

**Braintree District Settlement Fringes
Landscape Capacity Analysis for Sible
Hedingham**

for

Braintree District Council

June 2015



Final

Quality control

Landscape Capacity Analysis for Sible Hedingham

for

Braintree District Council

| | |
|---|---|
| Checked by Project Manager: | Approved by: |
| Signature:  Name: Sarah Long Title: Chartered Landscape Architect | Signature:  Name: Simon Neesam Title: Technical Director |
| Date: 22 nd May 2015 | Date: 22 nd May 2015 |

Contact:
Simon Neesam, Technical Director

The Landscape Partnership
The Granary
Sun Wharf
Deben Road
Woodbridge
Suffolk IP12 1AZ

t: 01394 380 509

e: simon.neesam@tlp.uk.com

w: thelandscapepartnership.com

The Landscape Partnership Ltd is a practice of Chartered Landscape Architects, Chartered Town Planners and Chartered Environmentalists, registered with the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment & the Arboricultural Association.

The Landscape Partnership Limited
Registered Office:
Greenwood House
15a St Cuthberts Street
Bedford
MK40 3JG.

Registered in England No 2709001

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction |
| 2 | Study Context |
| 3 | Sible Hedingham Landscape Setting Areas |
| 4 | Landscape Capacity Evaluation |
| 5 | Conclusion |

Figures:

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Figure SH01 | Settlement locations |
| Figure SH02 | Landform and drainage |
| Figure SH03 | Settlement evolution of Sible Hedingham |
| Figure SH04 | Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis – overview |
| Figure SH05 | Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis – Plan A |
| Figure SH06 | Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis – Plan B |
| Figure SH07 | Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis – Plan C |
| Figure SH08 | Sible Hedingham Landscape Capacity Evaluation |

Part 3: Appendices

| | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix A | Methodology for judging landscape capacity |
| Appendix B | Field survey sheet |

1 Introduction

Background to the study

- 1.1 In November 2014 Braintree District Council (BDC) commissioned The Landscape Partnership (TLP) to prepare a detailed landscape capacity analysis (at 1:10,000 scale) of the fringes of the settlement of Sible Hedingham. The results of this study are to be used as part of the evidence base to inform the forthcoming Local Plan, which will set out the Council's strategy for future residential development and employment growth up to 2033.
- 1.2 The intent is that the analysis document corresponds to those prepared in November 2007 by Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) in relation to the following settlements, which had been selected by BDC as having the potential for expansion:
- Braintree and environs
 - Kelvedon
 - Witham
 - Halstead
 - Silver End
 - Earls Colne
 - Hatfield Peverel
 - Coggeshall
- 1.3 The locations of Sible Hedingham and these settlements are identified at Figure 1.
- 1.4 The study has been informed by a review and understanding of the current planning policy background, and:
- the Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment prepared by CBA in September 2006
 - Landscape Capacity Analysis as described above
 - Protected Lanes Assessment (Essex County Council - July 2013)
 - Braintree District Historic Environmental Characterisation Project (Essex County Council – 2010)
 - Braintree District Core Strategy 2011
 - Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005

Study purpose and objectives

1.5 The key objectives of the Study are to:

- provide a transparent, consistent and objective assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of the settlement to accommodate new development;
- identify areas where new development could best be accommodated without unacceptable adverse landscape and visual impacts.

1.6 This report sets out the findings of the survey and analysis work for the Sible Hedingham.

Approach and methodology

1.7 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 TLP. The methodology used to make judgements about landscape capacity and sensitivity is set out in Appendix A.

1.8 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 into account 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.

1.9 The Study has used desk-based and field survey analysis to identify discrete 'Landscape Setting Areas', which have primarily been defined by the approximate extent of visibility for the 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 a distinctive settlement setting e.g. the extent to which an area has distinctive backdrops, distinctive approaches/gateways, visually important woodland or 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.

1.10 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 two or three 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 Local Plan preparation process to make assumptions about the quantum of development within the study area.

1.11 The assessment has comprised the following tasks:

(i) **Desk-based analysis**

- Preparation of base mapping;
- Review of the relevant Landscape Character Types and Areas 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.), wildlife sites and heritage conservation designations. This has been based in part by data mapped in the Braintree District Landscape Character Assessment and from other available data sources e.g. Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation datasets;
- Defining Landscape Setting Areas by mapping the approximate extent of potential visibility of the 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 broadly 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 the 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 the settlement, such as skylines/ridgelines, landmarks, visually important trees/woodland, distinctive approaches, tranquil areas, urban edges, green corridors or '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 the 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 Sible Hedingham, to supplement the CBA studies of the key settlements which informed the preferred options stage of the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011).

1.12 The extent of the study area around Sible Hedingham broadly reflects the extent of visibility of the settlement fringe.

2 Study context

Planning policy context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ March 2012

- 2.1 The NPPF now replaces all previous Planning Policy Statements (with the exception of PPS10 on waste) Planning Policy Guidance Notes, Circular 05/2005 Planning Obligations and Letters to Chief Planning Officers from Central Government. It covers a wide variety of topics, foremost amongst which is the requirement to ensure that sustainable development is delivered through planning at the local level.
- 2.2 The NPPF places achieving 'sustainable development' at the heart of the planning system, together with the three mutually dependent dimensions which underpin the purpose of planning. These are its economic, social and environmental roles which, together with the goals of sustainable development are elaborated at paragraphs 6 - 9 of the NPPF. The need to take local circumstances into account is recognised at paragraph 10.
- 2.3 A key tenet of national policy, set out at paragraph 14 of the NPPF, is the "presumption in favour of sustainable development". This means:
- Local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
 - Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change; unless:
 - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted."
- 2.4 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF goes on to state 12 core planning principles which should underpin plan making and planning decisions. Applying these principles, planning should be, amongst other things, 'genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings' and that it should 'take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it'.
- 2.5 This theme is elaborated further at Section 11 of the NPPF, which is concerned with the natural environment. Specifically, the NPPF recognises landscape sensitivity as a significant constraint which, in determining the scale and location of development, the local authority should carefully consider and take into account.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, 2012)

Local planning context

- 2.6 Under Section 38 of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ('The 2004 Act'), the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the approved development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.7 The Core Strategy for the BDC Local Development Framework was adopted in 2011. The 2007 Landscape Capacity Analysis studies undertaken by CBA for the fringes of eight key settlements provided an evidence base for informing the preferred options stage of the Strategy.
- 2.8 The Council had been working on a Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, however, due to the changes in national planning policy, and the Regional Spatial Strategy being abolished (from which the housing target in the Core Strategy was derived) it became apparent from evidence collated that the new housing target would be higher than that set out in the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADPM). BDC has since commenced work on identifying its Objectively Assessed Housing Needs figure. In June 2014 the Council resolved not to proceed with the Draft Site Allocation and Development Management Plan. Work is currently being progressed on a new Local Plan, which will set out the Council's strategy for future development and growth up to 2033. An Interim Planning Policy Statement, published in September 2014, sets out the Council's current position and affirms its continuing support for the land allocations and development management policies detailed within the ADPM whilst the new Local Plan is emerging.
- 2.9 The Council commissioned this study to help determine the most appropriate direction for future residential and employment growth in Sible Hedingham, by providing an up to date evidence base for the new Local Plan. It will also support policy in the new Local Plan relating to Landscape Character Areas, biodiversity and the environment. As development within the existing towns and villages on brownfield sites is reaching saturation point, there is an awareness that it is inevitable that future development to meet the housing need will be accommodated on the periphery of the main towns, and larger settlements in sustainable locations.
- 2.10 The intention of the Council in creating a clean and green environment is covered by Core Strategy Policy CS8 Natural Environment and Biodiversity, which replaces RLP79 Special Landscape Areas and RLP88 Agricultural Land. The policy states that the natural environment of the District, and in particular designated sites of national importance and locally designated sites (as identified on the Proposals Map), will be protected from adverse effects, with the intent to:
- *Protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of countryside character areas with area wide strategies, based on landscape character assessments, setting long-term goals for landscape change.*
 - *Develop criteria based policies informed by landscape character assessments and secure mitigation measures, where damage to local landscape character is unavoidable.*

- *Ensure new development minimises damage to biodiversity by avoiding harm to local wildlife sites and corridors. Preserving and enhancing habitats, species populations, geological and geomorphological sites. Having regard to the need for habitats and species to adapt to climate change.*
- *Protect and enhance the historic environment, including historic market towns, factory villages, conservation areas and listed buildings, rural landscapes and archaeological assets.*

Landform and drainage (see Figure 2)

- 2.11 Landform within the Braintree District is predominantly an elevated gently rolling Boulder Clay/Chalky Till plateau landscape, incised by v-shaped or u-shaped shallow river valleys which cut through a flat or gently undulating valley floor. The Colne, Blackwater, Pant and Stour river valleys are major landscape features, comprising locally significant scenic qualities.
- 2.12 The meandering River Colne runs in a south-easterly direction through Sible Hedingham to Halstead, and onwards towards Colchester. It is characterised by a shallow river valley with relatively steep valley sides which varies in width along its length, together with a series of minor tributaries. 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.

Landscape character

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment was undertaken to inform land use planning and land management decisions. The assessment involved a combination of desk study research and field study analysis that identified and mapped generic Landscape Types and geographically unique Landscape Character Areas at 1:25,000 scale.
- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 The character of the landscape within Braintree District is predominantly an elevated gently rolling Boulder Clay/Chalky Till plateau landscape, incised by shallow river valleys, which create a subtle variety to the landscape. Although the valleys are not prominent in terms of height or steepness, they provide a distinct contrast to the wider and largely 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.

- 2.17 Essex is fortunate in the quality of its historic towns, particularly in regard to the built environment. Many, such as Sible Hedingham, still retain a definite 'historic' identity and show clearly the stages of their development over time.
- 2.18 Sible Hedingham is characteristic of the settlements in the District, originating from around 500BC and being multi-period in date. The towns 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 communication 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.
- 2.19 The historic landscape setting to Sible Hedingham 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, industrial units and derelict water mills. Settlements are generally aligned along the rivers, 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 tranquillity, with a network of quiet rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.
- 2.20 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 within the farmland landscape are a key characteristic of the District. Halls are often associated with villages such as at 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 halls provide landmarks in the views across the farmland. However, in some cases, the integrity of vernacular buildings is diluted by more recent encroaching developments.

- 2.21 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 on the western fringes of Sible Hedingham are often framed by the hedges and woodland, creating a balance of enclosed and open views, with some distant channelled views to the Hedinghams.
- 2.22 Trees, hedgerows and woodland make a significant and positive contribution to the appearance of the landscape in the study area. They help 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.

Sible Hedingham

- 2.23 The village is a large village (the second largest in Essex) and civil parish in the upper reaches of the Colne Valley, with an area in excess of 2000 hectares and a population close to 4000 according to the 2011 census. It has a linear form, with dwellings and a broad range of services largely centred on the main A1017 that runs north to south through the village, with additional outlying greens and hamlets. The key stages in the evolution of the village are illustrated on Figure 3.
- 2.24 The River Colne runs through the village, with three minor tributaries connecting to it at Rectory Road, Alderford Street and Queen Street. Although based at river level, the western fringes rise to 70m AOD. Together with its sister village of Castle Hedingham on the eastern banks of the river, which occupies a more elevated position above the river, the settlements straddle the river and are based on four distinct crossing points.
- 2.25 The London clay and gravel areas within the valley formed the basis of the brick industry in the village, the success of which was boosted by the construction of the rail line along the valley. Subsequent employment was based on a joinery business that established adjacent to the rail line at the turn of the century. The railway was closed in 1964 and the station demolished, being rebuilt by the Colne Valley Railway Preservation Society, which operates a tourist line along a mile of the former track. The character of the village has been influenced by the loss of two large employers, whose sites are the basis for recent and current residential development. However the character remains one of a working village, providing a range of services for the surrounding rural and agricultural areas.
- 2.26 Two distinct areas of the village are designated as Conservation Areas – Church Street to the north of the village and Alderford Street at the southern end of the village which extends to the Colne and associated Mill. The village contains a number of open spaces, ranging from greens and meadows to sports facilities and equipped play spaces. A number of footpaths provide direct connections with the adjacent river valley and farmland landscapes.

3 Sible Hedingham Landscape Setting Areas

Introduction

This section sets out an assessment of the sensitivities and value of various Landscape Setting Areas immediately surrounding the fringes of Sible Hedingham. A set of 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 SH: Settlement Fringe Analysis Plan Overview.

LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA SH1 (Refer to Landscape Assessment Figure SH1)

Location

- 3.1 This Setting Area abuts the north-western edge of Sible Hedingham. It rises away from the A1017 Yeldham Road which extends northwards towards Great Yeldham approximately 3.5km upstream in the Colne Valley.

Landscape and visual baseline

- 3.2 Landform and drainage:

- The area comprises the gentle east-facing slopes of the Colne river valley, which fall away from the 70m AOD contour level of the adjacent plateau;
- Two subtle indentations based on minor brooks punctuate the valley slopes;
- The eastern boundary of the area meets the floodplain of the Colne, comprising the meandering channel and locally narrow section of valley floor;
- A series of minor cuttings and embankments, associated with the dismantled railway, create a smooth line across the valley floor, a section of which provides the easternmost boundary of the area.

- 3.3 Land uses:

- A combination of arable farmland on the valley sides with occasional parcels of pasture on the valley floor;
- Tree cover comprises occasional and geometric copses associated with the farming landscape on the valley sides, small plantation blocks on the valley floor, and occasional trees that line the river channel itself;
- A cluster of dwellings are based around the junction of Nunnery Street with Yeldham Road at Crouch Green, comprising a mix of semi-detached houses dating from approximately 1940,

occasional vernacular cottages, more recent individual dwellings, and 'Memories' pub/restaurant.

