better integration with the existing landscape. This is particularly important in the open and plateau landscape, characteristic of many parts of the District.

3.0 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND VALUE

Introduction

This section sets out an assessment of the sensitivities and value of various landscape setting areas immediately surrounding the fringes of Witham. A total of four Settlement Fringe Analysis Plans have been prepared to help identify key landscape, visual, heritage and ecological issues that are relevant to each Landscape Setting Area. The extent of each analysis plan is illustrated at Figure W0: Settlement Fringe Analysis Overview Plan.

3.1 LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA W1 (refer to Landscape Assessment Figure W3)

3.1.1 Location

This landscape setting area lies on western edge of Witham and extends westwards. The southern boundary abuts the A12 and the northern boundary abuts Terling Road.

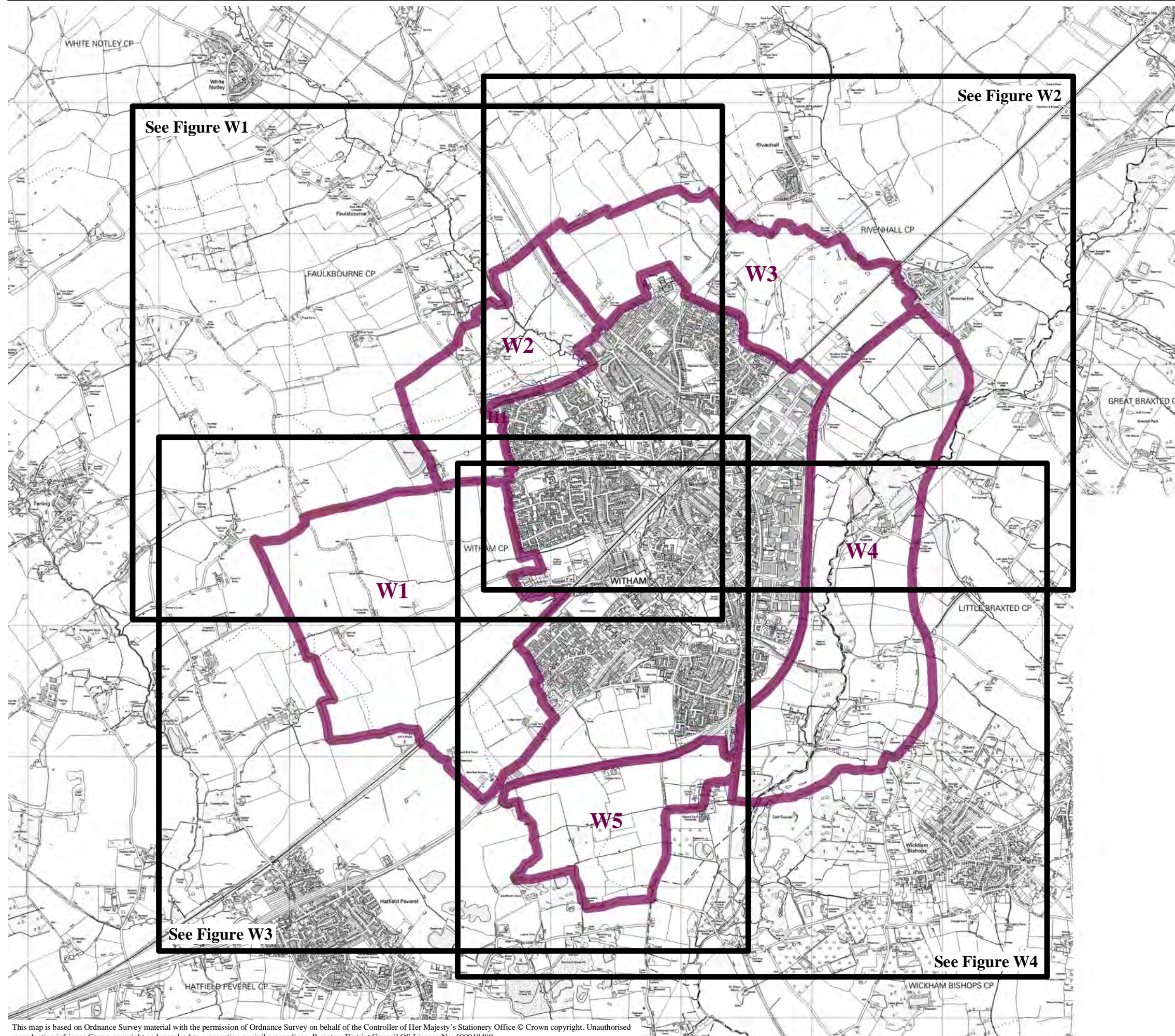
Landscape and Visual Baseline

3.1.2 Landform and Drainage

- In southern part of area, land slopes gently down towards the River Blackwater to the south-east of the town;
- A minor ridge, up to 50m AOD and orientated broadly north-south, lies some 1.5 to 1.8km to west of town;
- Three hillspurs descend off ridge to settlement edge, with intervening stream valley draining towards River Brain in town centre;
- Ridge of relatively high land, up to 89m AOD, lies broadly parallel and southeast of River Backwater.

3.1.3 Land Use

- Predominantly arable farmland;
- Occasional houses and farmsteads;
- London to Colchester Railway, Terling Road and Blunts Hall Road pass through area in a south-westerly direction from the settlement fringes.



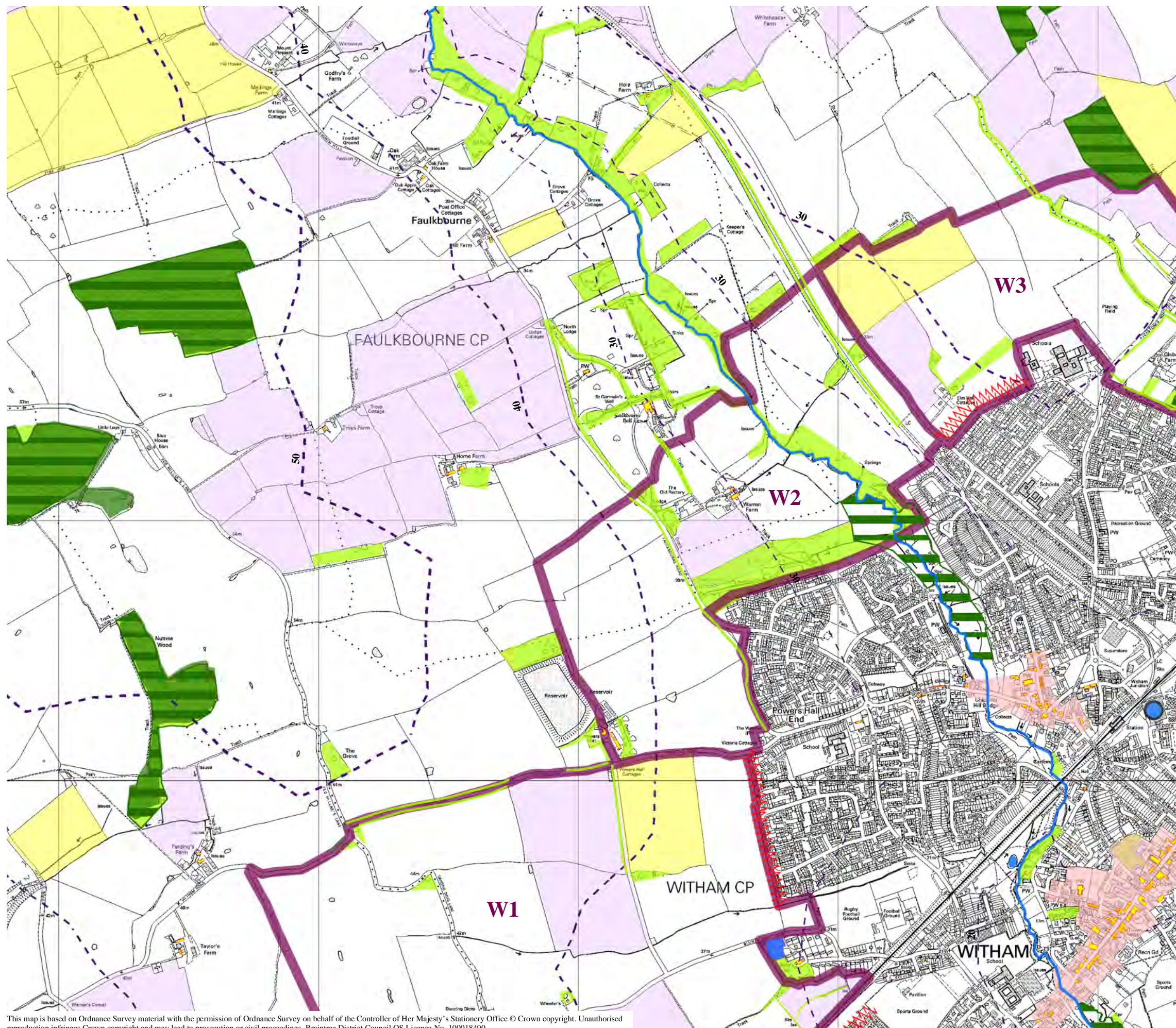
KEY

— Landscape Setting Areas (see Settlement Fringe Analysis Plans W1-W4)

