



Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB *Evaluation of Area Between Bures and Sudbury*

Final Report



July 2016

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1: Introduction

1.1 Appointment

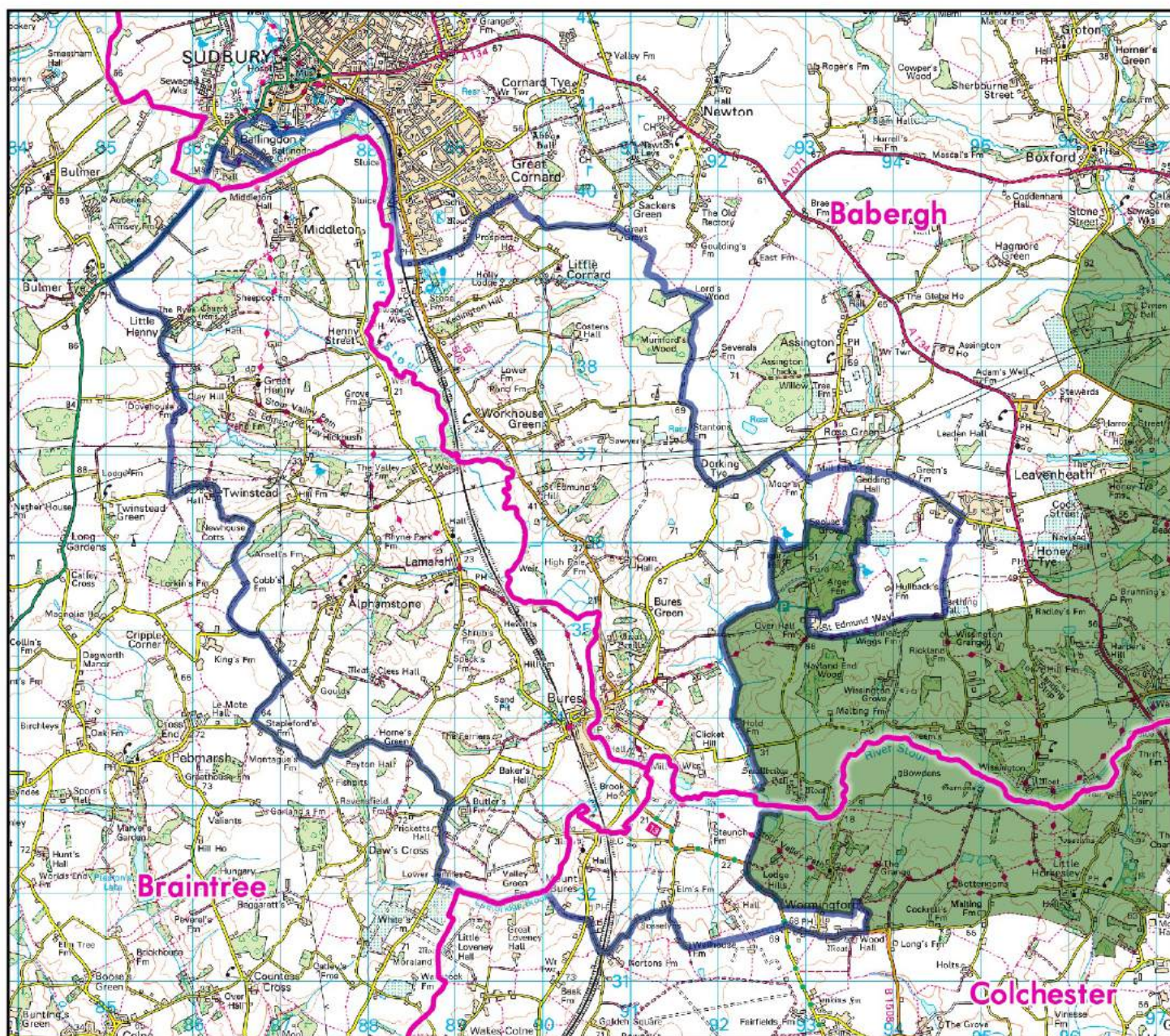
- 1.1.1 This report has been prepared by Alison Farmer Associates in association with Julie Martin Associates and Countryside on behalf of The Dedham Vale AONB Partnership. The aim of the study has been to review, update and gather evidence on the special qualities of an evaluation area to determine its suitability for designation as AONB using Natural England's Guidance¹. The evaluation area was initially defined in the brief and lies within the Dedham Vale Special Project Area between the existing AONB boundary and Sudbury.