3.4 Vegetation:

- Large-scale rectangular arable fields on the valley slopes, with some small pockets of pasture associated with the floodplain on the eastern fringes of the area;
- Geometric woodland blocks associated with the arable farmland;
- Intermittent hedgerows line the narrow lane which leads from the A1017 Yeldham Road to High Green, with a grassed bank in place of hedging on the verge on the north side of the lane;
- Loss of field hedges across the area as a consequence of amalgamation of fields into larger units;
- A mix of native and garden planting to boundaries of the High School, residential properties and smaller fields on the east side of the area. This includes occasional blocks of conifers, such as a block fringing the car park to the restaurant;
- Occasional trees marking the channel line of the River Colne;
- Field hedges and trees that line the A1017 Yeldham Road in the south of the area peter out in the vicinity of Nunnery Street, leaving a mown grass verge between field and highway.

3.5 Access:

- The Colne Valley Path (opened in 2006) crosses Nunnery Street at Crouch Green on the easternmost boundary of the area, providing access to the route which links Great Yeldham with Colchester;
- No public access available onto the farmland in the area;
- The peaceful lane from the Yeldham Road to High Green is used by walkers and cyclists.

3.6 Settlement edge:

- The southern boundary of the Setting Area is defined by the High School that marks the northernmost point of the village. The boundary a soft one, comprising mature trees and hedging to the northern boundary of the school playing fields;
- The cluster of properties, pub/restaurant and associated car park at Crouch Green define the entrance to the village of Castle Hedingham, which extends as a ribbon from the village centre 1km to the east, straddling the river at Nunnery Bridge;
- The dwellings on the easternmost fringes are the only settlement in the area;

- The entrance gates, workshops, sheds and engines associated with the Colne Valley Railway provide a pocket of industrial heritage at the northernmost point.

3.7 Visual appraisal:

- Settlement edges are generally enclosed in views from the north and west, due to a combination of the undulating landform and vegetation associated with land uses on the northern fringes of the village;
- Views across the adjacent area to properties at Friar's Close & Abbey Meadow;
- The predominantly open views across the large and unenclosed fields creates a strongly agricultural feel to the area;
- The blocks of woodland on the valley sides provide features that punctuate both the farmland landscape and the skyline in views from the Yeldham Road;
- Views west towards Highstreet Green and Delvin End are contained by the gentle rise away from the valley floor to the plateau landscape based around the 75m AOD contour;
- Broad & open views across the valley landscape are experienced from the Yeldham Road in the north of the area; these views becoming channelled by the mature vegetation that fringes the carriageway to the south of the Nunnery Street junction;
- The floodplain provides the defining edge to the east of the area, although the river channel itself is narrow and imperceptible in the views.

Evaluation

3.8 Landscape character sensitivity:

- The area has a Medium Sensitivity overall due to a moderate strength of rural character, its lack of distinctiveness around the settlement edge, the nature of the open arable landscape with few intrinsic qualities, low levels of semi-natural vegetation present; and a fragmented hedgerow structure;
- Northern settlement fringe of Sible Hedingham are fairly well integrated into the local landscape through the presence of hedgerows to the Yeldham Road, vegetation around the school perimeter, and planting associated with garden boundaries;
- Overall sensitivity is reduced by the influence of the A1017 Yeldham Road which crosses the easternmost fringes of the area; introducing movement and noise into the landscape;
- Large areas of pre-18th and 18th to 19th century field enclosures in central and northern parts contribute to a sense of time-depth in the area;
- Scope for enhancements associated with development, to strengthen the character of the landscape on the northern fringes of the village.

3.9 Visual sensitivity:

- Medium to High sensitivity overall, with eastern parts of the area clearly visible in open views of the valley sides from the floodplain landscape of Setting Area SH6 and Castle Hedingham beyond. Views from the south and west are more enclosed by a combination of undulating landform and vegetation;
- Visibility within the area varies greatly, being limited to views experienced by drivers and passengers travelling on the A1071 and the minor lane to Highstreet Green;
- Properties on the settlement fringes to Sible and Castle Hedingham at Crouch Green are visible in the mainly open views on the approach to the villages;
- The area is moderately prominent in views from the adjacent landscapes associated with the Colne and its tributaries due to combination of falling landform and the lack of boundary hedgerows. A new development would be visible, but partially screened by both a landscape framework and the gentle rise away from the valley towards the plateau landscape;
- Sensitivity of southern parts increased by views along and across the minor tributary valley to the northern fringes of Sible Hedingham, views framed in part by the hedgerow and trees on the south side of lane.

3.10 Landscape value:

Although the Setting Area includes no nationally designated landscapes or features, it is covered by Policy CS8 that addresses the Natural Environment and Biodiversity. Valued components of the landscape include:

- A Listed Building at the eastern edge of the setting area; being a dwelling associated with the Nunnery Street junction on the approach to Castle Hedingham;
- A strong sense of tranquillity away from the A1017, with the single track lane that meanders towards Highstreet Green attracting walkers and cyclists.

Landscape sensitivities and value

| Landscape character sensitivity | Visual sensitivity | Landscape value |
|---|--|---|
| Medium sensitivity overall due to a moderate strength of rural character, its lack of distinctiveness around the settlement edge, the nature of the open arable landscape with few intrinsic qualities, low levels of semi-natural vegetation present; and a fragmented hedgerow structure. | Low to medium visual sensitivity overall, views being limited to those from roads in the area; with the settlement fringes visible in the mainly open views. The area is moderately prominent in views from the adjacent landscapes associated with the Colne and its tributaries due to combination of falling landform and the lack of boundary hedgerows. | Medium sensitivity due to the moderate sense of tranquillity in western parts, away from the road and settlement edges. |
| Medium | Medium to high | Medium |

LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA SH2 (Refer to Landscape Assessment Figure SH2)**Location**

- 3.11 This Setting Area lies on the west side of Sible Hedingham, embracing the village fringes and extending westwards to the hamlet at Highstreet Green. The western edge of the area is defined by the intersection between the valley slopes and the plateau landscape around the village and airfield at Wethersfield.

Landscape and visual Baseline

- 3.12 Landform and Drainage:
- Area occupies the gently rising valley sides which descend eastwards towards the River Colne;
 - A series of small tributary valleys punctuate the area, rising perpendicular to the valley floor and extending westwards away from the northern fringes of the village;
 - The upper slopes of the valleys rise to approximately 75m AOD on the brow between the valley slopes and the adjacent plateau on the west of the area;

- The eastern edge of the area is loosely defined by the 55m AOD contour, where the village fringes straddle the gently rising and falling ground associated with the valleys;
- Numerous small ponds are scattered across the area, associated with the open farmland landscape, and sometimes based around farmsteads;
- A number of field streams associated with the minor valleys;
- Recently engineered water bodies in the east of the area, to alleviate flooding in the Colne valley in northern parts of the village;
- Spurs of high ground punctuate the area at Harrow Cross and Highstreet Green on the western fringes of the area.

3.13 Land uses:

- Predominantly arable farmland, comprising medium to large fields loosely arranged around the minor stream valleys;
- Areas of pasture, grassland and small blocks of woodland, particularly around farmsteads and the village fringes;
- Detached houses and barn conversions alongside the lane leading towards the hamlet at Highstreet Green west of the area;
- Clusters of houses and cottages extend along the Wethersfield Road, ;
- Allotments adjacent to the primary school at the south eastern tip of the area;
- Occasional equestrian uses, such as around Washland's Farm;
- Occasional commercial activity around the Wethersfield Road, such as the bus depot on the north side of the road adjacent to the stream valley.

3.14 Vegetation:

- Hedges and hedgerow trees fringing the minor roads and lanes are intermittent;
- Some hedgerow loss on farmland on higher ground an in the north of the eastern boundary, as a result of field amalgamation;
- Occasional mature trees, predominantly oak and ash, along field boundaries throughout the area;
- Small pockets of pasture associated with the tributary valleys that fall eastwards towards the Colne; particularly adjacent to the Church Street Conservation Area on the village fringes;
- Occasional small copses and groups of trees associated with outlying farmsteads and properties on the village fringes, such as the tree belt south of Hostage Farm;

- Large block of woodland in the vicinity of C19th property 'Rookwoods' in the north of the area;
- Stream floor is occasionally apparent, due the removal of the more characteristic vegetation between the water course and adjacent fields;
- The narrow School Lane on the southern boundary is largely enclosed with mature hedgerows.

3.15 Access:

- Series of minor roads aligned perpendicular to the River Colne, following both the spurs and floors of the minor streams;
- Distinctly rural feel, with a single lane meandering through and around the fringes to the area, in distinct contrast to the busy Hedingham Road on the eastern boundary of the area;
- Busier than the adjacent lanes, the Wethersfield Road rises through the area towards Cuckoo Hill, creating an east-west connection between outlying villages;
- Good network of footpaths along and across the stream valleys, providing direct access into the countryside from the northern fringes of the village. Paths both follow and cross the stream valley landscape;
- Unlike the adjacent Landscape Setting Area SH3 to the south, minor roads are busy and do not supplement the footpath network in the area.

3.16 Settlement edge:

- Settlement in the area comprises a series of properties scattered along the minor roads that extend from the village, with occasional houses and farmsteads set back from the road in the farmland landscape itself;
- Equestrian uses associated with properties, such as Washland's Farm;
- Lying below a spur of high ground, the allotments and primary school at the southernmost tip of the area are imperceptible in views from the north;
- Organic form of the northern fringes of the village are largely imperceptible as a consequence of the gentle undulations associated with the stream valleys;
- The eastern fringes of Sible Hedingham abutting the area comprise a range of historic houses and cottages in the Church Street Conservation Area, together with modern detached and semi-detached dwellings in Abbey Meadow;
- St Peter's Church occupies a prominent point on the upper valley slopes at the northern tip of the Conservation Area;
- Cluster of single storey properties on a spur of high ground at Harrow Cross at the southernmost tip.

3.17 Visual appraisal:

- Open views across the valley of the River Colne from much of the area, with occasional glimpses of Hedingham Castle and church on the eastern slopes from northern parts;
- Eastward views towards the village fringes from the numerous rights of way in the area, framed by the spurs of high ground between the stream valley landscapes;
- An impression of a settled landscape, with dwellings and businesses (including the former dairy) aligned with the Wethersfield Road and towards Highstreet Green;
- Views to the settlement fringe from eastern parts of the area are limited by the combination of undulating ground, blocks of vegetation close to the village fringes and trees and hedges associated with the lane sides and garden boundaries;
- A more open landscape around Cuckoo Hill in the west of the area, where the absence of hedgerows along the Wethersfield Road provides wide views across the gently falling stream valley;
- The substantial C19th 'Rookwoods', on the side of a minor stream valley connecting with the Colne on the northern fringes of the village, is contained by a block of woodland on the valley side and vegetation to the perimeter of the grounds;
- Although located immediately to the east of the area, the tower of St Peter's church is only glimpsed from high points in the repeating pattern of higher ground and stream valleys.

Evaluation

3.18 Landscape character sensitivity:

- A landscape characterised by a series of undulations around minor tributary valleys which fall gently eastwards towards the Colne, resulting in a strong and unified rural character;
- Medium sensitivity overall as a result of the presence and condition of vegetation associated with the hedgerows, woodland blocks and minor streams, and strong sense of a rural landscape;
- Area of pre-18th and 18th to 19th century field enclosures in central and southern parts, close to the fringes of the adjacent Conservation Area, contribute to a sense of time-depth in the area;
- Relatively open and geometric farmland based on the undulating landform, providing a transition between the more open and larger scale landscape of Landscape Setting Area SH1 to the north, and the more intimate landscape of the smaller scale valley landscapes of Setting Area SH3 to the south;

- Sensitivity reduced along the Wethersfield Road that crosses southern parts of the area, where the loss of hedgerows and commercial uses result in disturbance to the otherwise tranquil landscape from passing traffic;
- Landscape provides a link to the countryside from the western fringes of the village, with a footpath adjacent to 'Rookwoods' in the north of the area connecting with the nearby Colne Valley Path;
- Sense of a settled landscape, with scattered dwellings along the minor roads and lanes that radiate from the western fringes of Sible Hedingham, such as along the lane to Highstreet Green.

3.19 Visual sensitivity:

- Medium to High sensitivity overall. The combination of rolling landform and enclosure provided by vegetation results in restricted visibility of eastern parts of the area in the overall farmland landscape, but increased sensitivity in the elevated parts of the area, which lie on the brow of the adjacent plateau, and which are visually prominent in views from footpaths in the area;
- Southern parts of the area are generally enclosed from much of the area by hedges and blocks of vegetation associated with the stream falling towards the Church Street Conservation Area;
- The presence of larger fields and the absence of hedgerows in the Cuckoo Hill area increases the visibility and sensitivity on the western fringes, with an occasionally denuded feel to the approach to the village;
- Intermittent hedgerows provide a degree of enclosure to either side of the minor roads that extend from the village into the adjacent countryside;
- A range of views from the rural lanes and numerous footpaths in the area; with occasional glimpses of features and landmarks in Sible Hedingham and on the opposite slopes in the vicinity of Castle Hedingham.

3.20 Landscape value:

There are no nationally designated landscapes or features in the Setting Area. However, the features and habitats that define the landscape are addressed by the overriding Policy CS8 reflecting Natural Environment and Biodiversity. Valued components of the landscape include:

- Listed Buildings alongside the roads and lanes;
- A sense of tranquillity across the area; with minor lanes leading to Highstreet Green and Harrow Cross in the north and south of the area, and the busier Wethersfield Rd between the two;

- A comprehensive footpath network provides an easy link between the village and adjacent farmland landscape, with a range of routes following the tributary valley landforms. This is in distinct contrast to the adjacent plateau landscape, where few footpaths are present in the large scale arable farmland.