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1:30,000

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KEY

- Landmarks
- Visually Harsh Settlement Edges
- Contours (mAOD)
- Landscape Setting Areas
- Water Courses and Water Bodies
- Approximate Extent of Key Woodland Blocks and Tree Belts
- Ancient Woodland
- Pre-18th century enclosure
- 18th-19th century enclosure
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- County Wildlife Sites
- Listed Buildings
- Ancient Monuments
- Conservation Areas

0 250 500 Metres
1:15,000

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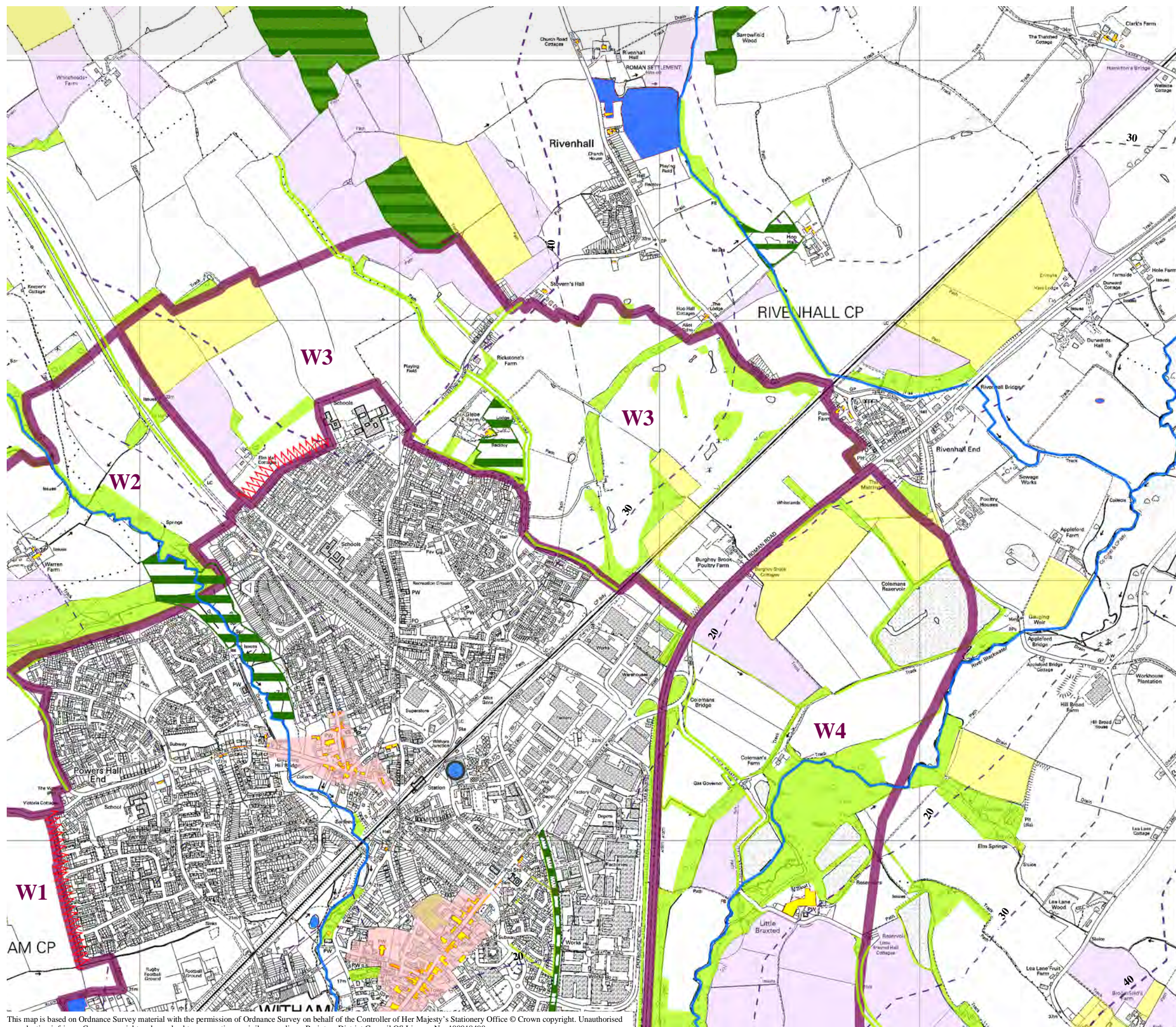
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SEPTEMBER 2007