1.2 Background and Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Dedham Vale AONB is the fourth smallest AONB of the AONB's in England and Wales (57 sq. km). Since its first designation in 1970 there have been two extensions to the boundary as follows:
- Polstead and Sulleys Hill, Raydon extension 1978 (addition of 15 sq kms)
 - Nayland-with-Wissington Extension 1991 (addition of 17 sq kms)
- 1.2.2 The evaluation area defined in the brief (refer to Drawing 1) includes land beyond the existing western boundary of the AONB, along the Stour Valley as far north as Sudbury – part of the middle reaches of the Stour Valley. The extent of the evaluation area is based on the definition of the Stour Valley as a landscape unit and includes the valley floor, valley sides and edges of the wider farmed landscape which forms the upper lip of the valley.
- 1.2.3 The evaluation area falls within the Stour Valley Project Area, created in 1988 in order to support landscape improvements in a potential AONB area beyond the AONB boundary.
- 1.2.4 The origins of the Stour Valley Project Area stem from early pressure on the Countryside Commission by Local Authorities in the 1970's to consider a wider area for designation. The Countryside Commission, in response to this, set up a "potential AONB" project² in 1978. This project was considerably widened in 1981 and eventually became the basis for a project covering the existing AONB, the potential AONB area and an even wider area of the Stour Valley (refer to Map 1 below which illustrates extent).

¹ Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, March 2011 Natural England

² Designation History Series, Dedham Vale AONB, Ray Woolmore, May 2010, para 82.



Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale Landscape

Drawing 1:
Evaluation Area with Administrative Boundaries

March 2016



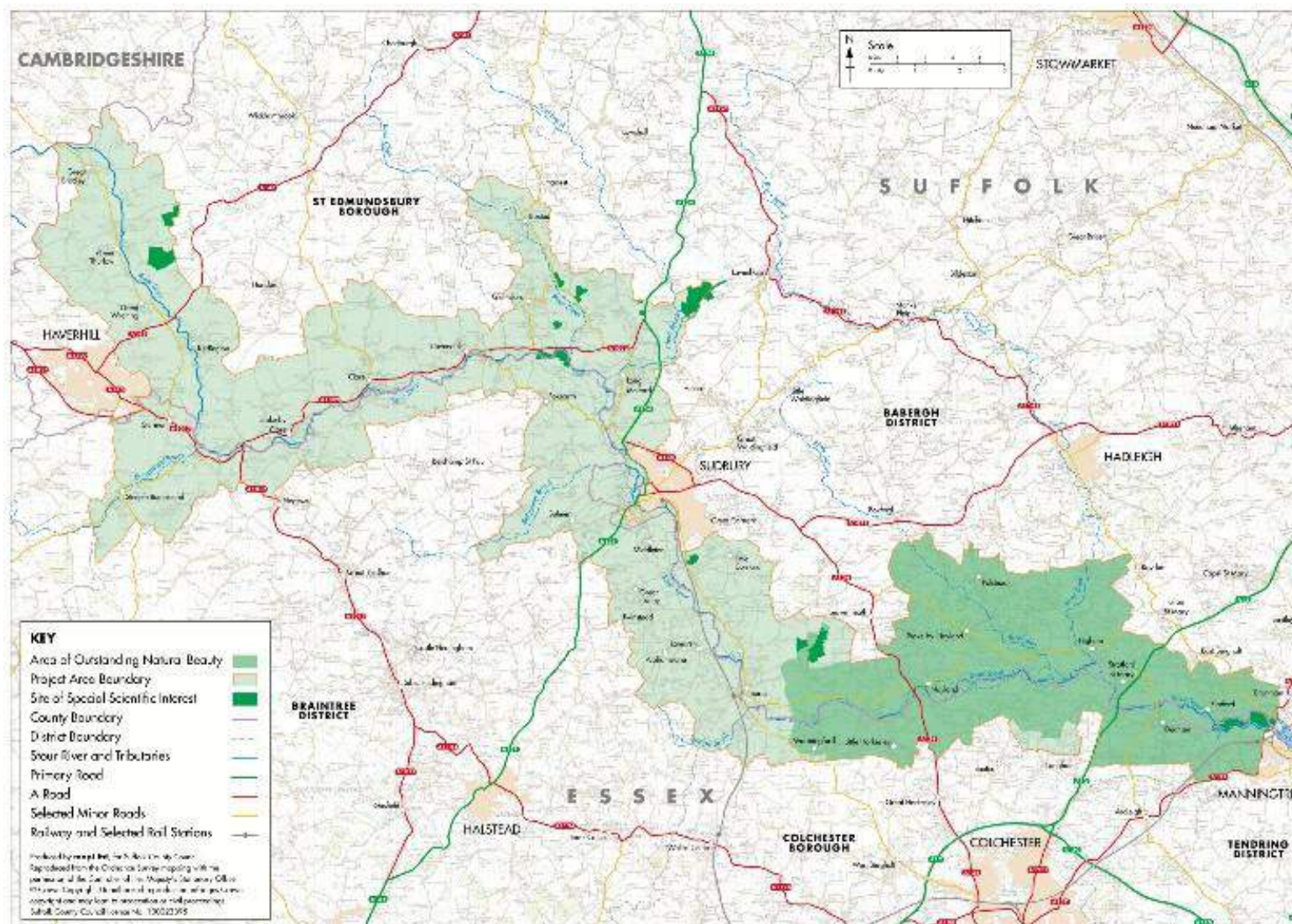
0 1 2 3 4 km

 Dedham Vale AONB

 Evaluation Area

 District Council

Map 1: Extent of Existing AONB and wider Stour Valley Project Area (taken from the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010-2015)



- 1.2.5 The extension of the AONB along the Stour Valley to the west and north has been an aspiration of local authorities, interested parties and subsequently the AONB Joint Advisory Committee for a number of years and is described in more detail in Section 3 of this report.
- 1.2.6 In November 2009 the AONB Partnership resolved to approach Natural England to seek an AONB extension in the area as far as Sudbury. In 2014 the Partnership gathered additional information/evidence and submitted this to Natural England to demonstrate how the proposed area satisfied the statutory criterion for designation as AONB. This assessment did not conclude one way or the other regarding whether the evaluation area qualified for designation but rather set out evidence for the whole area using the designation criteria defined in Natural England's Guidance for Assessing Landscapes for Designation (see section 1.3 below)³. The data relevant to natural beauty, gathered during this exercise, has been used as a starting point for the evaluation work set out in this report, supplemented by further information and field assessment, ensuring that evidence gathered and judgements made follow best practice. Data relating to recreation has not been used as this is only relevant to the designation of a landscape as National Park.
- 1.2.7 There remains a strong consensus for the consideration of this area as suitable for designation which is also noted in the draft Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project Area Management Plan 2016-2021 (endorsed by Partnership members on 1st April 2016) which states on page 17 that:
- 'In addition to the Partnership's long term ambition, the Local Authorities with parts of the area involved, Essex and Suffolk counties and Braintree and Babergh districts have written letters of support for the proposal to extend the current AONB boundary'.*
- 1.2.8 Over time, support for a proposed extension to the AONB has also been expressed by The Dedham Vale Society and Colne Stour Countryside Association.
- 1.2.9 The evaluation work set out in this report has been carried out alongside a parallel study to encapsulate the special qualities of the existing AONB, again in accordance with the factors relevant to assessing natural beauty. This latter piece of work forms a separately bound document titled *'The Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB'* and sets out evidence to support the designation of the area as AONB.

1.3 Natural England Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for Designation

- 1.3.1 Natural England Guidance on assessing landscapes for designation provides a clear approach including principles, criteria and indicators relevant to assessing landscapes for designation and also the way in which a detailed boundary should be defined; it also explains Natural England's approach to designation when receiving requests for boundary variations.
- 1.3.2 The Guidance sets out the legal framework to National Park and AONB designation; and outlines the practical application of the statutory criteria for

³ Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, March 2011 Natural England

designation. In the case of AONBs the key technical criterion that needs to be met is natural beauty. Three questions apply:

1. Does the landscape have sufficient natural beauty?
2. Is it desirable to designate this landscape as AONB?
3. Where should the boundary be drawn?

- 1.3.3 The Guidance draws attention to two distinct stages in assessing landscapes - **characterisation** and **evaluation**. The characterisation stage enables a spatial framework or evaluation area(s) to be defined. The evaluation area(s) are then tested against the natural beauty criterion using specific indicators and factors (as set out in appendix 1 of the Guidance and for ease provided in Appendix 1 of this report). Areas which meet the natural beauty criterion form candidate area(s). Issues to be addressed when defining the extent of qualifying land, such as transitional areas, incongruous features and settlements are recorded. Having identified a candidate area it is then necessary to consider whether it is desirable to designate the qualifying area(s) as an extension to the existing AONB. For this an understanding of the special qualities of the candidate area, issues and pressures affecting the special qualities and current management arrangements is necessary. Finally the Guidance sets out principles for defining a detailed boundary.
- 1.3.4 This study is concerned with answering the first of the three questions set out above, through a review of existing evidence collated from earlier studies, updating of evidence where necessary and the gathering of additional relevant evidence. This study does not include the drawing of a proposed detailed boundary but goes as far as defining a 'candidate area' of qualifying land within which a boundary may be drawn at a later date. This study has also given some general consideration to the desirability to designate insofar as it sets out current issues and existing management arrangements within the Stour Valley. This information is provided as background and a starting point for Natural England's further consideration.