Landscape sensitivities and value

| Landscape character sensitivity | Visual sensitivity | Landscape value |
|--|--|---|
| Landscape characterised by a repeating pattern of minor valleys of similar scale, orientation and vegetation framework, creating strong and unified rural character. | Medium sensitivity overall, due to the degree of enclosure and screening that the undulating landform, blocks of vegetation, and hedgerows to field boundaries provide. Increased sensitivity within the setting of Listed Buildings, and the less enclosed western parts on the brow of the adjacent plateau. | Medium value due to good access to the area by public footpaths; the presence of Listed Buildings within the lightly settled landscape, the intact field pattern and often historic hedges associated with the tributary valleys. |
| Medium | Medium to high | Medium |

LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA SH3 (Refer to Landscape Assessment Figure SH1)

Location

- 3.21 This Setting Area comprises a wedge of landscape to the south of the existing village fringes. The A1017 that follows a strong north-south line through the village forms the eastern boundary to the area, with the minor lane that meanders around Southey Green and Harrow Cross defining the extent of the area to the south and west. Properties in the Recreation Road area, defining the current settlement edge, marks the northern boundary.

Landscape and visual baseline

3.22 Landform and drainage

- Land rises from the 45m AOD contour adjacent to Swan Street in the north east corner, to the plateau landscape directly south of the area;
- Southern boundary broadly defines the edge of the plateau, based on the 85m AOD contour;
- A series of minor tributary valleys punctuate the south-westerly rise away from the Colne. Their locally steep sides create a landscape characterised by a repeating pattern of gentle rises and falls;
- Spurs of higher ground associated with the adjacent plateau punctuate the western margins of the area;
- Series of farm ponds are scattered across the landscape, usually associated with the scattered farmsteads;
- Larger pond alongside the stream in the east of the area, in the vicinity of the property at Mount Nebo.

3.23 Land uses

- Balance of arable and grazing pasture; the medium-sized arable fields being based on the higher valley sides and alongside the Hedingham Road;
- Pasture for sheep and horse grazing on the valley slopes, with a network of small to medium rectangular fields aligned with the falling ground;
- Larger areas of pasture on the western areas around Innham Hill and Horn Hill; where the lack of boundary hedges creates a more open landscape;
- Series of stables in the Cobbs Fen area, both on the Lamb Lane frontage and down narrow tracks that lead from the lane towards the stream;
- Thread of settlement along Lamb Lane, with a series of detached dwelling regularly spaced along the lane, punctuating the mature hedgerow that encloses the narrow lane;
- Car breaking yard at Harrow Cross is set within woodland that clothes the valley head, screening it from adjacent properties;
- Clusters of farmsteads and cottages along the narrow lane that skirts the boundary to the south and west;
- A1017 road corridor defines the eastern fringe of the area;
- Small blocks of woodland and copses; particularly around the tributary valleys.

3.24 Vegetation

- Intact hedgerows on the valley sides of the small streams, defining small to medium-scale pasture fields. Hedges occasionally contain hops, offering a remnant of a former crop grown in the area;
- Large and mature trees, predominantly oak and ash, along field boundaries throughout the area;
- Mature and often species rich hedges are a characteristic feature of the narrow lanes that wind through the area; the associated mature trees providing often tunnel-like enclosure;
- Avenue of recent planting and occasional tree planting creates a subtle parkland feel to the valley slopes around Baykers Farm;
- Small pockets of pasture associated with the tributary valleys that fall westwards towards the Colne; their more linear form reflecting the line of the water courses;
- Small blocks and copses of woodland are present across the area, often closely associated with the small streams, such as at Hole Farm in the south;
- Larger blocks of woodland are an occasional feature, notably that at the valley head around Lamb Lane, and recent plantation blocks north of Brickwall Farm in the north east;
- Ponds often enclosed by vegetation, such as the mature trees fringing the farm pond at Southey Green Farm, and more recent woodland blocks around the large pond at Mount Nebo;
- Intermittent hedgerows and occasional mature oak trees to the A1017 on the eastern boundary.

3.25 Access:

- Distinctly rural feel, with a single lane meandering through and around the fringes to the area, in distinct contrast to the busy Hedingham Road on the eastern boundary of the area;
- Numerous rights of way across the area, providing easy access to the rural landscape immediately to the south of the village. Paths frequently rise up the stream floor towards the lane skirting the southern and western boundaries;
- The narrow lanes that meander through the area are peaceful and well used by walkers and cyclists. They are frequently enclosed within steep sides, with mature hedges and trees limiting views of the adjacent landscape;
- Farmsteads and houses are frequently accessed via long tracks and driveways, such as Hole Farm and Mount Nebo;

- The busy A1017 follows a north-south course that marks the eastern boundary of the area, variously enclosed by hedges and trees.

3.26 Settlement edge

- A finger of Sible Hedingham that stretches southwards along the A1017, comprising detached houses within large and well-established gardens, forms the eastern boundary to the area;
- A series of business units and holiday cottages at Brickwall Farm create a cluster of commercial use on the eastern boundary;
- Settlement in the south of the area is based on a series of dispersed and often Listed houses and farmsteads, occasionally based around commons or ponds;
- Occasional properties sit alongside the roads that fringe the area; such as the former Windmill PH at Cutmaple on the busy Hedingham Road, and 'Chandlers' on the lightly-used Starling Hill;
- Settlement in the north of the area is more closely linked to the existing village boundary, with a range of houses and bungalows set along Lamb Lane as it extends from the Conservation Area in Potter Street;
- The southern fringes of Sible Hedingham form an abrupt boundary in the northern corner of the area. The uniform line of properties on the fringe are visible from footpaths and breaks in the hedge at Cobbs Fen to the south, and at School Lane to the west;
- Village primary school lies at the north of the area, forming an abrupt transition from the minor School Lane and visually prominent in views from the south;
- Cluster of single storey properties on a spur of high ground at Harrow Cross.

3.27 Visual appraisal:

- Views are generally well-enclosed as a result of the repeating pattern of the minor valley forms, which rise and dip across the area;
- The intact hedgerows in the south of the area frame views along the streams that fall towards the Colne valley;
- A more open and elevated landscape at Southey Green on the western corner, where broad views north to the fringes of Sible Hedingham are possible as a result of hedgerow removal associated with large areas of grazing pasture;
- Glimpses of the adjacent plateau landscape to the south are generally limited by rising landform, but are possible from higher ground in the south of the area;
- A smaller scale landscape at Cobbs Fen in the north of the area, where the pattern of field enclosure, associated hedges and small blocks of woodland alongside Lamb Lane limit views

of properties in the Recreation Road area to brief glimpses where breaks in the vegetation permit;

- Views of the farmland landscape adjacent to the southern fringes of the village are possible from the primary school and Hawkwood Road area, as a consequence of occasional hedgerow removal, the more open arable fields to the south of School Lane, and the gently falling landform;
- Outward views from the narrow lane that meanders around the southern and western fringes are limited given the often banked sides and associated mature hedgerows;
- The numerous rights of way across the area offer a range of views across the valley landscape of the area, as well as views back to housing on the settlement fringes;
- Footpaths often pass Listed Buildings in the area, creating a strong sense of a historic landscape;
- Occasional views into the area are possible from the Hedingham Road, such as at the former Windmill pub at Cutmaple, according to the presence and management of boundary hedges;
- Small blocks of woodland and mature hedgerow trees across much of the area reinforce the sense of a smaller scale and visual containment provided by the landform.

Evaluation

3.28 Landscape character sensitivity:

- A landscape characterised by a repeating pattern of minor valleys of similar scale, orientation and vegetation framework, creating strong and unified rural character;
- Medium to High sensitivity overall due to the semi-natural vegetation associated with the small blocks of woodland and minor streams, good condition of the hedgerows across the area, and strong sense of a rural stream landscape;
- Smaller scale to the landscape in comparison to the more open and geometric farmland in the adjacent Landscape Setting Area SH2, and the open plateau to the south;
- Pockets of pre-18th and 18th to 19th century field enclosures associated with the lane meandering around Starling's Hill and Southey Green in southern parts of the area, and in the stream valley at Cobbs Fen, contribute to a sense of time-depth in the area;
- Sensitivity reduced in the east of the area alongside the Hedingham Road, where the closely managed hedges and occasional open sections allows an impression of passing traffic and reduces the otherwise tranquil characteristics;
- Presence of irregular field patterns reveals a former elements of a former farmland landscape; reinforced by mature trees in the hedges that line both field boundaries and the narrow lanes;

- Landscape characteristics provide a balance to the occasionally harsh southern fringes of Sible Hedingham on the northern boundary of the area;
- Sensitivity enhanced by the presence of dispersed and occasionally historic farmsteads, often associated with publicly accessible areas such as commons or footpaths;
- Landscape provides a bridge to the adjacent countryside, with a range of footpaths leading from the southern fringes of the village, extending along and across the stream valley landscape and linking with Cobbs Fen, Harrow Cross and Southey Green;
- Some loss of the former field pattern in the west of the area in the vicinity of Perryfields Farm as a result of the amalgamation of fields into larger areas for grazing results in a reduced sensitivity;
- Strong sense of remoteness around the minor road that skirts the boundary to the south and west of the area; the single track lane often contained within steeply sloping sides reinforced by mature trees and hedgerows.

3.29 Visual sensitivity

- Medium sensitivity overall, due to its restricted visibility in the wider landscape, given the combination of rolling landform and enclosure provided by trees and hedges;
- Increased sensitivity in the elevated western parts of the area, which lie on the brow of the adjacent plateau, which are visually prominent in views from footpaths in the area. These views often include notable historic houses such as Southey Green Farm and Baykers Farm;
- Northern parts of the area are generally enclosed from much of the area by hedges and copses around Cobbs Fen. The presence of larger fields and occasional breaks in hedges along School Lane increases the sensitivity in the northernmost corner, being visible from the school and southern edge of the village;
- Hedgerows provide a strong degree of enclosure to either side of the peaceful lanes and rights of way;
- Increased sensitivity within the setting of Listed Buildings, including Bayker's Farm and Southey Green Farm, which occupy elevated positions in the landscape;
- Elevated eastern parts are glimpsed at breaks in the vegetation along the Hedingham Road, offering a view across well enclosed open farmland, creating a distinctive rural approach to the southern fringes of the village.

3.30 Landscape value

There are no nationally designated landscapes or features in the setting area. However, the features and habitats that define the landscape are addressed by the overriding Policy CS8 reflecting Natural Environment and Biodiversity. Valued components of the landscape include:

- A range of Listed Buildings such as the Elizabethan timber framed Bayker's Farm on Lamb Lane; and the C17th substantial timber framed farmhouse at Southey Green;
- A strong sense of tranquility away from the A1017 Hedingham Road, with the only roads in the area being the single track lane that winds around Starlings Hill and Innham Hill in the south and west of the area, and Lamb Lane that meanders through Cobbs Fen towards Harrow Cross;
- A comprehensive footpath network provides an easily between the village and adjacent farmland landscape, with a range of routes following the tributary valley landforms. This is in distinct contrast to the adjacent plateau landscape, where few footpaths are present in the large scale arable farmland. The narrow lanes supplement the public footpaths in providing good access for walkers and riders in the area.

Landscape sensitivities and value

| Landscape character sensitivity | Visual sensitivity | Landscape value |
|---|---|--|
| Landscape characterised by a repeating pattern of minor valleys of similar scale, orientation and vegetation framework, creating strong and unified rural character. Sensitivity enhanced by the presence of dispersed and historic farmsteads, often associated with publicly accessible areas such as commons or footpaths. | Medium Sensitivity overall, due to its restricted visibility in the wider landscape – despite the presence of numerous footpaths. Increased sensitivity within the setting of Listed Buildings, which occupy elevated positions in the landscape, and visually prominent western parts of the area on the brow of the adjacent plateau. | Medium to high value due to good access to the area by public footpaths; the significant Listed Buildings within the lightly settled landscape, the Parish Council owned common at Southey Green, the intact field pattern and often historic hedges associated with the tributary valleys. A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity. |
| Medium to high | Medium | Medium to high |

LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA SH4 (Refer to Landscape Assessment Figure SH1)**Location**

- 3.31 This setting area meets the southern edges of Sible Hedingham, and occupies the east facing slopes of the Colne river valley, extending southwards to Foxborough Hill Farm. The north-south route of the A1017 Hedingham Road defines the western boundary of the area, with the A1124 Halstead Road which follows the valley sides meeting it at the Braintree Corner junction.

Landscape and visual baseline

3.32 Landform and drainage

- The area is characterised by gentle valley side slopes which rise westwards away from the floodplain towards the A1017 Hedingham Road;
- The road rises gently as it extends southwards from river level at Swan Street on the southern fringes of the village, towards the plateau landscape of the former RAF Gosfield;
- The valley sides are gently sloping in the north of the area, rising to a height of approximately 50m AOD at the Braintree Corner intersection;
- Valley slopes steepen in the south of the area where they rise westwards to a local high point of 68m AOD at Foxborough Hill Farm;
- Gentle undulations associated with the shallow tributaries which emerge as springs and ponds on the valley sides and follow the slopes in a north-eastward direction towards the Colne;
- Small ponds and modern agricultural reservoirs are a feature of the valley sides, often associated with farmsteads;
- The eastern boundary of the area meets the linear form of the margin to the floodplain, within which the Colne itself follows a meandering course.

3.33 Land uses

- In the north of the area, a series of medium sized rectangular fields extend eastwards from the Alderford Conservation Area towards the western margin of the floodplain;
- Predominantly arable farmland on the valley slopes, based on medium to large fields that often extend directly from the roadside to the edge of the floodplain;
- The more elevated valley slopes in the south of the area comprise a mosaic of grassland, hedges, scrub, and small blocks of woodland, connecting with those associated with Tile Kiln Farm sand quarry and fill site to the south of the area;
- A ribbon of farmhouses, cottages and modern properties define the western boundary of the area, extending southwards to Braintree Corner;

- Lightly settled in the south of the area, with dispersed farmsteads on the valley sides, a cluster of properties at the Braintree Corner junction, and a series of detached dwellings aligned with the Halstead Road;
- The treatment works on Hull's Mill Lane is a functional element in the landscape, visible from the Halstead Road in the vicinity of Sparrows Farm.