BRAINTREE DISTRICT SETTLEMENT FRINGE LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ANALYSIS

Figure W1
Witham Settlement
Fringe Analysis Plan 1

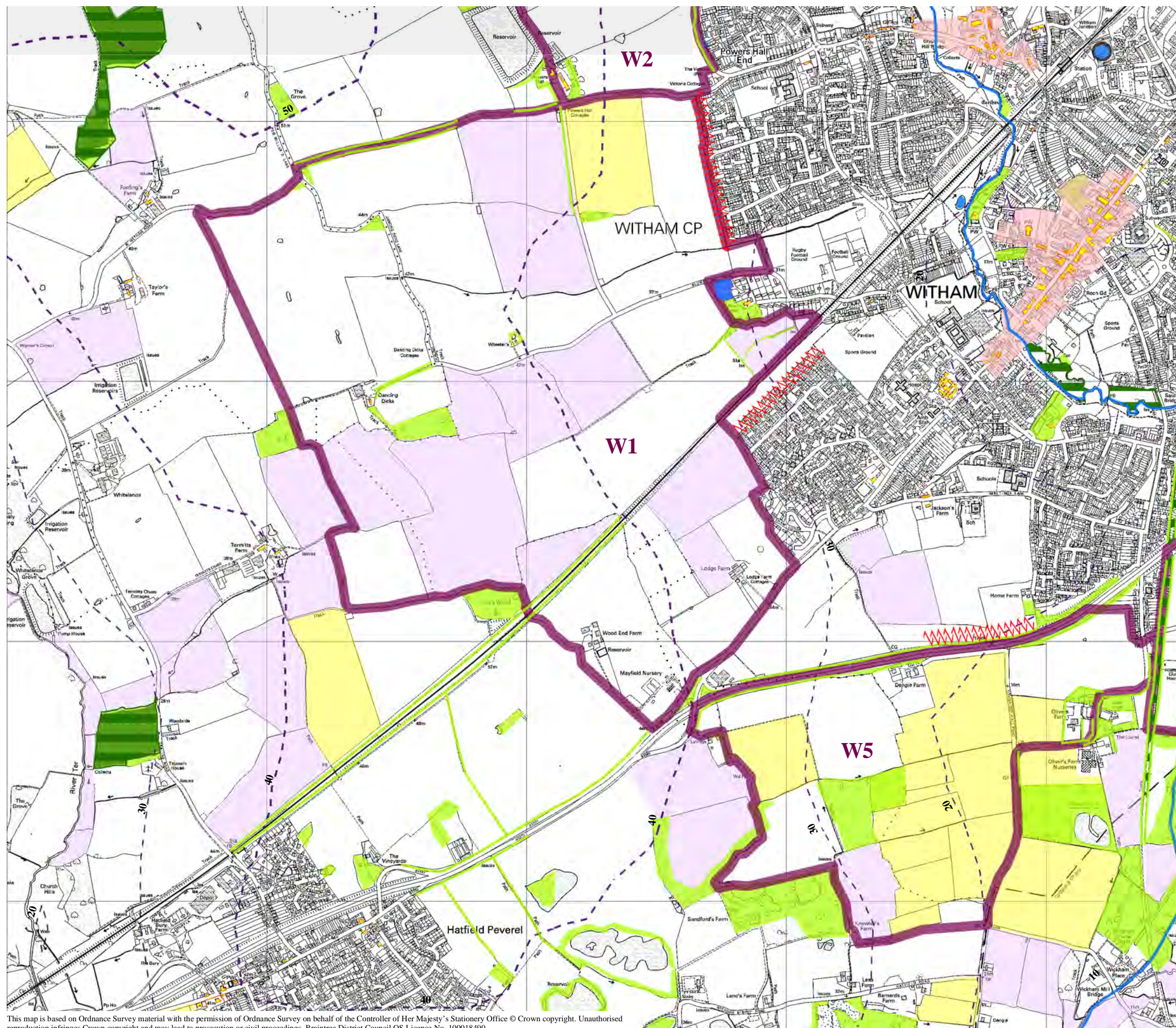


- KEY**
- Landmarks
 - Visually Harsh Settlement Edges
 - 40
 - 70
 - Landscape Setting Areas
 - Water Courses and Water Bodies
 - Approximate Extent of Key Woodland Blocks and Tree Belts
 - Ancient Woodland
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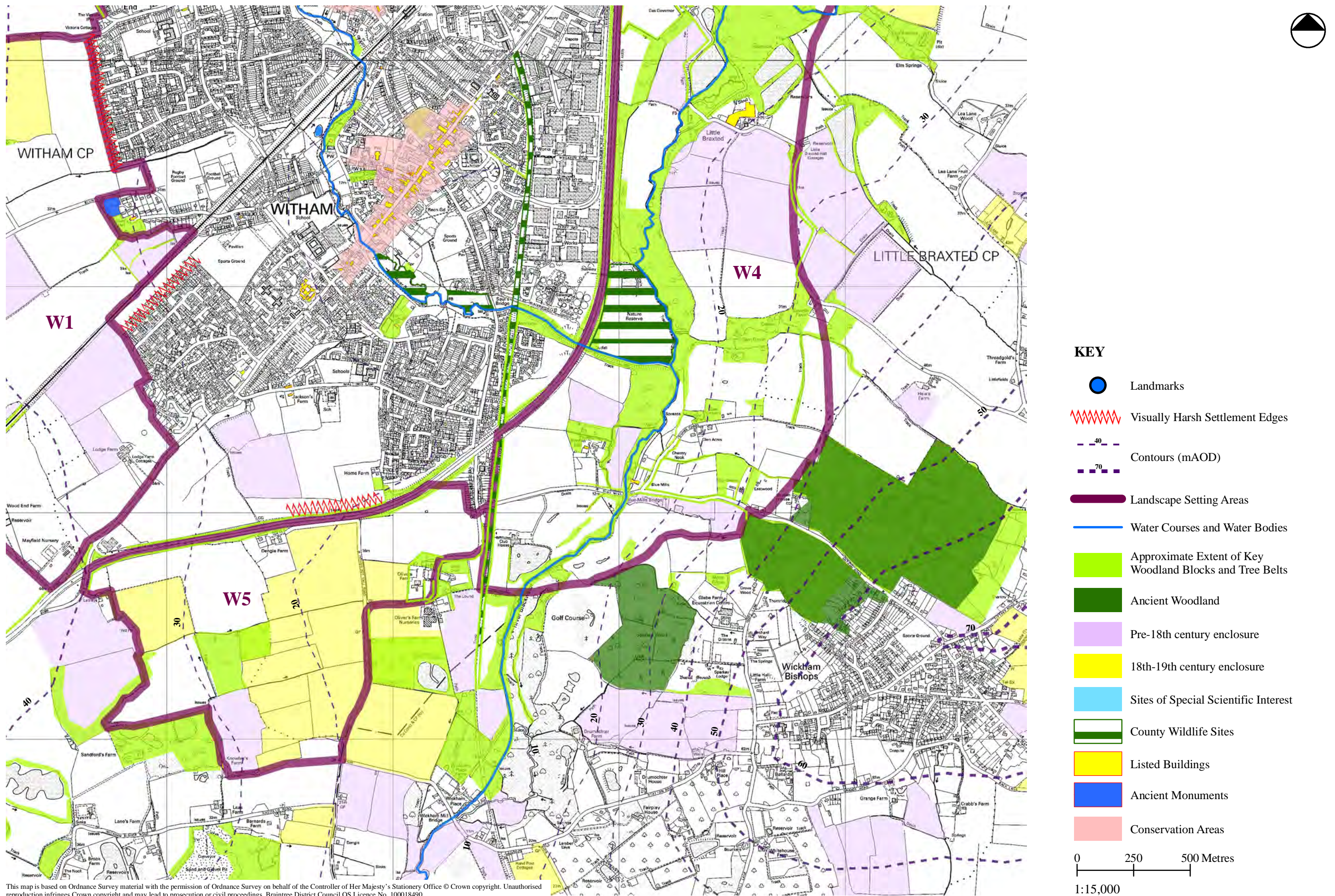
KEY

- Landmarks
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3.1.4 **Vegetation**

- Irregular medium to large-scale arable fields;
- Robust hedgerow structure generally with occasional mature hedgerow trees;
- Some small woodland blocks and narrow tree belts;
- Robust tree/shrub belts generally line both sides of the railway.
- Vegetation adjacent to urban edge largely restricted to short section of tree/shrub belt alongside Humber Road;
- Large group of mature trees at historic Blunt's Hall on the western edge of town.

3.1.5 **Access**

- Generally restricted public access between the settlement fringes and the wider countryside;
- Public footpath around Blunt's Hall provides a short circular route and connects to a footpath / cyclepath that passes alongside the River Brain in the centre of the town.

3.1.6 **Settlement Edge**

- Western settlement fringe of Halstead includes mainly terraced housing with a fairly harsh and abrupt linear edge, which is softened in parts by field hedgerows and tree/shrub planting within rear gardens;
- Wedge of open space (including sporting fields) protrudes into the town from central part of settlement fringe, north of Blunts Hall Road;
- Historic Blunt's Hall and grounds protrude out from the settlement fringe in southern part of area.

3.1.7 **Visual Appraisal**

- Limited visibility from the wider landscape due to enclosure provided by ridgeline along western boundary, by woodland blocks and by tree belts;
- Good visibility within elevated western parts due to rising landform and some loss of hedgerow structure, allowing expansive views to Witham and beyond;
- Long distance views towards well-treed ridge of land southeast of River Blackwater;
- Views from local roads dominated by farmland and often uninterrupted;
- Views of stream generally enclosed by the side slopes of the valley;

- Perception of wooded horizon due to cumulative screening effect of robust hedgerows, trees and small woods;
- Glimpsed oblique views from roads of visually harsh settlement edges;
- Direct, open views of the well-vegetated settlement edge near Blunt's Hall, with well-treed residential gardens and groups of mature trees in grounds of hall;
- Railway tree/shrub belts heavily restrict views of residential area south of railway;
- Robust field hedgerows substantially enclose views of northern part of settlement fringe;
- Silos in industrial area are visually prominent features in town.

Evaluation

3.1.8 **Landscape Character Sensitivity**

- Area provides only a moderate contribution to wider rural landscape on account of the enclosure provided by a fairly prominent ridgeline, by woodland and by tree belts;
- Area provides a distinctive rural approach and setting to western Witham, with its medium to large scale arable fields, scattered blocks of woodland and farmstead clusters;
- Increased sensitivity in eastern part due to Blunt's Hall and its historic buildings, moated grounds, mature trees, woodland and pre-18th century enclosure field;
- Belt of pre-18th century and 18th to 19th century field enclosures in western and central parts also contribute to sense of time-depth in the area;
- Semi-natural vegetation largely limited to small woodland blocks;
- Moderate strength of character;
- Overall limited contribution to setting of town on account of enclosure provided by landform and hedgerows within the setting are itself;
- Area physically and visually connected with wedge of open space that extends past Blunt's Hall towards centre of settlement;
- Few landscape detractors.

3.1.9 **Visual Sensitivity**

- Low to medium sensitivity overall as the setting area is fairly well enclosed from the wider landscape, there are few public footpaths within area and roads that pass through or alongside area are not well used;

- Reduced sensitivity in low-lying northern and southern parts of settlement fringe due to views of existing housing;
- Sensitivity increased in northern and western parts due to elevated land and along central part of settlement fringe due to sense of visual continuity between open countryside and the wedge of open space that extends into town;
- Increased visual sensitivity in vicinity of moated grounds of Blunt's Hall.

3.1.10 **Landscape Value**

Although the setting includes no nationally or locally designated landscapes, valued components of the landscape include:

- Small number of public footpaths;
- Ancient monument site with homestead (listed building) and moat with prominent internal bank at Blunt's Hall;
- Listed building at Dancing Dicks Farm in western part of area;
- Moderate to high sense of tranquillity away from railway, roads and settlement edges;
- Sense of remoteness as few public footpaths and narrow roads.

3.1.11 Summary of W1 Landscape Sensitivities and Value

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Value
Medium to high sensitivity overall due to moderate contribution to wider landscape, limited semi-natural vegetation, moderate strength of character and limited contribution to setting of town. However, area provides an open, rural setting to Blunt's Hall and contributes to wedge of open space that extends past Blunt's Hall towards centre of town.	Varies across the area but low to medium sensitivity overall due to enclosure provided by low landform and hedgerows. However, increased sensitivity near Blunt's Hall and increased sensitivity in western parts, where open, rural rising slopes are more visible.	Medium value: area has limited public footpaths but with a sense of remoteness and moderate to high sense of tranquillity. Increased value near central part of settlement fringe where land lies close to Blunt's Hall, an ancient monument site with a listed building.
Medium to high	Low to medium	Medium

3.2 LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA W2 (refer to Landscape Assessment Figure W1)

3.2.1 Location

This landscape setting area lies on the northern and north-western edges of Halstead and is centred on the lower parts of the River Brain valley.