3.34 Vegetation

- A farmland landscape typified by medium to large scale arable fields enclosed by perimeter hedgerows;
- Occasional and often geometric blocks of woodland on the higher valley slopes;
- Areas of scrub and grassland in the south of the area, associated with higher ground of the adjacent plateau landscape and the Tile Kiln Farm sand quarry and fill site;
- Substantial hedge with integral field oaks to the verge on the south side of Hull's Mill Lane; the north side of the lane being interspersed with remnant trees as a result of the removal of the hedgerow beneath;
- Geometric line of trees and scrub lines the access track to the treatment works on the eastern boundary of the area, comprising willow, oak, hawthorn etc;
- Dense and mature screen planting on the western and southern boundary to the treatment works, providing a contrast to associated vegetation which follows the natural contours;
- Continuous line of vegetation defines the western boundary of the area, associated with the boundaries to gardens and farm buildings along the A1017, as well as hedgerows alongside the carriageway itself;
- Properties around Braintree Corner and Halstead Road lie within well-established gardens, creating a wooded feel to the roads on the approach to the village;
- Native hedges line the A1124 beyond the settled area, becoming more intermittent towards the valley floor in the east of the area;
- Occasional conifers mature conifers (pine/cedar etc) within garden planting;
- Floodplain to the east is largely open and unenclosed; interrupted by occasional stands of poplars.

3.35 Access

- Numerous footpaths provide direct and easy access from the southern fringes of the village, and connections with the Colne Valley Path and routes in the adjacent landscape of the east side of the river valley;

- These paths connect with the footpath network on the west side of the Hedingham Road in the adjacent area;
- Hull's Mill Lane is a lightly-used narrow lane which provides access to the ford, mill and Hull's Mill Farm in the heart of the Colne valley. It provides access to the sewage treatment works on the edge of the floodplain on the eastern boundary of the setting area;
- The impression of the adjacent farmland landscape in the occasionally open views from both the Halstead and Hedingham Roads results in a close connection between village and countryside, and a correspondingly rural feel.

3.36 Settlement edge

- The southern fringes of Sible Hedingham define the western edge of the Setting Area, characterised by the linear development to either side of the A1017 Hedingham Road. They form the Alderford Conservation Area, a mix of former farm buildings, historic houses/cottages, and range of modern properties, and provide the backdrop to views from its northern parts. Dwellings are variously set back from the road, creating a variety in scale and form when viewing the settlement from northern parts of the setting area;
- Midway along the western boundary of the area, the black-boarded and peg-tiled barns at Wash Farm are a pocket of commercial activity on the southern fringes of the village, with a range of small businesses arranged around parking in the former farmyard;
- Strong inter-visibility between the village and the rural setting area, with parcels of the farmland in northern parts of the setting area occasionally extend directly to the A1017;
- Settlement is based on linear development along the Hedingham Road and Halstead Road, where period houses, farmhouses, barn conversions and modern properties sit within large gardens enclosed by groups of trees and mature vegetation. Properties on the south side of the road stand higher than the carriageway itself, on the rising valley sides;
- Beyond the substantial and recent Melbourne House on the north side of the Halstead Road, settlement is more typically characterised by farmhouses associated with the edge of the floodplain, such as Sparrows Farm.

3.37 Visual appraisal

- Views from the footpaths in the north of the area are wide and open, embracing a broad area of the Colne valley landscape. As well as close views to the valley floor, distant views of adjacent landscapes are possible;
- Settlement on the southern fringes of Sible Hedingham form the horizon line in views west from the valley floor, comprising a thread of mature vegetation and occasional specimen trees within;

- Views from the Halstead and Hedingham Road are largely framed by mature and high hedges which line the highway, opening up towards the valley floor in the south of the area;
- Open views from the A1017 on the approach to the village from the south, towards the plateau landscape beyond the valley, due to hedges being cut lower and occasional gaps;
- No views south to the landscapes south of from Hull's Mill Lane due the dense, mature and species rich hedgerow that lines it;
- The ground modelling around the reservoir at Wash Farm is a subtle interruption to the landform and views around the gentle lower valley slopes;
- Little intervisibility with the landscape to west, as a consequence of the rising and undulating landform. As the valley sides meet the more open plateau landscape in the south of the area, views across the farmland to the west of the A1017 are possible;
- Some intervisibility with landscape setting area SH5 due to occasional views that are possible in breaks in the vegetation on the valley floor. The upper slopes in the vicinity of Purlshill are visible above tree planting in the floodplain;
- No visibility of the Tile Kiln Farm sand quarry due to hedges and trees around the perimeter.

Evaluation

3.38 Landscape character sensitivity

- Medium Sensitivity overall due to the unified and generally rural character associated with the underlying valley slopes;
- Recognisable landscape structure based on fields perpendicular to the Colne, with a network of hedgerows and woodland blocks becoming more substantial on the higher slopes;
- Moderate contribution to the river valley landscape on account of the farmland landscape on the eastern slopes and mature vegetation on the ridgeline;
- The pattern of woodland and hedges is generally robust and in good condition, with the exception of the medium sized fields in the north of the area adjacent to the settlement fringes, where some hedges have been removed;
- Pockets of pre-18th and 18th to 19th century field enclosures in northern parts adjacent to Alderford Mill, and southern parts alongside the Halstead Road, contribute to a sense of time-depth in the area;
- Sensitivity is increased by the presence of groups of trees and semi-natural habitat in the adjacent river valley landscape;
- The settlement fringes are largely well-integrated and generally enclosed by vegetation; with the exception of the engineered and more urban feel of the Braintree Corner junction.

3.39 Visual sensitivity

- Varied, but with Medium Sensitivity overall due to the presence and visibility of the linear settlement fringe on the western boundary of the area;
- Visual prominence of the area increases in the south, where the land is more open and the gentle rise of the valley slopes towards the plateau landscape is apparent from both the Halstead Road and adjacent Landscape Setting Area SH6;
- Views from the Halstead Road and Hedingham Road are generally contained by hedgerows, trees and planting associated with gardens; the A1017 occasionally set within steeply banked sides on the approaches to the Braintree Corner junction;
- Southern parts provide a visual setting to the approaches to Sible Hedingham, where breaks in hedgerows and between properties allow views of adjacent farmland and provide a strong rural outlook;
- Although northern parts are not visually prominent within the wider landscape, they are prominent in views from the local footpath network that connects with the Colne Valley Path;
- Increased sensitivity in the vicinity of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area that line Swan Street and Potter Street;
- The horizon line is defined by trees and woodland, with no vertical landmarks in the view;
- Sensitivity increases in low-lying parts in the south of the area, given a sense of visual continuity along the river corridor, including areas of open grassland with occasional mature trees, and a distinct impression of the former railway along the floodplain.

3.40 Landscape value

Policy CS8 concerning the Natural Environment and Biodiversity applies to the landscape setting to Sible Hedingham, with the intention of protecting the natural environment from potential adverse effects. Although the Setting Area includes no nationally designated landscapes or features, components of the landscape which are valued include:

- A moderate sense of tranquillity away from the A1124 Halstead Road; the only other road in the area being the peaceful narrow lane to the river and fording point at Hull's Mill;
- A comprehensive network of rights of way which provide direct access from the village into the adjacent floodplain landscape, connecting with the Colne Valley Path and the landscape on the west facing valley slopes beyond;
- The north facing valley slopes provide a backdrop to the south of the Setting Area, although there is no impression of the 62 hectares of largely ancient woodland at Broaks Wood on the plateau landscape further to the south.

Landscape sensitivities and value

| Landscape character sensitivity | Visual sensitivity | Landscape value |
|---|---|---|
| Medium Sensitivity overall due to the unified and generally rural character associated with the underlying valley slopes, and recognisable landscape structure of fields perpendicular to the river Colne and network of hedgerows and woodland blocks. | Varied, but with medium Sensitivity overall due to the presence and visibility of the linear settlement fringe on the western boundary of the area. Visual prominence increases in the south, where the open land and rise towards the plateau landscape is apparent from both the Halstead Road and adjacent Landscape Setting Area. | Medium, due to good access to the area by public footpaths; and a sense of tranquillity away from the Halstead Road. A strong sense of the adjacent River Colne, visible as part of a mosaic of woodland, pasture and farmland on and alongside the floodplain. |
| Medium | Medium to high | Medium |

LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA SH5 (Refer to Landscape Assessment Figure SH1)**Location**

- 3.41 This Setting Area abuts the River Colne that defines the easternmost boundary of the Sible Hedingham. It comprises the valley slopes that rise away from the floodplain towards the wider plateau landscape; the edge being defined by the Sheepcot Road and Dyne's Hall Road. The area meets the southern edge of the settlement at Castle Hedingham, which forms a 'sister' village on the west-facing slopes of the Colne valley.

Landscape and visual baseline

- 3.42 Landform and drainage
- The area comprises the gentle west-facing slopes of the Colne river valley, which fall away from the 70m AOD contour level of the adjacent plateau;
 - Two subtle indentations based on minor brooks punctuate the valley slopes;
 - The western boundary of the area meets the floodplain of the Colne, comprising the meandering channel and drained landscape of the valley floor;
 - A number of pits and ponds associated with farmsteads on the plateau edge;

- The presence of the former rail line along the valley floor is apparent via a series of minor cuttings and embankments which create a level and continuous line along the meandering valley floor. In the south of the area, a section of the dismantled line defines the westernmost boundary.

3.43 Land uses

- Predominately arable, with large rectangular field compartments on the fringes of Castle Hedingham to the north of the area, such as those around Little Lodge Farm;
- Pockets of smaller scale pasture on the steeper sides of the tributary valleys in the south of the area, as around Hopwell's Farm and Purlshill;
- Blocks of mixed woodland on the lower valley slopes, such as that based on the 50m AOD contour at Purlshill plantation to the south of the area;
- Scattered farmsteads associated with the network of lanes or set back along farm tracks;
- The discreet Anglian Water treatment works on Sheepcot Road, adjacent to Maiden Ley Farm, whose timber boarding and overall appearance is in keeping with larger agricultural buildings in the area.

3.44 Vegetation

- Large-scale rectangular arable fields on the valley slopes, which are often unenclosed by perimeter hedgerows;
- Small pockets of pasture associated with the tributary valleys that fall westwards towards the Colne; their more linear form reflecting the line of the water courses;
- The westernmost fringes are occasionally punctuated by groups or plantations of poplar and willow in the adjacent floodplain landscape, such groups associated with Maiden Ley Farm;
- Woodland is a feature of the area, with a mix of occasional and geometric blocks associated with the arable farmland landscape, and larger blocks that broadly follow the contours of the sloping valley sides;
- Hedgerows are a distinct feature in the south of the area, often associated with the steep banks to the sides of the narrow lanes that rise from the valley floor towards the plateau farmland in the east;
- Some loss of field hedges in the north of the area, given the amalgamation of fields into larger compartments;
- The floodplain to the west is marked by a largely continuous fringe of trees and woodland, creating a distinct boundary feature to the area.

3.45 Access

- Footpath access in the area is based on two public footpaths which provide good access into the countryside on the eastern side of the valley. They both cross the contours of the valley slopes and connect with the longer distance Colne Valley Path (opened in 2006) along the valley floor. The path from the Purlishill Plantation meets the floodplain at the Alderford Mill bridging point, with the path from Little Lodge Farm emerging alongside the treatment plant at Sheepcot Road;
- The narrow lanes which rise eastwards up the valley slopes from Alderford Mill have a distinctly rural feel and are used for walking and cycling. They are frequently enclosed within steep sides, with mature hedges and trees reinforcing the sense of containment and limited views of the adjacent landscape;
- Distinctly rural feel, with a series of meandering lanes away from the busier B1058 Sudbury Road which passes through Castle Hedingham to the north of the area.

3.46 Settlement edge

- The northern boundary of the Setting Area is marked by a range of land uses on the southern edge of Castle Hedingham village, including a range of detached and terraced properties in the New Park cul-de-sac; large and mature gardens associated with substantial properties on Sheepcot Road, and vegetation to the perimeter of the scout headquarters and cemetery at the southernmost tip of the village;
- Settlement is limited in the area; based on a range of scattered farmsteads. Some, such as Little Lodge Farm, stand high on the edge of the plateau, whilst others such as Hopwell's Farm are more closely associated with the subtle contours of the tributary valley landscapes;
- Sible Hedingham is visible across the valley to the east of the area, seen as a roofscape over and beyond the vegetation that lies in the floodplain, with landmarks such as the church tower featuring in the views.

3.47 Visual appraisal

- Views within much of the area generally comprise medium to long distance views down to and along the valley floor, where occasional breaks in the vegetation associated with the floodplain allows glimpses of the linear form of Sible Hedingham beyond. The roofline of the former Premdor site and current residential development are visible in these breaks in the vegetation;
- The vegetation associated with the fringes of the floodplain provides definition to the western edge of the area. No impression of the river itself, given the small scale of the channel within the overall floodplain, and the presence of blocks of mature trees and scrub along the length of the valley floor;

- Outwards views are more limited in the south of the area, where the combination of narrow and occasionally sunken lanes, the undulating landform of the gentle tributaries that rise perpendicular to the River Colne, and the presence of mature and largely intact hedgerows and associated trees, narrows and focusses the views on the landscape in the foreground;
- Views to the more distant landscape to the east are prevented by the gentle rise away from the valley floor, with Little Lodge Farm on the edge of the plateau at 70m AOD providing a landmark feature on the skyline;
- The southern fringes of Castle Hedingham are visible from the footpath rising from Maiden Ley Farm, marked by a continuous thread of vegetation to garden boundaries at New Park, Green Crofts, cemetery and scout headquarters. The undulating ground on the east side of Sheepcot Road restricts the impression for drivers and passengers to one of treetops and the skyline.

Evaluation

3.48 Landscape character sensitivity

- A strong rural character to the area, whose characteristics provide a balance to the settlement of Sible Hedingham on the opposite bank of the River Colne;
- Medium to High Sensitivity overall, given the nature of the farmland on the gently falling valley slopes, the presence of hedges and woodland, the scattered and often historic farmsteads in the area accessed by a network of quiet rural lanes and tracks, which contribute of the landscape to the settings of Sible and Castle Hedingham, and result in a unified and distinctive sense of place;
- Evidence of pre-18th and 18th to 19th century field enclosures around Hopwells Farm and Alderford Farm in central parts of the area, contribute to a sense of an often unchanged landscape structure;
- Some loss of the former field pattern in the north of the area as a result of the amalgamation of fields into larger units, and a corresponding loss of the characteristic hedgerow structure, results in a reduced sensitivity;
- The mix of farmland and pasture contributes to the setting of the closely spaced villages of Sible and Castle Hedingham which straddle the river. The area contributes to the visual and physical separation between the closely spaced villages;
- Sensitivity increased in southern parts due to the sequences of small-scale fields defined by robust hedgerows, mature woodland and threads of semi-natural woodland associated with the meandering lanes and pasture of the tributary valleys.

3.49 Visual sensitivity

- There are great variations in visibility within the area, with many views framed or truncated by blocks of woodland, and hedgerows providing a strong degree of enclosure to either side of the lanes or rights of way;
- Sensitivity varies across the area, but medium to high overall as the slopes on the valley sides are visually prominent in the wider landscape;
- Medium sensitivity in southern parts, where there is a high degree of enclosure provided by field and roadside hedgerows and tree belts, but increased sensitivity in northern parts, where the open and rising slopes are visually prominent in views from the fringes of Sible and Castle Hedingham and from the wider landscape.
- The northern part of the area is visible in open views from the B1058 Queen Street which links the two villages. The large and open arable field can be glimpsed at breaks in the tightly managed thorn hedge which sits above a low concrete retaining wall to the rear of the narrow pavement, where it rises away to an open horizon;
- The skyline that marks the intersection between the valley and plateau landscape is largely well-vegetated with hedgerows and trees which fringe the rural lanes and field boundaries. Some loss of these features in the slopes below Little Lodge Farm result in a more open landscape, with the farmhouse standing as a landmark on the skyline;

3.50 Landscape value

Although the Setting Area includes no nationally designated landscapes or features, it is covered by Policy CS8 that addresses the Natural Environment and Biodiversity. Valued components of the landscape include:

- A strong sense of tranquillity away from the B1058 Sudbury Road, with the minor road to Great Maplestead and narrow lanes meandering up and along the contours of the valley sides;
- Good access to the area, with the narrow lanes supplementing the public footpaths in providing good access into the adjacent farmland landscape. The paths offer a range of routes, which connect with the Colne Valley path which runs along the valley floor.

Landscape sensitivities and value

| Landscape character sensitivity | Visual sensitivity | Landscape value |
|--|---|--|
| Medium Sensitivity overall, given the rural farmland character of the valley slopes, the presence of hedges and woodland across the area, the scattered farmsteads accessed by a network of quiet rural lanes and tracks, which contribute to the setting of Sible and Castle Hedingham, and result in a unified and distinctive sense of place. | Varies across the area, but Medium to high overall. Medium Sensitivity in southern parts, where there is a high degree of enclosure provided by field and roadside hedgerows and tree belts, but increased sensitivity in northern parts, where the open and rising slopes are visually prominent in views from the fringes of Sible and Castle Hedingham and from the wider landscape. | Medium to high value due to good access to the area by public footpaths; the presence of Listed Buildings within scattered farms; and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity. A prevailing sense of the adjacent River Colne, given the presence of a continuous band of vegetation on the edge of the floodplain. |
| Medium to high | Medium to high | Medium to high |

LANDSCAPE SETTING AREA SH6 (Refer to Landscape Assessment Figure SH1)**Location**

- 3.51 This Setting Area is based on the floodplain of the River Colne, defining and separating the landscape between the villages of Sible and Castle Hedingham. It forms a ribbon that runs north-south, following the eastern fringes of Sible Hedingham from the Colne valley Railway on the Yeldham Road downstream to Hull's Mill alongside the Halstead Road.

Landscape and visual baseline

- 3.52 Landform and drainage
- The landform comprises the valley floor of the River Colne, which varies in width along the length of the setting area;
 - The fringes are loosely based on the 45m AOD contour which defines the transition between the level ground of the floodplain and the adjacent lower valley slopes, with a series of indentations around the confluence of the minor streams (which rise perpendicular from main valley) and the River Colne;

- The river channel itself is a minor feature in the overall valley floor, comprising a small stream north of the B1058 at Queen Street;
- A network of geometric drainage ditches criss-cross the valley floor, contrasting with the gently meandering river channel itself at the centre of the setting area;

3.53 Land uses

- A mosaic based substantial blocks of mixed age and species woodland, with small pockets of arable farmland and pasture within;
- Occasional stands of poplar trees arranged in a geometric grid amongst the more characteristic pattern of willow and alder trees and associated scrub in the floodplain, such as the plantations north of Hull's Mill;
- Scattered watermills and historic features clustered at bridging points over the river, such as the Listed Buildings at Hull's Mill and Ancient Monument at Alderford Mill;
- The corridor of the former railway is apparent as a swathe of mature trees associated with the former track sides, along the length of the setting area. Of the three original bridging points over the river, the bridge associated with the Colne Valley Railway (a short section of operational line adjacent to the northern fringes of the area) is the only one that remains intact;

3.54 Vegetation

- Blocks and belts of semi-mature and mature woodland throughout the area, within which small arable fields and areas of pasture occupy pockets of the floodplain landscape;
- An intermittent line of medium and large trees marking the channel line of the River Colne, such as the willow trees at Nunnery Bridge;
- The corridor of the former railway is apparent as a swathe of mature trees associated with the former track sides, along the length of the setting area;
- Vegetation on the fringes of the setting area is mixed, ranging from vegetation in garden boundaries such as those to the rear of cottages along the Yeldham Road on the northern tip of the area; hedgerows at the foot of the valley slopes such as north of Maiden Ley Farm where hedges mark a transition to the more open arable farmland landscape of the valley slopes; and substantial blocks of woodland that link with such areas in the floodplain landscape;
- The level of vegetation cover reduces in southern sections, such as the floodplain to the east of Wash Farm, where the more intermittent presence of hedgerows and trees to the edge of the floodplain creates a connection with the arable farmland in the adjacent setting area.

3.55 Access

- The Colne Valley Path (opened in 2006) extends along the length of the Setting Area from Nunnery Street at Crouch Green in the north to Hull's Mill and beyond in the south, providing a route which links Great Yeldham with Colchester;
- The footpath variously follows the edge of the floodplain and banksides of the river itself, with close connections with the corridor of the dismantled railway which is informally used for public access;
- The peaceful lanes around Alderford Mill and Hull's Mill are used by walkers and cyclists;
- The four bridging points over the river have strikingly different character, ranging from settlement along the roadside that extends to the bridging point itself at Nunnery Bridge in Castle Hedingham in the north of the setting area, to the peaceful fording point at Hull's Mill at the southern tip.

3.56 Settlement edge

- The western edge of the Setting Area is a smooth line defined by the fringes of Sible Hedingham which sit beyond, and are partially screened by, the band of trees and shrubs along the corridor of the dismantled rail line on the western edge of the floodplain;
- The north western boundary of the setting area is defined by the fringes of Castle Hedingham, where properties that are aligned along Nunnery Street towards the crossing at Nunnery Bridge and those located within the Conservation Area, which wrap around a broad loop in the floodplain in the north west;
- Settlement in the area is limited to dwellings on the eastern edge of the floodplain close to Alderford Mill (Ancient Monument) and the cluster of properties at Hull's Mill which includes several listed Buildings;
- The corridor of the dismantled rail line forms a gently sweeping line along the length of the setting area, at times marking the transition between valley and adjacent countryside (alongside Purlshill Plantation), while also occasionally defining the edge of the settlement (adjacent to the Premdor/Rockways regeneration sites on the eastern fringes of the village);
- Sewage works adjacent to the floodplain on the southern tip of the setting area, with structures partially screened for the floodplain by hedging and trees to the boundary;
- The rail line bridging the broad area of floodplain at the northern tip of the Setting Area provides a pocket of activity at the northernmost point, where there is an impression of the workshops, sheds and engines associated with the Colne Valley Railway.

3.57 Visual appraisal

- Visibility within the area is generally restricted due to the strong structure of vegetation present along the length;
- Settlement edges of both Sible Hedingham to the west and Castle Hedingham to the east are generally enclosed in views from roads and footpaths due to the level of tree and scrub cover within the floodplain, and the belt of mature trees along the line of the dismantled railway at the edge of the floodplain. Partial views of larger scale buildings rising above the tree line are possible where localised breaks in the vegetation permit;
- Views into the area are generally limited to these from bridging points, such as to the east of the fording point at Hull's Mill, where an area of pasture extends northwards to a grid of poplar trees planted on the valley floor;
- Woodland and tree belts within the setting area, combined with the well-wooded river valley slopes, provide a generally well-wooded skyline;
- Some intervisibility between southern parts of the area and the southern fringes of Sible Hedingham, where the absence of vegetation along the edge of the floodplain allows views to the adjacent arable fields on the lower valley slopes;
- The transition between the floodplain and the adjacent lower valley slopes provides the defining edge to area, although the river channel itself is narrow and imperceptible in the views.

Evaluation

3.58 Landscape character sensitivity

- Medium to High Sensitivity overall with its riverside woodland blocks, patterns of semi-natural vegetation, presence of hedgerows generally in good condition, generally well-contained and well-integrated edges; distinctive historic buildings scattered within the landscape and overriding sense of unity; which combine to create a sense of a strong rural character;
- The area contributes to the physical and visual separation between Sible and Castle Hedingham on the western and eastern slopes of the river valley landscape;
- Belts of trees and hedgerows through the area, including those alongside roads and lanes leading towards bridging points over the river, contribute to a well-wooded landscape in which the river itself is an imperceptible feature;
- The area provides a rural river valley setting on the approaches to Castle Hedingham from the west, and Sible Hedingham from the east, contributing to the character of each village as they straddle the floodplain on each side of the setting area;

- Sensitivity increases in the vicinity of Listed Buildings at Alderford Mill and Hull's Mill, clustered around historic crossing points over the river;
- Overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity, with no disruption by noise, lighting, etc.;
- Scope for the removal of the geometric and incongruous stands of poplar trees and replacement with trees that are more characteristic of the river valley landscape, such as alder and willow, to strengthen the character of the landscape on the eastern fringes of the village.

3.59 Visual sensitivity

- Medium Visual Sensitivity overall, due to a strong sense of enclosure to views that trees and woodland along the valley floor provide, providing a strong definition to the eastern fringes of Sible Hedingham;
- Visibility is limited in views of the wider landscape, given the presence of the mature vegetation on the intersection of the lower valley slopes and the floodplain landscape of the setting area;
- Increased sensitivity in central parts, given the sense of visual continuity along the river corridor which includes substantial areas of tree cover, reducing any impression of adjacent setting areas;
- Increased sensitivity within the visual setting of Listed Buildings and the Ancient Monument at Alderford Mill.

3.60 Landscape value

Although the setting area includes no nationally designated landscapes or features, the overriding Policy CS8 that addresses the Natural Environment and Biodiversity, Policy RLP 86 relating to River Corridors, and Policy RLP 83 around Local Nature Reserves are applicable. Valued components of the landscape include:

- A number of Listed Buildings associated with crossing points on the river, such as Pooles Bridge at the crossing between Sible and Castle Hedingham, the Grade II* watermill at Alderford, and the weatherboarded Hulls Mill at the southernmost tip of the Setting Area.
- A strong sense of tranquillity across the area, punctuated only at the bridge crossings on roads between Sible and Castle Hedingham on opposite banks for the river;
- The presence of a connected series of Local Nature Reserves along the floodplain stretching from meadows east of Hedingham School on the northern fringes of the village, to areas of woodland south of Alderford Farm in the heart of the setting area.
- A comprehensive footpath network connecting with the linear Colne Valley Path, which follows the edge of the floodplain, crossing it at the various bridging points along the length of the

setting area. The linear route forms a hinge that connects a series of paths on the valley slopes either side of the river itself.

Landscape sensitivities and value

| Landscape character sensitivity | Visual sensitivity | Landscape value |
|---|--|---|
| Medium to high sensitivity overall 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 a distinct landscape break between the Hedinghams. | Medium visual sensitivity overall, due to its limited visibility within the wider landscape, particularly in central sections in the vicinity of Sible and Castle Hedingham. | Medium to high value sensitivity due to the presence of Local Nature Reserves in the floodplain, public footpaths, including recreational routes alongside river corridors; scattered Listed Buildings, and a strong sense of moderate sense of tranquillity away from roads and development sites. |
| Medium to high | Medium | Medium to high |

4 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 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| SH1 | Medium | Medium to high | Medium | Low to medium |
| SH2 | Medium | Medium to high | Medium | Low to medium |
| SH3 | High | Medium | Medium to high | Low |
| SH4 | Medium | Medium to high | Medium | Low to medium |
| SH5 | Medium to high | Medium to high | Medium to high | Low to medium |
| SH6 | Medium to high | Medium | Medium to high | Low to medium |

- 4.4 The capacity levels for the various Landscape Setting Areas around Sible Hedingham are illustrated on Figure SH4: Landscape Capacity Evaluation Plan. These 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. The Landscape Capacity Evaluation Plan identifies that there are two

different levels of landscape capacity for the Landscape Setting Areas around this settlement: 'Low to Medium' and 'Low'. The various Landscape Setting Areas associated with each of these capacity levels are identified below, together with broad locations where there might be opportunities for any necessary residential or employment development to be accommodated within each area.