Landscape and Visual Baseline

3.2.2 Landform and Drainage

- Area occupies a shallow valley with sides that gently descend towards the River Brain, which meanders through the area in a southerly direction towards Witham;
- Small field streams and drainage ditches are concentrated in western parts and drain into the River Brain;
- Abuts reservoir in western part.

3.2.3 Land Use

- Predominantly arable farmland with pockets of pasture;
- Large areas of rough grassland and woodland copses along river corridor;
- Braintree to Witham railway passes near eastern edge of area;
- Woodland plantation in central part, near settlement edge;
- Clusters of farmsteads and cottages along roads.

3.2.4 Vegetation

- Small to medium-scale arable fields with small grass paddocks and pasture in central parts;
- River corridor is well-enclosed by streambank vegetation and woodland copses;
- Mature woodland plantation in central parts, near settlement edge;
- Belts of trees and shrubs line railway corridor and some roads,
- Generally intact hedgerow structure, in varying condition, and some large trees along field boundaries throughout the area;
- Some fragmented hedgerows and hedgerow loss within western and central parts;
- Mature woodland block and trees along edge of reservoir form part of the western boundary;

- Good structure of vegetation surrounding farmsteads and cottages including avenue trees, copses of woodland, isolated mature trees and trimmed hedgerows;

3.2.5 Access

- Generally restricted public access, with only one north-south public footpath that connects to The Old Rectory with the northern settlement fringes of Witham.

3.2.6 Settlement Edge

- Northern settlement fringes of Halstead includes mainly modern terraced and semi-detached housing with a fairly abrupt edge, which is softened in parts by woodland plantation, field hedgerows and tree/shrub planting within rear gardens;
- Wedge of open space, centred on the River Colne, protrudes into the built-up area, through central part of settlement fringe.

3.2.7 Visual Appraisal

- Visibility within setting area is fairly restricted due to a strong vegetation structure and gentle undulations within the river valley landscape;
- Visibility within western parts is fairly open, due to rising landform, fragmented hedgerows and limited mature vegetation, allowing elevated views over Halstead to the well-wooded slopes south of the town;
- Settlement edges west of railway are well-enclosed from much of the area relatively high land on the valley side, by plantation and a strong structure of trees and shrubs within the allotments and lining the river;
- Belts of trees and shrubs lining Faulkbourne Road provide visual enclosure to southern edge of setting area;
- Farmsteads and cottages are well-enclosed by a strong structure of vegetation including mature trees and shrubs, allowing only filtered views to buildings;
- Tree belts along roads and pathways combined with scattered woodland blocks and belts within the local landscape contribute to a wooded skyline.

Evaluation

3.2.8 Landscape Character Sensitivity

- Area has a medium to high sensitivity overall due to its patterns of semi-natural vegetation lining the river, a generally intact field enclosure pattern with some

hedgerows in good condition, blocks of mature woodland, generally contained and well-integrated edges in eastern parts, its strength of character and unity, all combining to form a generally enclosed, rural river valley setting to north Witham;

- Areas of open, species-rich grassland combined with tree/shrub belt along river valley contribute to a generally unified corridor of open space that leads into the northern parts of Witham;
- Area provides a low to moderate contribution to the wider landscape due to enclosure provided by landform and vegetation;
- Distinctive and well-wooded northern approach road to Witham along Faulkbourne Road;
- Distinctive buildings, including those at Warren Farm and The Old Rectory;
- Area generally provides a strong contribution to the northern setting of the town;
- Sensitivity slightly increased in central parts by historic Warren Farm and The Old Rectory, which about a pre-18th century field enclosure, woodland and some intact hedgerows;
- Sensitivity reduced in western parts by some loss of hedgerow structure.

3.2.9 Visual Sensitivity

- Medium sensitivity overall, due to its restricted visibility in the wider landscape and many areas of restricted views within area as a result enclosure provided by landform and vegetation;
- Elevated western parts are visually prominent within the setting area due to rising landform and medium-scale fields with some fragmented enclosures. Although these parts are not generally prominent in views from the wider landscape, they are prominent in views from the railway corridor and approach roads to northern Witham and they form part of the northern setting to the town;
- Sensitivity generally reduced in lower parts of river valley due to visual enclosure provided by trees but increased within low-lying parts nearest to river due to the sense of visual continuity along the river corridor, including sequences of open grassland with copses of mature trees;
- Increased sensitivity within visual setting of Powers Hall;
- Settlement fringe is generally well contained and enclosed by woodland and/or a robust structure of trees/shrubs along field boundaries and settlement edges.

3.2.10 Landscape Value

Area includes a County Wildlife Site:- Witham Marsh; a protected grassland site alongside the River Brain corridor. Other valued components of the landscape include:

- Special Landscape Area designation;
- Listed buildings within Warren Farm and Powers Hall Cottages,
- Limited public footpaths;
- Allotment gardens;
- Medium to high sense of tranquillity, particularly within central and western parts.

3.2.11 Summary of W2 Landscape Sensitivities and Value

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Value
Sensitivities include its strong vegetation structure with semi-natural vegetation and species-rich grasslands lining the river, which contribute to a generally unified corridor of open space; its strength of character and unity; distinctive buildings within farms; well-integrated settlement edges; hedgerows generally in good condition; all contributing to setting of town. Medium to high sensitivity overall.	Medium sensitivity overall due to its limited visibility within the wider landscape. Increased sensitivity in elevated western parts that are visually prominent in views from approach roads to Witham; and low-lying central parts, due to the sense of visual continuity along the river corridor.	Medium to high sensitivity due to Special Landscape Area, protected species-rich grassland alongside river corridor (County Wildlife Site); allotment gardens; public footpaths; various listed buildings within farmsteads and cottages; and medium to high sense of tranquillity.
Medium to high	Medium	Medium to high

3.3 LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA W3 (refer to Landscape Assessment Figure W2)

3.3.1 Location

This landscape setting area lies on northern and north-eastern edges of Witham, and extends to the village of Rivenhall End to the northeast. The western boundary of area is defined by Cressing Road and the south-eastern boundary by the A12.

Landscape and Visual Baseline

3.3.2 Landform and Drainage

- Western and eastern parts of area comprise the sideslopes of shallow valleys, which gently descend towards the River Brain and the River Blackwater respectively;
- Central part of area comprises spur of elevated land that extends southwards, descending towards centre of Witham.

3.3.3 Land Use

- Predominantly arable farmland with pockets of pasture;
- Golf course in eastern part;
- Railway passes through eastern part, along southern edge of golf course;
- A12 forms the south-eastern boundary;
- School sporting fields protrude out from central part;
- Clusters of farmsteads and cottages along roads;
- Row of detached houses along Rickstones Road.

3.3.4 Vegetation

- Good structure of vegetation throughout the area;
- Fairly robust network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees define medium to large-scale arable fields in central and western parts;
- Robust belts of trees and shrubs lining public footpath alongside school playing fields;
- Groups of mature trees associated with The Old Rectory;
- Substantial recently planted woodland belts within golf course;
- Insubstantial vegetation structure associated with the railway and A12.

3.3.5 Access

- Good network of public footpaths in central and eastern parts, including routes past the golf course and through arable farmland to link with the fringes of Witham.

3.3.6 Settlement Edge

- Northern settlement fringes of Halstead includes mainly modern terraced and semi-detached housing with a fairly abrupt edge, which is softened in parts by woodland plantation, field hedgerows and tree/shrub planting within rear gardens;
- Older and more varied architecture along Rectory Lane and Rickstone's Road;
- Large-scale industrial estate between railway and A12;
- School and historic Old Rectory in central part of settlement fringe;
- Allotments in western part of settlement fringe, west of school.

3.3.7 Visual Appraisal

- Most views of housing on edge of Witham are enclosed and softened by peripheral trees and hedgerows;
- The Old Rectory is well-enclosed by a robust tree belts alongside Rectory Lane and mature trees and shrubs within the grounds;
- Glimpsed views of housing on northern edge of settlement obtained from Cressing Road on the approach to Witham;
- Mixture of glimpsed and partial views from eastern parts through peripheral trees/shrubs and woodland to modern brick terraced housing along north-eastern settlement fringe;
- Parts of golf course are well-enclosed by woodland plantation;
- Skyline views from eastern part of area to large-scale buildings within industrial estate on eastern settlement fringes of Witham and some long distance views to well-wooded upper slopes of River Blackwater valley;
- Allotments and sporting fields are well defined and contained by tree/shrub planting along boundaries.