Low to medium capacity areas

4.6 Landscape Setting Areas SH1 to SH2 and SH4 to SH6 have been identified as having low to medium capacity to accommodate new residential or employment development. Potential opportunities for incorporating new built development within these setting areas are limited, but include the following:

- farmland to the east of the Alderford Street Conservation Area in the northern parts of Landscape Setting Area SH4, between A1017 at Potter Street as it stretches south of the village and the minor lane extending to the sewage works and Hull's Mill. Any development should be closely related to the existing settlement edge, such as the cluster of properties and business units at Wash Farm, ensuring that there is no adverse impact on the tranquil character of the river valley landscape to the east;
- easternmost parts of Landscape Setting Area SH2, adjacent to the school and Church Street Conservation Area, providing that the pre 18th century and 18th-19th century pattern of field enclosure is safeguarded. Mitigation opportunities include the restoration of the landscape framework around Cuckoo Hill on the Wethersfield Road on the western fringes of the area, and tree and hedgerow planting alongside the stream valley at the northern tip, to improve habitat connectivity in the area;
- along the Yeldham Road at the eastern edge of Landscape Setting Area SH1, associated with the cluster of existing dwellings at Crouch Green at the junction with Nunnery Street, provided that the development does not extend to the upper valley slopes and have an impact on views to Hedingham Castle to the east. Mitigation opportunities include reinforcing the intermittent hedgerows and trees alongside the road, to help enclose any new built development.

4.7 These potential opportunities would need to be verified through a more detailed assessment of the setting areas and new tree/shrub belts should be provided in association with any new built development along the settlement fringes. 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.

4.8 Opportunities for helping accommodate built development within the Landscape Setting Areas SH1 to SH2 and SH4 to SH6 also include enhancing local hedgerow structures and providing additional tree/shrub planting to help soften the appearance of some fringes of the settlement. Opportunities should also be taken to improve the existing Colne Valley Path, creating a landscape recreational

corridor alongside the River Colne in Landscape Setting Area SH6, in close proximity to the fringes of Landscape Setting Areas SH1, SH4 and SH5.

Low capacity areas

- 4.9 Landscape Setting Area SH3 has been identified as having low capacity to accommodate new built development. This low capacity reflects the relatively high landscape sensitivity associated with this area.
- 4.10 There are limited opportunities for accommodating new built development within Landscape Setting Area SH3. If development is necessary within this setting area, then land to the south of School Road and west of Hawkwood Road, adjacent to the existing settlement edge in the north of the area should be examined in more detail. Any development would be outside the areas of pre 18th and 18th-19th century field enclosure present, specifically at Harrowcross and Cobbs Fen. It is desirable that the landscape and visual sensitivities identified in Section 3.3 above should be safe-guarded as part of any development proposal.
- 4.11 The potential opportunities for this Landscape Setting Area would need to be verified through a more detailed landscape and visual assessment of the setting area. New tree/shrub belts should be provided in association with any new built development along any of the settlement fringes, to help integrate development into the adjacent landscape. Any development would need to be consistent with the form and scale of the existing settlement fringe.

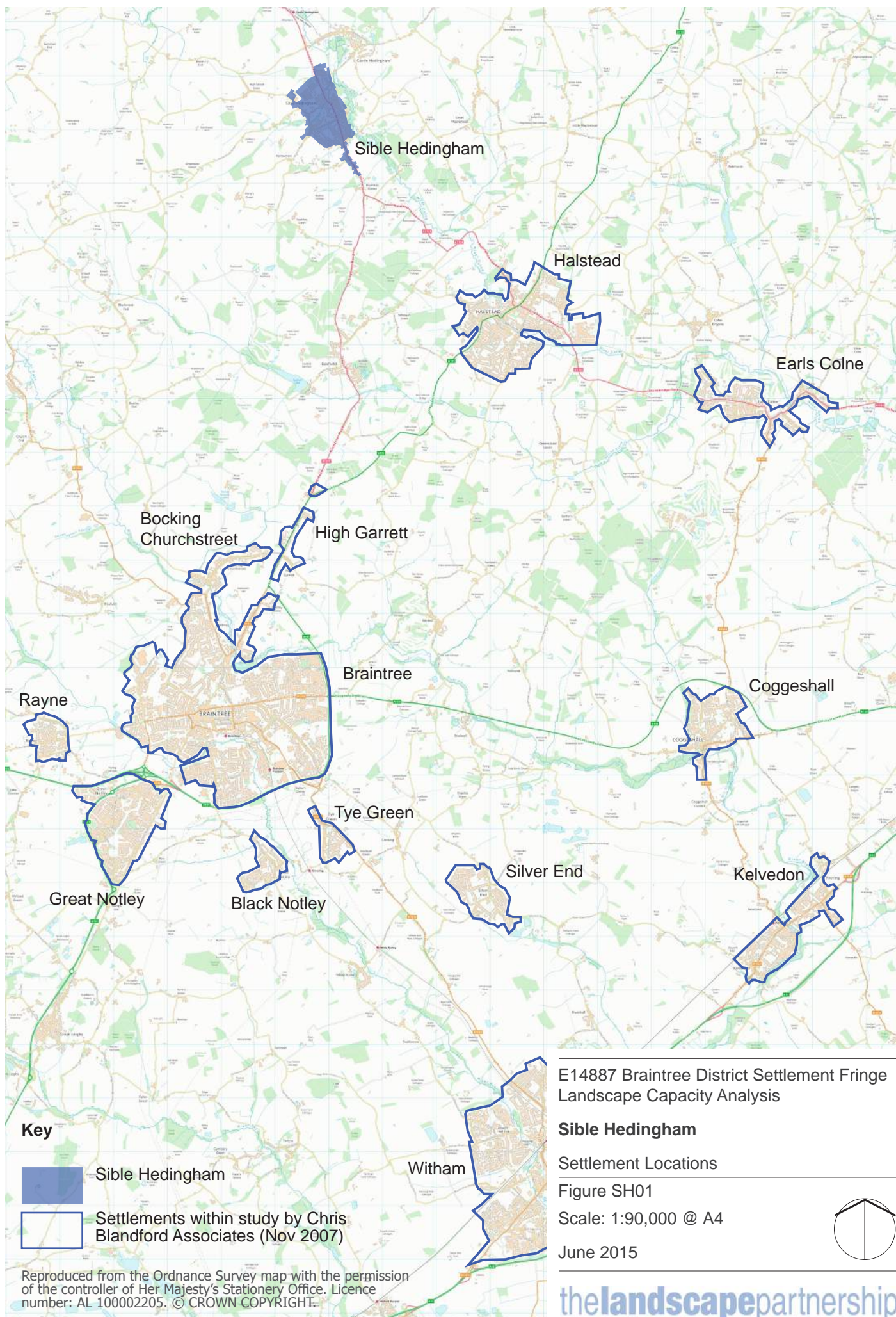
5 Conclusions

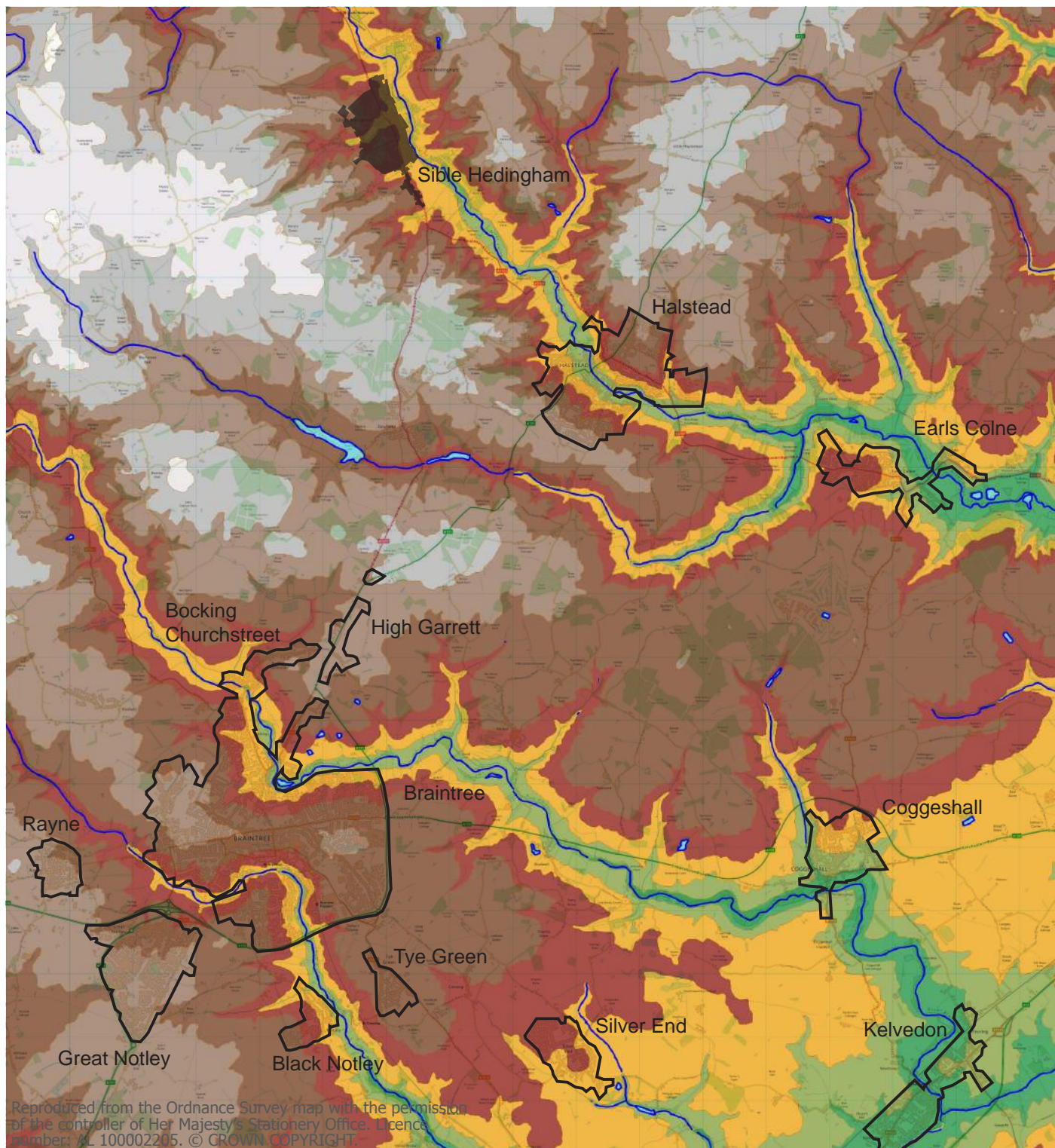
- 5.1 In accordance with the purpose and objectives of the study set out in the introduction to this report, the principal application of this landscape capacity study is to assist Braintree District Council in identifying a broad strategy for housing and employment development in the District and in 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 or low to medium landscape capacity have been identified as locations that are suitable in landscape and visual terms, for limited development (e.g. minor settlement extensions). The landscapes are typically small in scale and have, 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.














Key

-  Sible Hedingham
-  Settlements within study by Chris Blandford Associates (Nov 2007)

Elevation (indicative)

-  90m A.O.D.
-  80m
-  70m
-  60m
-  50m
-  40m
-  30m
-  20m A.O.D.
-  Rivers

E14887 Braintree District Settlement Fringe Landscape Capacity Analysis

Sible Hedingham

Landform and drainage

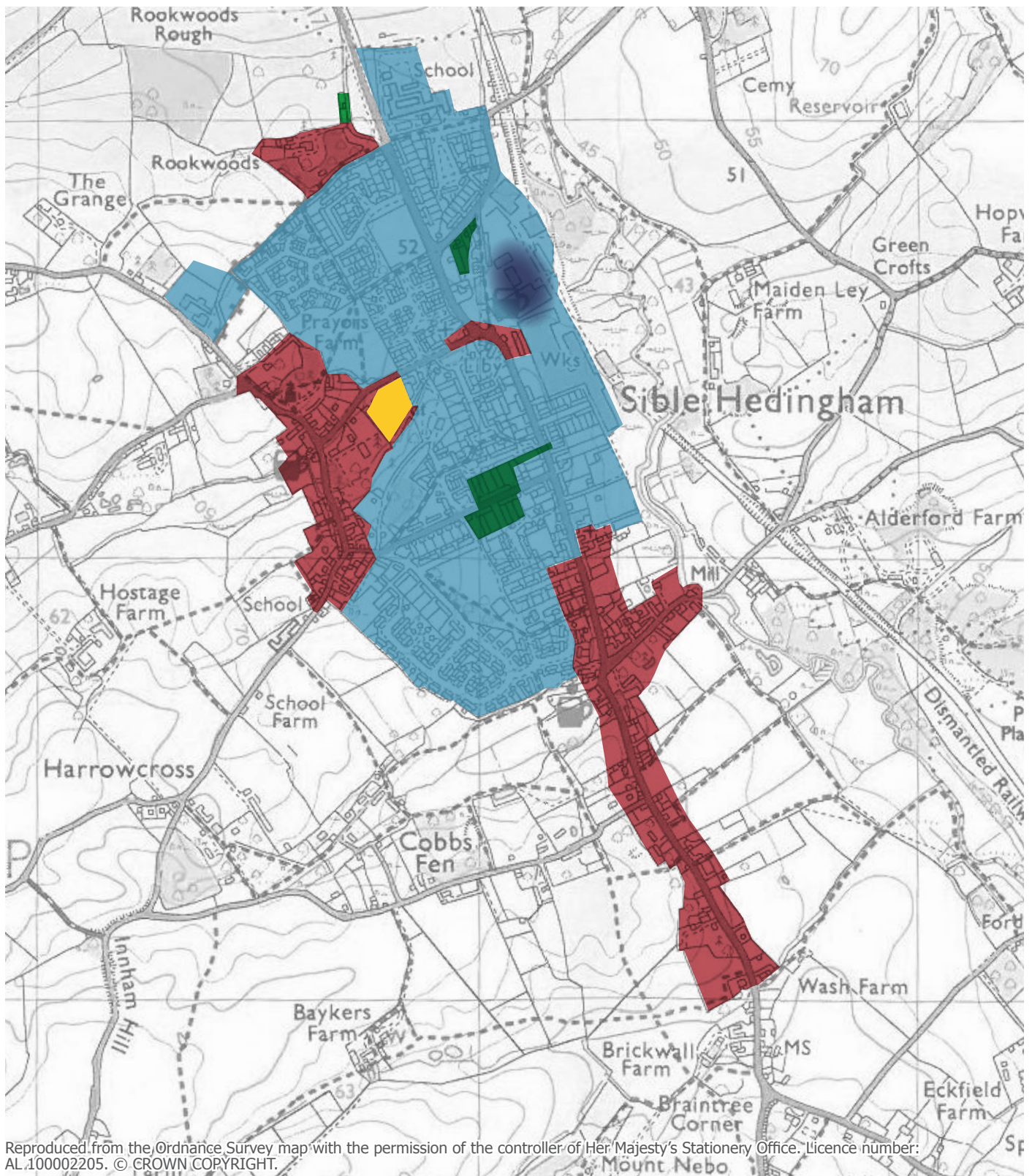
Figure SH02

Scale: 1:90,000 @ A4

June 2015

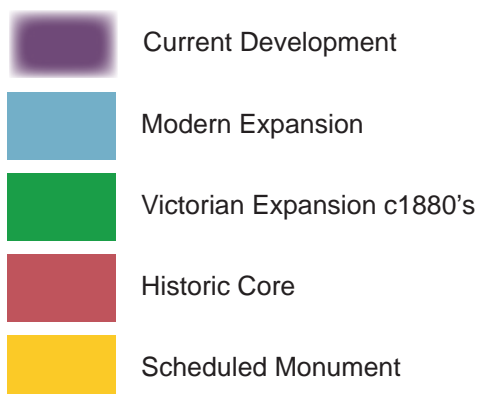


thelandscapepartnership



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence number: AL100002205. © CROWN COPYRIGHT.

Key



E14887 Braintree District Settlement Fringe
Landscape Capacity Analysis

Sible Hedingham

Settlement evolution of Sible Hedingham

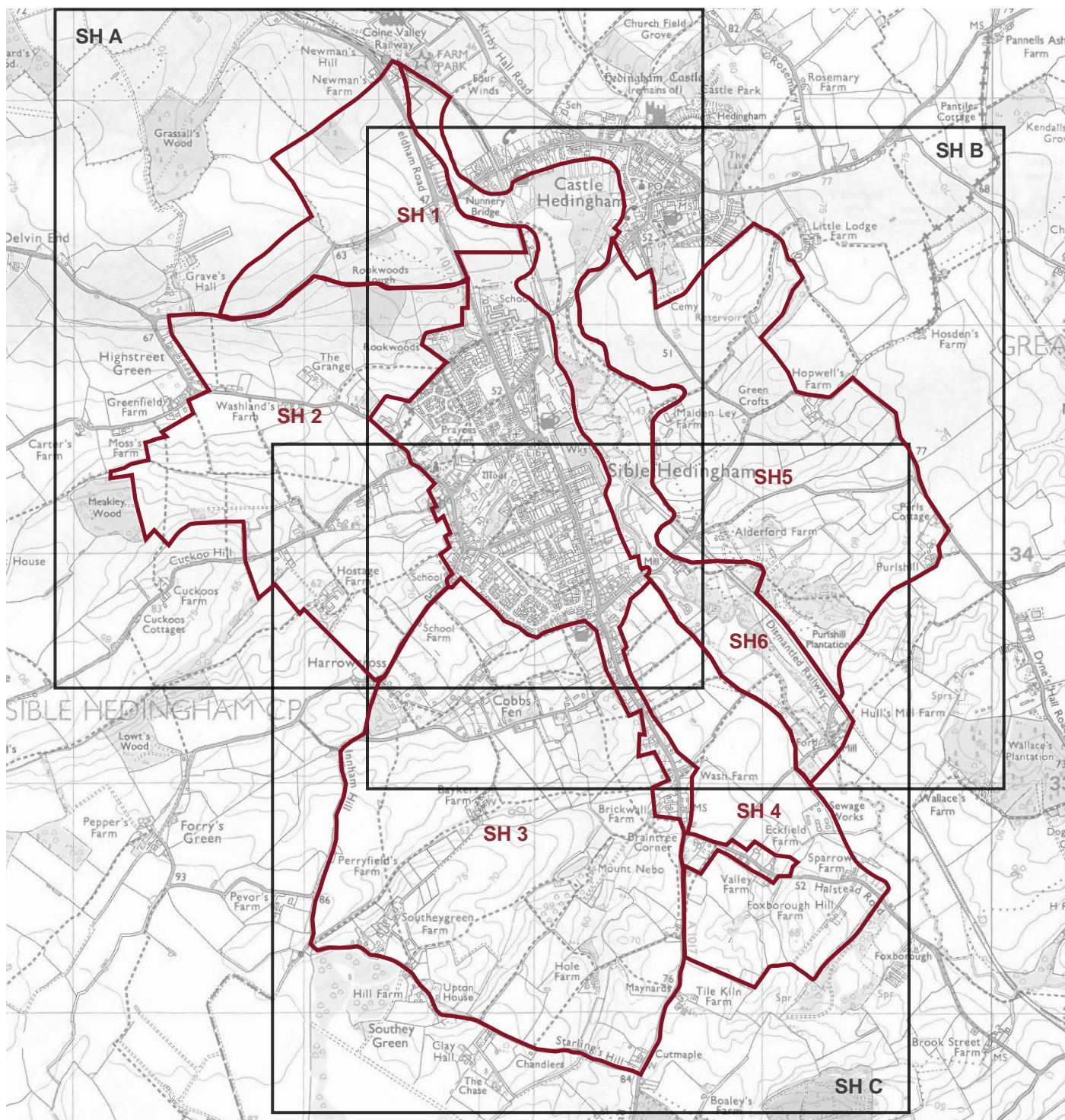
Figure SH03

Scale: 1:12,500 @ A4

June 2015



thelandscapepartnership



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence number: AL 100002205. © CROWN COPYRIGHT.

Key

— Landscape Setting Areas (see Settlement Fringe Analysis Plans SH A - SH C)

E14887 Braintree District Settlement Fringe Landscape Capacity Analysis

Sible Hedingham

Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis – overview

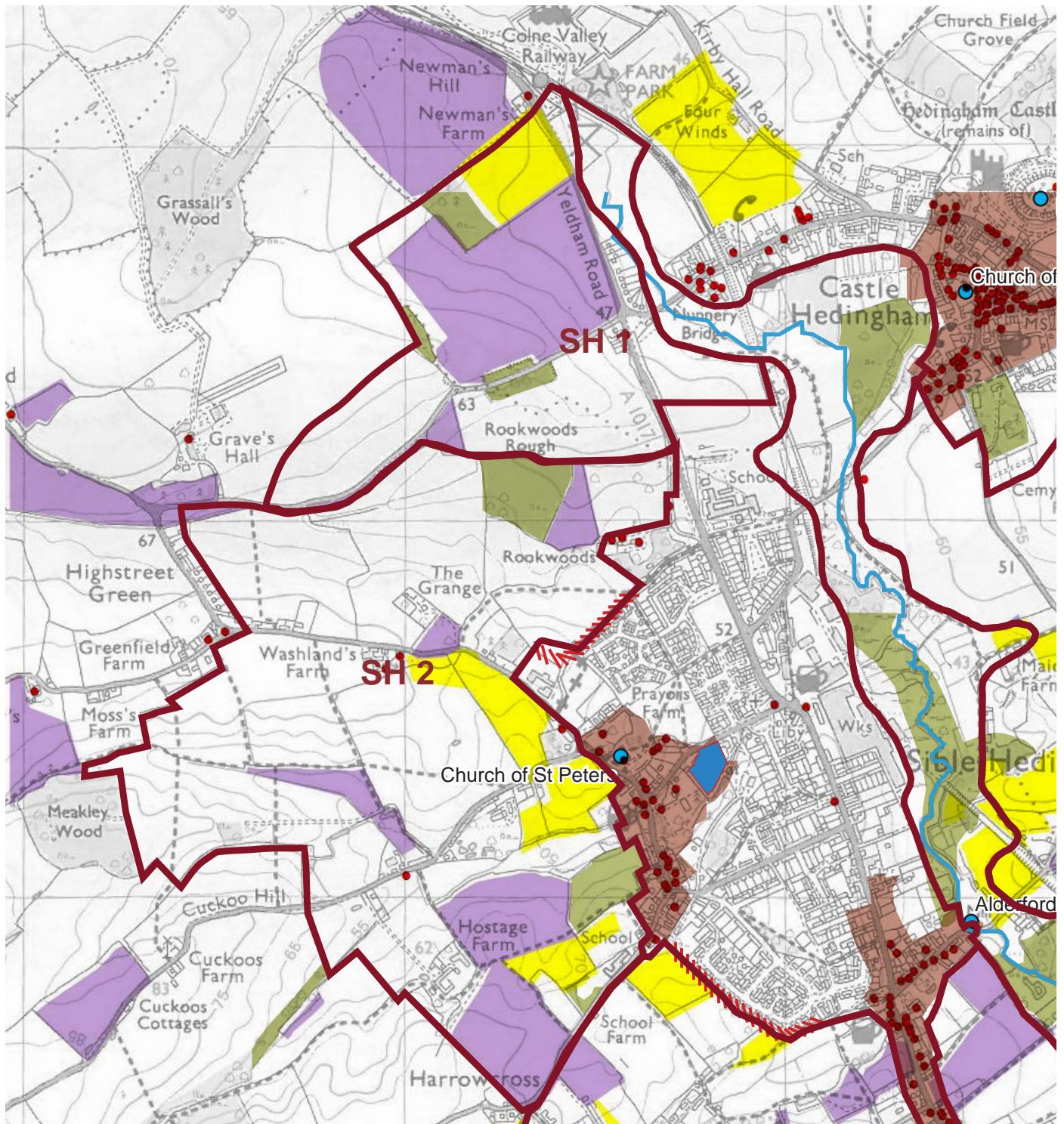
Figure SH04

Scale: 1:25,000 @ A4

June 2015












thelandscapepartnership



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence number: AL 100002205. © CROWN COPYRIGHT.

Key

-  Landmarks
-  Visually Harsh Settlement edges
-  Approximate extent of Key Woodland Blocks and Tree Belts
-  Conservation Areas
-  Ancient Monuments
-  Listed Buildings
-  Water courses and water bodies
-  Pre 18th Century enclosure
-  18th -19th Century enclosure

E14887 Braintree District Settlement Fringe Landscape Capacity Analysis

Sible Hedingham

Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis – Plan A

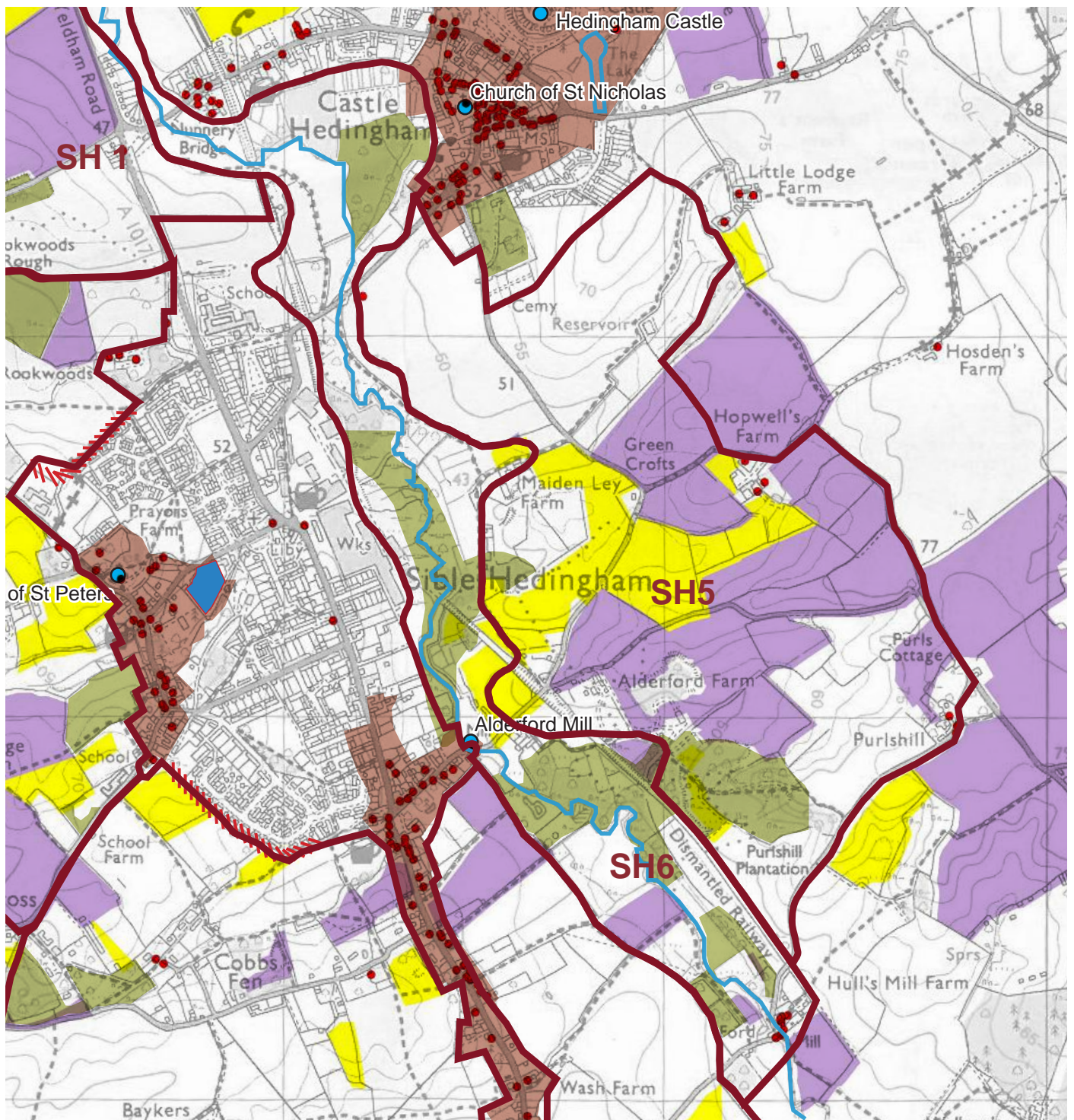
Figure SH05

Scale: 1:15,000 @ A4

June 2015












thelandscapepartnership



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence number: AL 100002205. © CROWN COPYRIGHT.