Evaluation

3.3.8 Landscape Character Sensitivity

- Area provides an open, rural setting to northern and north-eastern parts of Witham;
- Area contributes to the physical and visual separation between Witham and Rivenhall End and between Witham and Rivenhall;
- Fairly strong vegetation structure generally including tree belts lining roads and rail corridors, woodland blocks, some robust hedgerows and mature trees, species-rich grassland within grounds of The Old Rectory;
- Sense of time depth provided by Old Rectory and by old housing and historic field enclosures alongside Rickstone's Road;
- Some historic field enclosures in far western parts and northern part of area;
- Strong rural character in western parts but strength of rural character diminished in eastern parts, with skyline views to large-scale buildings within industrial estate and partial views to modern terraced housing along settlement fringes, influence of overhead power lines, and noise associated with the railway corridor and A12;
- Medium to high sensitivity overall due to its contribution to the physical and visual separation between north-eastern Witham and nearby settlements, its overall moderate intactness and condition of the landscape, its strong rural character in western parts and its sense of time depth in central parts.

3.3.9 Visual Sensitivity

- Medium visual sensitivity overall due to enclosure provided by landform, woodlands, tree belts and hedgerows. The western parts of the area are generally of higher sensitivity on account of their open nature, their elevated location and the availability of expansive views across medium to large-scale arable fields.
- Sensitivity increased by the availability of long distance views between south-eastern parts and the upper river valley slopes southeast of Witham;
- Area forms part of visual setting to The Old Rectory.

3.3.10 Landscape Value

Area includes a County Wildlife Site:- The Old Rectory Meadows, which is a protected grassland site. Other valued components of the landscape include:

- The Old Rectory as a listed building;

- Network of public footpaths and golfcourse;
- Moderate sense of tranquillity;
- Allotment gardens to west of school;
- Northern edge of area abuts ancient woodland (Tarecroft Wood). Other listed buildings at Stovern's Hall and at Hoo Hall Cottages on the eastern edge of area.

3.3.11 Summary of W3 Landscape Sensitivities and Value

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Value
Medium to high sensitivity overall due to its contribution to the physical and visual separation between north-eastern Witham and nearby settlements, its overall moderate intactness and condition of the landscape, its strong rural character in western parts and its sense of time depth in central parts.	Medium visual sensitivity overall due to enclosure provided by landform, woodlands, tree belts and hedgerows. The western parts of the area are generally of higher sensitivity on account of their open nature, their elevated location and the availability of expansive views across medium to large-scale arable fields. Increased sensitivity in central parts where area forms part of visual setting to historic Old Rectory.	Medium to high value due to listed buildings, protected grassland meadow within grounds of The Old Rectory (County Wildlife Site), and public footpaths and golf course.
Medium to high	Medium	Medium to high

3.4 LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA W4 (refer to Landscape Assessment Figure W2 and W4)

3.4.1 Location

This landscape setting area lies on eastern edge of Witham and is centred on the River Blackwater, but extends eastwards from the A12 up onto the lower slopes of the valley.

Landscape and Visual Baseline

3.4.2 Landform and Drainage

- Landform comprises a shallow valley. Its east-facing slopes gently descend towards the River Blackwater, which meanders through the area in a southerly direction;
- River Blackwater meets the Brain River valley in southern part of area;
- A12 embankments and cuttings have significantly altered landform with western parts of the area;
- Series of lakes and reservoirs alongside River Blackwater;
- Scattered ponds and dams throughout the area.

3.4.3 Land Use

- Predominantly arable farmland with some pasture fields in northern parts;
- Substantial blocks of woodland, as well as pockets of pasture and rough grassland along river corridor;
- Medium and large reservoirs in northern parts, including Colemans Reservoir, which is used for recreational purposes;
- Golf course in southern part;
- A12 forms the western boundary and dismantled railway, extending south from Witham, forms part of south-western boundary;
- Isolated farmsteads alongside roads;
- Scattered historic houses, including Little Braxted Hall (moated site) and Benton Hall;
- Historic water mill located along River Blackwater in southern part of area.

3.4.4 **Vegetation**

- Blocks and belts of mature woodland amongst arable fields throughout area, with woodland concentrated alongside River Blackwater
- Medium to large scale arable fields dominate eastern parts;
- Hedgerows delineating field boundaries are in mixed condition with some well trimmed hedges and others that are more scrubby and fragmented with scattered hedgerow trees;
- Groves of poplars and willows lining river valley in southern parts;
- What Mead nature reserve, a protected mosaic site in central part of area;
- Robust belt of trees and shrubs lining dismantled railway;
- Woodland plantation surrounding Little Braxted and nearby reservoirs;
- Strong structure of trees/shrubs lining embankments, cuttings and interchanges along the A12, all contributing to a strong delineation between the urban area and the open countryside;
- Open grassland with pockets of woodland and scattered mature trees within golf course;
- Tree belts lining roads throughout area, particularly along Blue Mills Hill, Ishams Chase, Little Braxted Lane and track south of Coleman's Reservoir.

3.4.5 **Access**

- Well accessed by a number of public footpaths, including routes alongside the River Blackwater and River Brain corridors, which pass underneath the A12 to provide access into Witham.

3.4.6 **Settlement Edge**

- A12 wraps around the eastern settlement edge and is softened and well-enclosed from most parts of the area by landform and tree/shrub planting along embankments and cuttings;
- Dismantled railway forms a well-treed corridor of open space that protrudes into the town centre;
- Linear industrial development along inner edge of A12;
- Sewage works and small belt of modern residential development south of industrial area;
- Some ribbon development along Spring Lane extends into the countryside south of A12, comprising mainly detached and semi-detached houses.

3.4.7 Visual Appraisal

- Visibility within western part of area is generally restricted due to its strong structure of vegetation alongside A12 and River Blackwater;
- Generally open views within belt of arable fields in eastern part of area;
- Woodland and tree belts within the setting area, combined with the well-wooded upper slopes of river valley, provide a wooded skyline;
- Settlement fringes of Witham are generally well-enclosed from much of the area, due to a strong structure of trees/shrubs along the A12 and the River Blackwater. However, partial views may be obtained of some industrial buildings rising above the treeline;
- Open views to northern parts of the area from A12, comprising views across arable fields to the well-treed River Blackwater valley;
- Glimpsed views to tiled roofs of houses along Spring Lane, from local roads and open arable fields in southern parts;
- Some intervisibility between southern parts of the area and the A12 as it ascends to pass over Spring Lane;
- Little Braxted Hall is well-enclosed by woodland and by mature trees within its grounds.

Evaluation

3.4.8 Landscape Character Sensitivity

- Area provides a medium to high sensitivity overall due to its strong rural character, with its patterns of semi-natural vegetation lining the rivers, numerous blocks of mature woodland, a largely intact field enclosure pattern with some hedgerows in good condition, generally well-contained and well-integrated settlement edges and its sense of unity, all combining to form a rural river valley setting to the town;
- Area comprises a wooded farmland landscape, with numerous woodland blocks and plantations. River valley has a strong character and sense of place, with narrow rural lanes and historic buildings;
- Increased sensitivity within central parts, due to sequence of pre-18th century field enclosures around historic Braxted Hall and grounds, alongside the Blackwater river;
- Area provides a rural river valley setting to historic Little Braxted Hall and grounds;

- Belts of trees and shrubs lining Blue Mills Hill, Ishams Chase, Little Braxted Lane, contribute to a well-wooded and distinctive southern approach to the settlement;
- Area provides the setting to the eastern part of the town;
- Area contributes to the visual and physical separation between Witham and Wickham Bishops, located on the eastern edge of the Blackwater valley;
- Overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity disrupted by noise from A12.

3.4.9 **Visual Sensitivity**

- Medium sensitivity overall, due to strong sense of enclosure of views provided by trees and woodland in western parts of area and due to enclosure provided by rising landform;
- Sensitivity increased in eastern parts due to open expansive nature of views in these parts;
- Increased sensitivity within visual setting of Little Braxted Hall;
- Increased sensitivity within low-lying western parts by the sense of visual continuity along the river corridor including substantial woodland areas and occasional open grassland, nestled amongst a wooded farmland landscape;
- Sensitivity increased within northern parts due to intervisibility with open countryside between Witham and Rivenhall End and open views from the A12.

3.4.10 **Landscape Value**

Area includes a rural Local Nature Reserve:- Whet Mead; a protected mosaic site in central part of area. Other valued components of the landscape include:

- Special Landscape Area designation;
- Country Wildlife Site associated with dismantled railway;
- Little Braxted Hall as ancient monument and listed building;
- Machin's Mill: site of medieval water mill located on the River Blackwater in southern part of area;
- Listed building at Benton Hall;
- Strong sense of place and tranquillity away from roads;
- The dismantled railway along the south-western boundary as a Country Wildlife Site.

3.4.11 Summary of W4 Landscape Sensitivities and Value

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Value
Medium to high sensitivity due to its strong rural character with its riverside woodland blocks, its patterns of semi-natural vegetation; hedgerows generally in good condition; generally well-contained and well-integrated edges; distinctive historic buildings scattered within the landscape and its sense of unity, all providing the setting to the eastern edge of town.	Medium sensitivity overall due to its limited visibility within the wider landscape, particularly within the western part of area.	Medium to high value due to Special Landscape Area, Whet Mead Local Nature Reserve; public footpaths, including recreational routes alongside river corridors; scattered listed buildings; and strong sense of place and tranquillity away from roads.
Medium to high	Medium	Medium to high

3.5 LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA W5 (refer to Landscape Assessment Figure W3)

3.5.1 Location

This landscape setting area lies on southern edge of Witham, and extends southwards from the A12 to Wickham Bishops Road.

Landscape and Visual Baseline

3.5.2 Landform and Drainage

- Landform within the area is gently undulating, descending in an easterly direction towards the River Blackwater, some 600 metres east of the area;
- Several drainage channels within farmland, following field boundaries.

3.5.3 Land Use

- Mixture of arable and pasture farmland;
- Scattered blocks and copses of mature woodland;
- Clusters of farmsteads along roads;
- Area abuts A12 along northern edge.

3.5.4 Vegetation

- Patchwork of arable and pasture fields, of varying size and shape;
- Some large mature trees along field boundaries throughout the area;
- Occasional mature woodland blocks;
- Robust belt of trees/shrubs forms part of western boundary, lining a historic field enclosure;
- Tree belts along Maldon Road, adjacent Oliver's Farm;
- Copses of mature trees and shrubs enclose farmsteads;
- Strong structure of mature trees and shrubs lining most of the A12 embankments;
- Recognisable hedgerow structure overall with some loss of hedgerows in central and western parts.

3.5.5 Access

- A12 generally limits public access to the area from Witham;

- One public footpath along western boundary that connects to A12 / Hatfield Road interchange; and another footpath that connects Maldon Road with the settlement fringes of southern Witham, underneath the A12.

3.5.6 Settlement Edge

- A12 wraps around the southern edge of the town, and is softened and well-enclosed from area by landform and tree/shrub planting along embankments and cuttings;
- Settlement fringes comprise mainly newly developed detached and semi-detached houses, and areas of open land set aside for residential development;
- Isolated farmstead within central part of settlement fringe (Home Farm);
- Car show-room service station located at A12 / Hatfield Road interchange.

3.5.7 Visual Appraisal

- Northern views within area generally comprise near to medium distance views of arable fields and hedgerows, but with views of visually prominent and recently developed housing on the northern edge of A12, to the west of Home Farm, seen above the highway embankments and interrupting an otherwise well treed skyline;
- Settlement fringe east of Home Farm is well-enclosed by a strong structure of trees/shrubs lining the embankments of A12;
- Partial views from eastern part to row of modern detached and semi-detached houses along Spring Lane, to large scale industrial sheds within Oliver's Farm; and to farmhouse and sheds within Dengie Farm;
- Intervisibility between eastern and western parts of the setting area restricted in parts by woodland and some robust hedgerows;
- Limited visibility from the wider landscape due to enclosure provided by landform, well-treed embankments of A12 motorway and robust mature woodland to south and east.

Evaluation

3.5.8 Landscape Character Sensitivity

- Area has medium to high sensitivity overall due to its contribution to the setting of Witham, its contribution to physical and visual separation between Witham

and Hatfield Peverel, and due to its significant group of 18th-19th century field enclosures, which add a sense of time-depth to the area;

- Distinctive, well-treed approach road to southern Witham along Maldon Road;
- Strength of rural character significantly reduced by open and partial views of residential buildings along northern edge of A12;
- Recognisable but fairly fragmented landscape structure, limited semi-natural vegetation and low to moderate contribution to the wider landscape on account of enclosure provided by landform and hedgerows/woodland.

3.5.9 **Visual Sensitivity**

- Low to medium visual sensitivity overall due to visual prominence of newly developed residential buildings alongside the A12, combined with strong enclosure from the wider landscape;
- A well-treed skyline in most parts of area.

3.5.10 **Landscape Value**

Although the setting includes no nationally designated landscapes, valued components of the landscape include:

- Special Landscape Area designation (eastern part of area only);
- Public footpaths in western and eastern parts;
- Moderate sense of tranquillity.

3.5.11 Summary of W5 Landscape Sensitivities and Value

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Value
Medium to high sensitivity overall due to its contribution to the setting of Witham, its contribution to physical and visual separation between Witham and Hatfield Peverel, and due to its significant group of 18 th -19 th century field enclosures, which add a sense of time-depth to the area.	Low to medium sensitivity overall due to highly prominent and newly developed housing on northern edge of A12 motorway, combined with strong enclosure from the wider landscape.	Medium value due to Special Landscape Area in eastern part, two public footpaths through area and Country Park on periphery.
Medium to high	Low to medium	Medium

4.0 LANDSCAPE CAPACITY EVALUATION

- 4.1 Landscape capacity refers to the degree to which a particular landscape is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Reaching conclusions about capacity means making a judgement about whether the amount of change proposed can be accommodated without having unacceptable adverse effects on the character of the landscape (related to *landscape character sensitivity*), or the way that it is perceived (related to *visual sensitivity*), and without compromising the values attached to it (related to *landscape value*). Landscape capacity is the function of landscape character sensitivity, plus visual sensitivity, plus landscape value.
- 4.2 This section of the report considers the capacity of each Landscape Setting Area to accommodate a settlement extension.
- 4.3 The levels of landscape character sensitivity, visual sensitivity and landscape value for each Landscape Setting Area, as identified in Section 3.0, are set out in Table 4.1 below. The level of landscape capacity for each of these Landscape Setting Areas is also identified in this table using the matrices provided in Appendix A: Methodology for Judging Landscape Capacity.

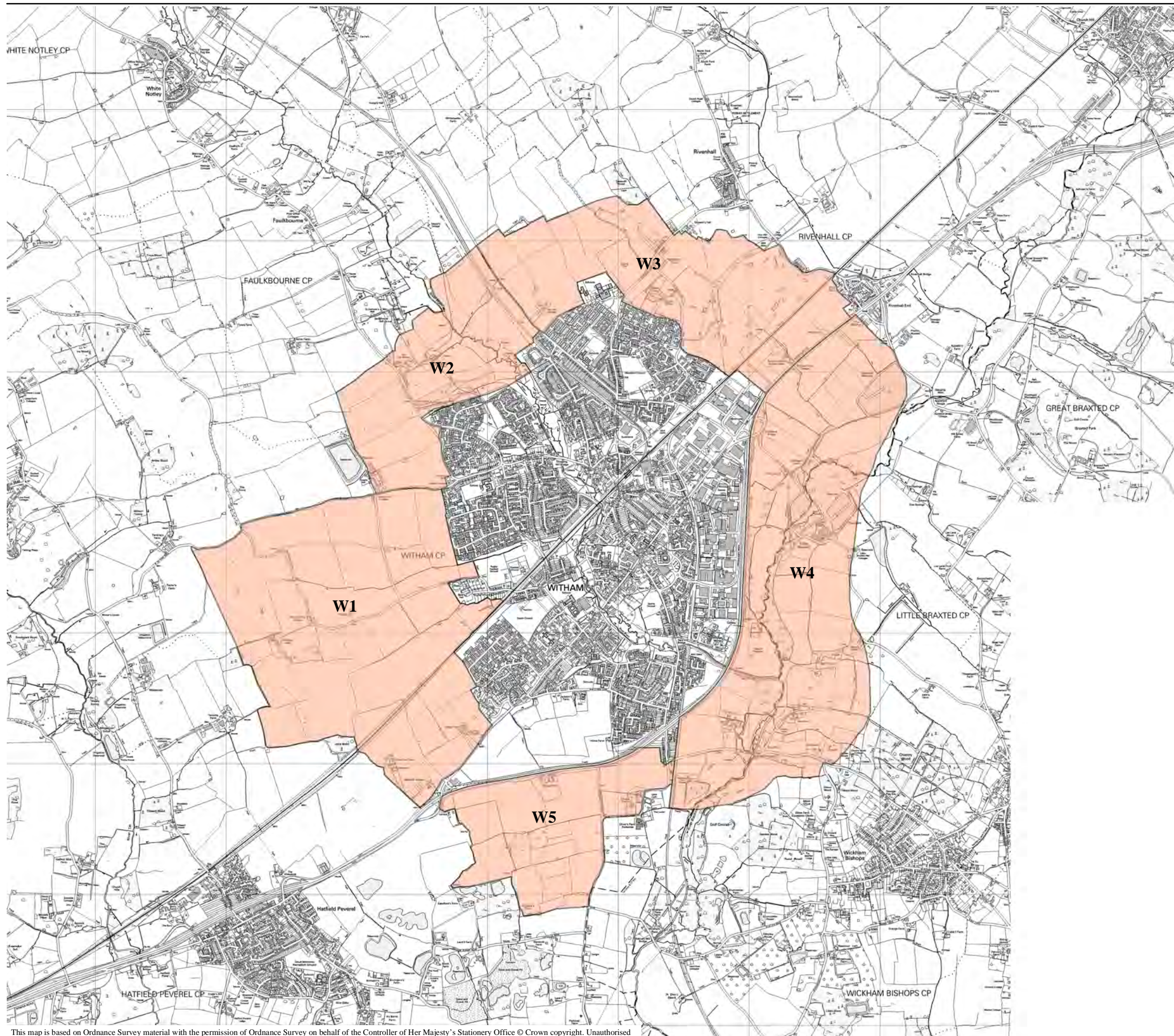
Table 4.1: Schedule of Landscape Sensitivities, Landscape Value and Landscape Capacity.