Key

-  Landmarks
-  Visually Harsh Settlement edges
-  Approximate extent of Key Woodland Blocks and Tree Belts
-  Conservation Areas
-  Ancient Monuments
-  Listed Buildings
-  Water courses and water bodies
-  Pre 18th Century enclosure
-  18th -19th Century enclosure

E14887 Braintree District Settlement Fringe Landscape Capacity Analysis

Sible Hedingham

Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis – Plan B

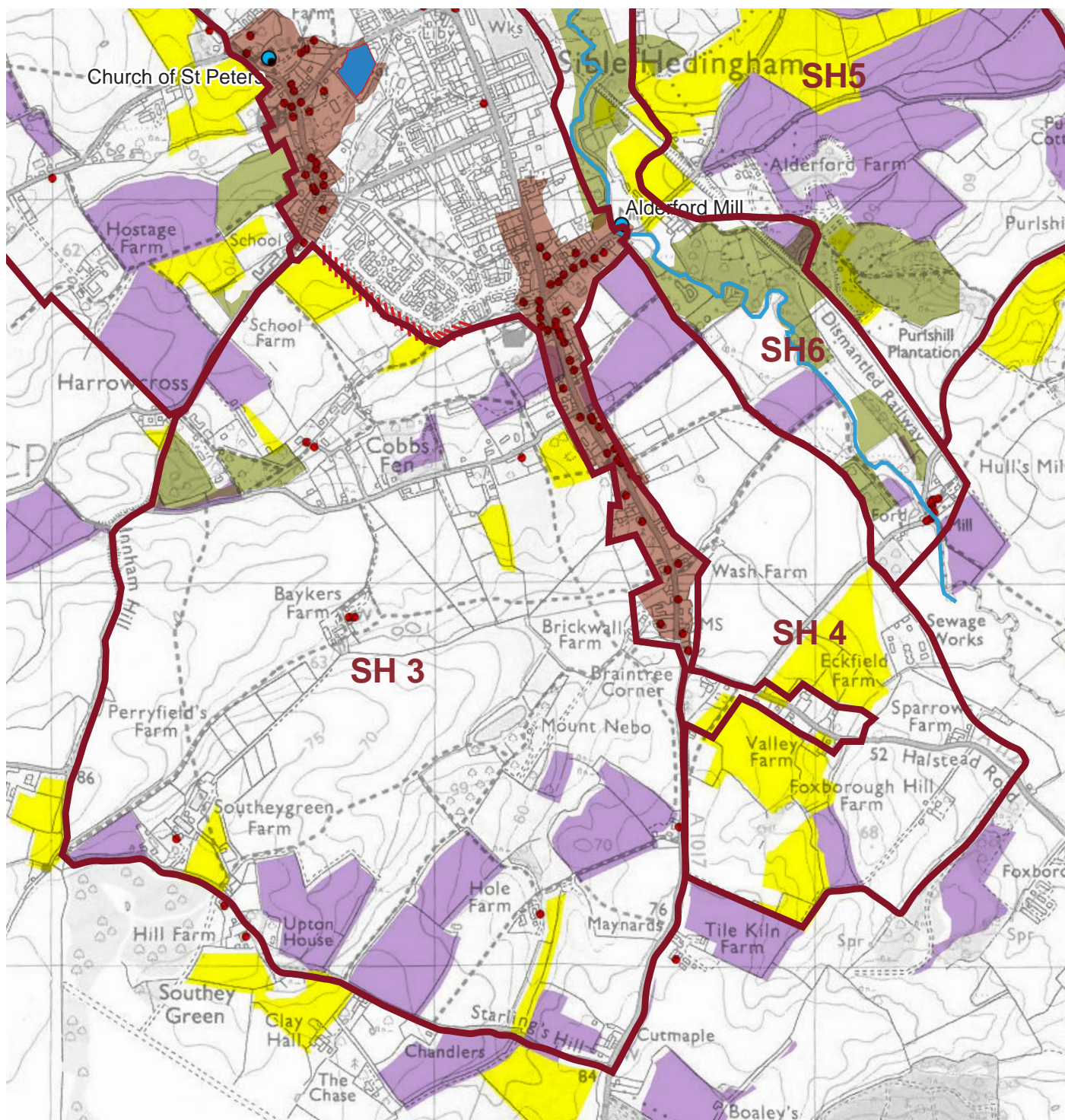
Figure SH06

Scale: 1:15,000 @ A4

June 2015












thelandscapepartnership



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence number: AL 100002205. © CROWN COPYRIGHT.

Key

-  Landmarks
-  Visually Harsh Settlement edges
-  Approximate extent of Key Woodland Blocks and Tree Belts
-  Conservation Areas
-  Ancient Monuments
-  Listed Buildings
-  Water courses and water bodies
-  Pre 18th Century enclosure
-  18th -19th Century enclosure

E14887 Braintree District Settlement Fringe
Landscape Capacity Analysis

Sible Hedingham

Sible Hedingham settlement fringe analysis –
Plan C

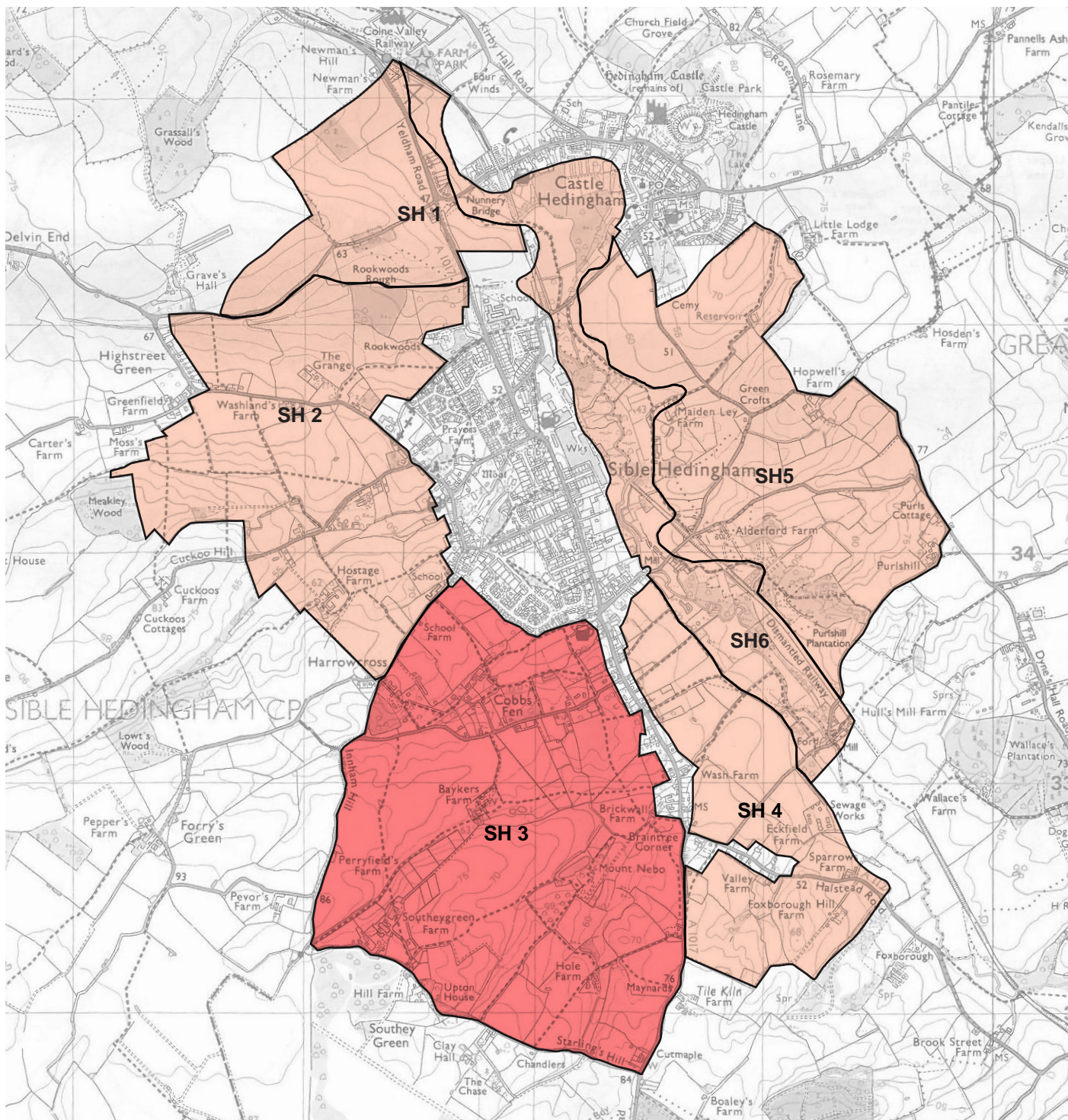
Figure SH07

Scale: 1:15,000 @ A4

June 2015

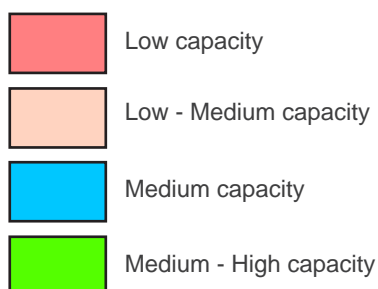


thelandscapepartnership



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Licence number: AL 100002205. © CROWN COPYRIGHT.

Landscape capacity:



E14887 Braintree District Settlement Fringe
Landscape Capacity Analysis

Sible Hedingham

Sible Hedingham Landscape Capacity
Evaluation

Figure SH08

Scale: 1:25,000 @ A4

June 2015



thelandscapepartnership

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 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 recreatability, 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 manmade 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 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 Character Sensitivity | High | High | Low to Medium | High | 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: | |
| View no: | | Photograph ref nos: | | | |
| Direction of view: | | Location: | | | |
| Relevant planning designations: | | | Assessor: | | |
| | | | | | |
| A. LOCAL LANDSCAPE SETTING | | | | | |
| LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SENSITIVITY | | | | | |
| Natural factors: | | | | | |
| Vegetation - <i>hedgerows; tree cover & type; woodland (visually important):</i> | | | | | |
| Water bodies/courses - <i>river (S/M/L); speed (F/M/S); meanders; lake; ponds; bog/wetland; drainage channels/ditches; locks/weirs:</i> | | | | | |
| Cultural factors: | | | | | |
| Land Use - <i>farmland (a/p); forestry/woodland; historic parkland; mineral working; natural; military; other (as described):</i> | | | | | |
| Enclosure & pattern - <i>scale & shape of fields (as referenced in HLC data):</i> | | | | | |
| Landscape quality/condition: | | | | | |
| Landscape character - <i>key features that contribute to the character of the area & make it differ from surrounding areas (landform; hydrology; land cover; field patterns & boundaries; communications, built form, etc):</i> | | | | | |
| Landscape qualities/features - <i>condition; survival or intact-ness; state of repair of individual features/elements (field boundaries; trees & woodland; historic features, etc):</i> | | | | | |

| |
|--|
| Urban edge description - <i>type; quality; character. Perception of the existing urban edge - well integrated/harsh/ad hoc urban fringe:</i> |
| Settlement perception - <i>aesthetic factors; views to settlement (open/filtered or well-screened):</i> |
| Built form/architectural character - <i>timber frame; weatherboard; flint; brick (traditional/modern); stone; slate; thatch; tile:</i> |
| Scale - <i>intimate; small, medium, large:</i> |
| Enclosure - <i>expansive; open; enclosed; constrained:</i> |
| Stimulus - <i>monotonous; bland; interesting; inspiring:</i> |
| Movement - <i>remote; vacant; peaceful; active:</i> |
| Unity - <i>unified; interrupted; fragmented; chaotic:</i> |

OVERALL SENSITIVITY RATING:
LOW / LOW-MEDIUM / MEDIUM /MEDIUM-HIGH

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

General visibility:

Topography/landform influences - *flat; shelving; rolling; undulating; steep slopes; gentle slopes; floodplain; hills; plateau; broad valley; narrow valley; shallow valley:*

Skylines/ridge lines - *Views - panoramic/framed/open/channelled; key views to landmarks/landscape features:*

Tree/woodland cover - *robust/filtered/open views:*

General intervisibility - *degree to which the area is widely visible from, and positively influences the character of, surrounding areas:*

Broad description of potential views - *who sees the setting area (nearby residents/users of nearby roads/users of public rights of way):*

Distinctive approaches/gateways/nodes:

Pedestrian movement - *good/restricted access; green corridors/bridges; links/connections to the adjacent countryside:*

OVERALL SENSITIVITY RATING:
LOW / LOW-MEDIUM / MEDIUM /MEDIUM-HIGH

LANDSCAPE VALUE

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/ponds:*

Tranquility - *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/gardens); public access; permeability:*

OVERALL VALUE RATING:

LOW / LOW-MEDIUM / MEDIUM /MEDIUM-HIGH

OVERALL SETTING SUMMARY

B. POTENTIAL MITIGATION OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACTS

Overall opportunities - *e.g. development of green links (public right of way provision); screening of visual detractors (e.g. woodland linkages); general enhancements of hedgerows/woodlands; conserve & enhance the landscape setting of settlements; conserve & enhance views:*