Landscape Setting Area	Landscape Character Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Landscape Capacity
W1	Medium to High	Low to Medium	Medium	Low to Medium
W2	Medium to High	Medium	Medium to High	Low to Medium
W3	Medium to High	Medium	Medium to High	Low to Medium
W4	Medium to High	Medium	Medium to High	Low to Medium
W5	Medium to High	Low to Medium	Medium	Low to Medium

4.4 All of the Landscape Setting Areas around Witham have a ‘Low to Medium’ landscape capacity, as set out in Table 4.1 and illustrated on Figure W5: Landscape Capacity Evaluation Plan. These capacity levels are indicators of the likely amount of change, in terms of built development, which a particular landscape setting area can accommodate without having unacceptable adverse effects on the character of a landscape, or the way that is perceived, and without compromising the values attached to it.

4.5 Landscape capacity is a complex issue and it may be possible that a certain amount of appropriately located and well-designed built development may be quite acceptable even in a moderately sensitive and highly valued landscape. Potential opportunities for incorporating new built development around Witham are limited. However, there may be opportunities for any necessary residential or employment development to be accommodated, subject to survey and analysis work at a more detailed scale. Potential opportunities identified at this 1:10,000 scale study are identified below.

- To the south of the railway within Landscape Setting Area W1, with appropriate landscape mitigation planting;
- Along the southern edge of Terling Road within Landscape Setting Area W1, with appropriate landscape mitigation planting: adverse impacts on the setting of Powers Hall should be avoided, the wedge of open space adjacent to Blunts Hall should be retained and enhanced as a recreational corridor, small woods and copses should be planted and existing narrow, winding lanes should be retained;
- Along the northern edge of Terling Road within Landscape Setting Area W2, with appropriate landscape mitigation planting: adverse impacts on the setting of Powers Hall should be avoided. Mitigation opportunities include extension of the existing group of mature trees and woodland around Powers Hall eastwards to help enclose any new built development.
- Between housing at Yew Close and the south-western edge of the Rivenhall Oaks Golf Course within Landscape Setting Area W3. Mitigation opportunities include landscape mitigation planting, with links to the tree/shrub belts along the periphery of the golf course, to help enclose any new built development;
- To the north of Oliver’s Farm and to the east of housing along Spring Lane, in the far eastern part of Landscape Setting Area W5, with appropriate landscape mitigation planting.







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KEY

Landscape Capacity

-  Low Capacity
-  Low-Medium Capacity
-  Medium Capacity
-  Medium-High Capacity

0 0.5 1 Kilometres
 1:30,000

Figure W5
 Witham Settlement Landscape
 Capacity Evaluation Plan

- 4.6 These potential opportunities would need to be verified through a more detailed assessment of the setting areas. New tree/shrub belts should be particularly robust if land is to accommodate new employment development. Any development in these setting areas would need to be consistent with the form and scale of the existing settlement fringe.
- 4.7 Opportunities for helping accommodate built development within the landscape setting areas W1 to W5 also include enhancing local hedgerow structures, providing additional tree/shrub planting to help soften the appearance of some fringes of the settlement and building in local vernacular style. Opportunities should also be taken to develop landscape recreational corridors alongside the River Blackwater and the River Brain, which pass through Landscape Setting Areas W2 and W4.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In accordance with the purpose and objectives of the study set out in the introduction to this report, the principal application of this landscape capacity study is to assist Braintree District Council in identifying a broad strategy for housing and employment development in the District and in directing this development to areas of higher landscape capacity.
- 5.2 The landscape capacity appraisal, which has been based on the findings of the landscape sensitivity and landscape value analysis, has identified a range of Landscape Setting Areas that could accommodate varying degrees of change in the form of new built development. Areas with low to medium landscape capacity or above could, in landscape and visual terms, accommodate some level of new development without significant adverse effects on the character of the landscape, providing that appropriate design and mitigation measures are put in place. Any such new development would need to be in scale with the existing settlement. This new development would need to respect the character and sensitivities of adjacent landscapes as well as the character, setting and form of the existing settlement fringe.
- 5.3 It should be noted that levels of landscape capacity may not be uniform across any one landscape setting area. Where capacity for development within any one landscape setting areas varies, proposals would need to respond to site-specific constraints. In such cases, development proposals should respond to the inherent landscape sensitivity of the setting area and take account of both its setting and potential impacts on the surrounding landscape.
- 5.4 Setting areas with low to medium landscape capacity, or even lower, may contain some locations that are suitable, in landscape and visual terms, for limited development (e.g. minor settlement extensions). These landscapes are typically small in scale with at least, a moderate amount of visual enclosure.
- 5.5 It is recommended that development briefs should be prepared for all sites that are identified in the Core Strategy as having capacity for development. These briefs should take account of the setting area appraisals, identifying:-

- Landscape features or characteristics that give an area its special identity and local distinctiveness;
- Measures to protect and enhance the character of adjacent landscape setting areas, particularly high sensitivity landscapes;
- Measures to protect or enhance these landscape features and characteristics.

5.6 These landscape sensitivities and landscape values identified in the above assessments should inform the land use distribution and masterplanning process, so as to reinforce local landscape distinctiveness, minimise landscape impacts and build, in a consistent form, on the existing settlement pattern. In particular, they should inform the evolution of the development proposals and preparation of strategic landscape strategies so that they provide:

- A landscape strategy which is consistent with local landscape character, taking into account identified landscape sensitivities.
- A land use strategy and built form, which is characteristic of, and compatible with the existing settlement pattern, where appropriate.
- Proposals which avoid landscape and visual impacts on surrounding landscape setting areas or the setting to the District's landscape and heritage assets, and
- Development proposals which have regard for the setting of, and separation between, existing settlements.

5.7 Finally, reference should be made to the land management guidelines identified in the Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment. These management guidelines are prescriptive in nature and respond to local landscape character. They provide a robust basis for detailed landscape proposals, which should be prepared to accompany any new development proposals.

APPENDIX A
METHODOLOGY FOR JUDGING LANDSCAPE CAPACITY

METHODOLOGY FOR JUDGING LANDSCAPE CAPACITY

A1.0 Methodology for Judging Landscape Capacity

Landscape capacity to accommodate the proposed change is a function of landscape character sensitivity, plus visual sensitivity, plus landscape value. Reaching conclusions about capacity means making a judgement about whether the amount of change proposed can be accommodated without having unacceptable adverse effects on the character of the landscape (related to *landscape character sensitivity*), or the way that it is perceived (related to *visual sensitivity*), and without compromising the values attached to it (related to *landscape value*).

A1.1 Landscape Character Sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity is defined as '*the extent to which a landscape type or area can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character*'. (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2002). It is based on judgements about the sensitivity of aspects most likely to be affected:

Natural factors – extent and pattern of semi-natural habitat

Cultural factors – land use, enclosure pattern

Landscape condition – representation of typical character

Aesthetic factors – e.g. scale, enclosure, pattern form/line, movement

The sensitivities of the landscapes have been assessed using the following five-point scale and corresponding definitions: -

Table A1: Landscape Character Sensitivity Definitions

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Definition
Low	A landscape or landscape features of low sensitivity potentially tolerant of substantial change. This landscape is likely to have moderate to low levels of semi-natural vegetation and/or historic integrity, and few intrinsic landscape/townscape qualities. The loss or alteration of these qualities/features is likely to have only limited effects on the distinctiveness of the settlement's landscape setting. There is significant scope for enhancement of these landscape

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Definition
	qualities/features through good design and layout of development schemes. (e.g. developed or derelict landscape setting where new development could be accommodated without adversely affecting character).
Low to medium	Between low and medium
Medium	A landscape or landscape features of moderate sensitivity reasonably tolerant of change. This landscape is likely to have moderate levels of semi-natural vegetation and/or mixed historic integrity, and some intrinsic landscape/townscape qualities. The loss or alteration of these qualities/features is likely to partially erode the distinctiveness of the settlement's landscape setting. These landscape qualities/features are considered desirable to safeguard from development through sensitive location, design and layout.
Medium to high	Between medium and high
High	A landscape or landscape feature of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small change. This landscape is likely to have high levels of semi-natural vegetation and/or strong historic integrity and thus low re-creatability, and many intrinsic landscape qualities. The loss or alteration of these qualities/features is likely to significantly erode the distinctiveness of the settlement's landscape setting. Those landscape qualities/features that are considered desirable to safeguard from development. (e.g. rural landscape with few uncharacteristic or detracting man-made features where new development could not be accommodated without adversely affecting character).

A1.2 Landscape Value

Landscape value is concerned with the relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally. In the context of this study a professional judgement has been made on the value of the landscape within the setting of a zone, giving consideration to, for example, sites or areas designated for their landscape value.

Designations which are most relevant to this study are those which are related to protection of landscape or buildings partially or wholly for their contribution to the landscape. There are no national or regional designations in the study area. However, locally designated landscape or features include Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Conservation Areas, and Listed Buildings. Other designations, which are important components of the landscape and contribute towards landscape value, but are not protected for their contribution to the landscape, include nature conservations sites (e.g. ancient woodland) and ancient monuments.

As part of the judgement of landscape value lies in the views of communities of interest, and obtaining these views is not part of this study, in all cases landscape value is evaluated as medium unless there is an obvious reason to give a higher or lower value (e.g. elevate because of a landscape designation, or lower because of a high degree of disturbance and degradation). An indicator of higher landscape value is the extent of public rights of way within any particular landscape. The value of the landscapes has been assessed using the following five-point scale and corresponding definitions: -

Table A2: Landscape Value Definitions

Landscape Value	Definition
Low	No relevant designations. Degraded or possibly derelict landscape.
Low to medium	Between low and medium
Medium	All landscapes unless there is an obvious reason to give a higher or lower value. The zone lies within, or within the setting of, a relevant local designation but it is not considered that development would adversely affect it.
Medium to high	Between medium and high.
High	The zone lies within, or within the setting of, a relevant local designation and it is considered that development would adversely affect it.

A1.3 Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is based on the nature of change proposed and its interaction with visual aspects of the landscape. It is based on:

Nature of potential change – considering factors such as height, massing, colour, movement and how it would blend in with or contrast with other elements in its

setting. In the case of this study professional experience is used to judge what the nature of an urban extension might be.

General visibility of potential development within the zone – considering influences of enclosing or screening elements such as landform, hedgerows, trees, woodlands, and built development.

Population – numbers and types of views. The sensitivity of visual receptors (or viewers) is dependent on the location and context of the viewpoint and viewing opportunities, the occupation/pastime of the receptor and the importance of the view.

Sensitivity of view:

- Low – Viewers with a passing interest in their surroundings, e.g. motorists.
- Medium – Viewers with a moderate interest in their surroundings, e.g. users of recreation facilities.
- High – Viewers with proprietary interest and prolonged viewing opportunities, e.g. a residential property of users of public footpaths.

Visual sensitivity has been assessed using the following five-point scale and corresponding definitions: -

Table A3: Visual Sensitivity Definitions

Visual Sensitivity	Definition
Low	Nature of potential change – unobtrusive in the context of its setting General visibility of the potential development – enclosed, screened. Only visible from short distances. Population – Seen by few viewers, or predominantly by viewers with a passing interest in their surroundings, e.g. motorists
Low to medium	Between low and medium
Medium	Nature of potential change – moderately obtrusive in the context of its setting General visibility of the potential development – visible but partially enclosed or screened. Not visible from long distances. Population – seen by a moderate number of viewers. Seen by viewers of medium or lower sensitivity.
Medium to high	Between medium and high
High	Nature of potential change – highly obtrusive in the context

Visual Sensitivity	Definition
	of its setting General visibility of the potential development – highly visible due to the open, exposed nature of the surroundings. Might be visible from long distances. Population – seen by a large number of viewers. Seen predominantly by viewers of high or lower sensitivity.

A1.4 Defining Landscape Capacity

Information produced from the field survey is used to make transparent judgements about the sensitivity and indicative capacity of each Landscape Setting Area to accommodate new built development.

Reaching conclusions about capacity means making a judgement about whether the amount of change proposed can be accommodated without having unacceptable adverse effects on the character of the landscape (related to landscape character sensitivity), or the way that it is perceived (related to visual sensitivity), and without compromising the values attached to it (related to landscape value).

In order to identify the indicative capacity of each Landscape Setting Area to accommodate new built development, the overall sensitivity of each Landscape Setting Area has initially been determined by integrating landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity in accordance with the matrix set out in Table A4 overleaf.

The overall capacity of a Landscape Setting Area to accommodate new built development has been determined by integrating overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value in accordance with using the matrix set out in Table A5 overleaf.

Table A4: Combining Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity to give Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	High	High	High	High	High
	Medium to High	Medium to High	Medium to High	Medium to High	Medium to High	High
	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium to High	High
	Low to Medium	Low to Medium	Low to Medium	Medium	Medium to High	High
	Low	Low	Low to Medium	Medium	Medium to High	High
		Low	Low to Medium	Medium	Medium to High	High
Visual Sensitivity						

Table A5: Combining Overall Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value to give Landscape Capacity

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low	Low	Low
	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low to Medium	Low to Medium	Low
	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low to Medium	Low
	Low to Medium	Medium to High	Medium to High	Medium	Low to Medium	Low to Medium
	Low	High	Medium to High	Medium	Medium	Medium
		Low	Low to Medium	Medium	Medium to High	High
Landscape Value						

APPENDIX B
FIELD SURVEY SHEET

Local Landscape Setting name	
Date/ Time/ Weather	
Photograph Numbers	
Direction of View	

A. LOCAL LANDSCAPE SETTING

<p>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY</p> <p>CHARACTER</p> <p>Natural Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation: Hedgerows, tree cover and type, woodland (visually important) • Water bodies / courses: River (s/m/l) Speed (f/m/s), river meanders, lake, ponds, bog/wetland, drainage channels, drainage ditches, locks/weirs • Water bodies / courses: River (s/m/l) Speed (f/m/s), river meanders, <p>Cultural Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use: Farmland (A/P), Forestry/woodland, historic parkland, mineral working, natural, military, other. • Enclosure and pattern: Scale and shape of fields (refer to HLC data) <p>Landscape Quality / Condition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Character: key features that contribute to the character of this area and make it differ from surrounding areas – land form, hydrology, land cover, field patterns and boundaries, communications, buildings etc. • Landscape Qualities / Features: Condition/ survival or intactness/ state of repair of individual features or elements, such as field boundaries, trees and woodland, historic features etc. • Urban Edge Description: Type and quality and character – how is the edge perceived? Well integrated / harsh / ad-hoc urban fringe 	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlement Perception: views to – open, filtered or well screened. <p>Aesthetic Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built/ architectural character: Timber-frame, weatherboard, flint, brick (traditional/ modern), stone, slate, thatch, tile. • Scale: intimate, small, medium, large • Enclosure: expansive, open, enclosed, constrained • Stimulus: Monotonous, bland, interesting, inspiring • Movement: Remote, vacant, peaceful, active • Unity: unified, interrupted, fragmented, chaotic 	
OVERALL SENSITIVITY RATING	LOW / LOW TO MEDIUM / MEDIUM / MEDIUM TO HIGH / HIGH
<p>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</p> <p>General Visibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topography / Landform Influences: Flat, shelving, rolling, undulating, steep slopes, gentle slopes, floodplain, hills, plateau, broad valley, narrow valley, shallow valley • Skylines / ridgelines: Views – panoramic/ framed/ open/ channelled, key views to landmarks / landscape features • Tree / Woodland cover: Robust, filtered, open views; • General Intervisibility: The degree to which an area is widely visible from, and positively influences the character of, surrounding areas. • Broad description of potential views: Who will see the setting – nearby residents? Users of nearby motorways / roads? Users of public footpaths? • Distinctive Approaches / Gateways / Nodes: • Pedestrian Movement: Good access to or restricted? Green 	

corridors / bridges, links / connections to countryside.	
OVERALL SENSITIVITY RATING	LOW / LOW TO MEDIUM / MEDIUM / MEDIUM TO HIGH / HIGH
<u>LANDSCAPE VALUE</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Integrity: Visually noted features of historic interest that contribute to the landscape setting – taking into account the intactness and integrity of historic landscape patterns and the presence of valued historic features within the area. • Ecological Integrity: Visually noted features of ecological interest that contribute to the character of the area e.g. Ecological/ nature conservation designations; Woodland (native? Deciduous?); rivers / streams / lakes / pond • Tranquillity: Noise disturbance; Very strong, strong, moderate, low; e.g. minor or major noise disturbance? Scenic beauty and value? Contribution to settlement i.e. amenity value – allotments, sports pitches, parks and gardens, public access and permeability? 	
OVERALL VALUE RATING	LOW / LOW TO MEDIUM / MEDIUM / MEDIUM TO HIGH / HIGH
OVERALL SETTING SUMMARY	

B. POTENTIAL MITIGATION OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACTS

<p>Overall opportunities:</p> <p>e.g. development of green links (public right of way provision)</p> <p>e.g. Screening of visual detractors through, for example, woodland linkages</p> <p>e.g. General enhancement of hedgerows</p>	
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/ woodlands

*e.g. Conserve and enhance the
landscape setting of settlements*

e.g. Conserve or enhance views



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