1.4 Methodology and Approach to the Review

- 1.4.1 This evaluation work has included desk study and field assessment. Background documents and evidence (including GIS datasets) were requested from the AONB and included data for both Suffolk and Essex, and three Local Authorities namely Babergh, Braintree and Colchester (refer to Drawing 1 for details on administrative areas). Data on existing designations and landscape character assessments were compiled digitally in a GIS. Fieldwork was undertaken to check evidence, gather evidence on matters such as scenic quality, condition, tranquillity and relative wildness and to update evidence from previous assessment work.
- 1.4.2 The following documents were reviewed as part of the work:

Landscape Character Assessment

- *Dedham Vale Landscape Assessment: Technical Report* to the Countryside Commission and others, Landscape Design Associates, 1996.
- *The Dedham Vale Landscape, An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, Countryside Commission, 1997.
- *East of England Landscape Character Assessment (2009)*.
- *Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment* 2009 and updated 2011.
- *Essex Landscape Character Assessment*, Chris Blandford Associates, 2003.

- *Braintree Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates, September 2006.*
- *Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates, November 2005.*
- *Historic Landscape Characterisation, Suffolk (2008).*
- *Managing a Masterpiece Landscape Partnership, Historic Landscape Study, 2013.*
- *The Stour Valley Heritage Compendia, The Historic Landscape Compendium, Howard Brooks, 2013.*
- *The Stour Valley Heritage Compendia, The Stour Navigation Compendium, Sean O'Dell and Steve Munro, 2013.*

Natural Beauty Evaluation

- *Designation History Series: Dedham Vale AONB, Countryside Commission, 2010.*
- *Natural Beauty Evaluation Table - Stour Valley extension to Dedham Vale AONB - Wormingford to Sudbury, 2014.*

Land Management

- *Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project Area, Management Plan 2016-2021 (Endorsed by Partnership Members).*
- *Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010-2015, Strategy.*
- *Braintree District Protected Lanes Assessment, July 2013.*

1.4.3 This evaluation work has included the following:

- A review of the existing evaluation area between Wormingford and Sudbury;
- A detailed evaluation of the landscape within the evaluation area to identify land worthy of designation and therefore a 'candidate area' which may be taken forward by Natural England and within which a detailed boundary can be drawn at a later date;
- Brief analysis of current management mechanisms including the service provided by the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project.

1.4.4 The work to define a candidate area has given consideration to land allocated for development, features of interest, transitional areas, incongruous development and the inclusion or exclusion of settlements.

1.5 Format of Report

1.5.1 The remainder of this report covers the following:

- **Section 2** considers past character assessments and explains the components of the landscape;
- **Section 3** sets out the designation history and past evaluation work for the area;
- **Section 4** includes a detailed evaluation of the area setting out the weight of evidence in relation to the factors and indicators which contribute to the area's natural beauty;
- **Section 5** sets out the conclusions of the evaluation and considers in general terms current management issues and resources.

2: The Evaluation Area

2.1 Landscape Character Assessments as a Framework

- 2.1.1 The Stour Valley, and parts thereof, are included within a number of different character assessments. Character assessments are often carried out for administrative areas such as counties and districts and as such many of the early assessments for the Stour Valley did not consider the valley as a whole as the division between administrative areas runs down the middle of the River Stour.
- 2.1.2 This issue was rectified with the Managing a Masterpiece Landscape Partnership Scheme which undertook landscape character assessment work and brought together relevant character assessments for the existing AONB and wider Stour Valley Project Area and also integrated historic character into written descriptions. The result was the publication of the Managing a Masterpiece, Historic Landscape Study (2013). This is the most up to date and detailed landscape character assessment covering the whole of the AONB and the whole of the evaluation area in a consistent way. It is therefore an important assessment providing valuable baseline data on the landscape which can be used to inform evaluation. The Managing a Masterpiece assessment defines three character types within the evaluation area namely Valley Meadowlands (valley floor), Rolling Valley Farmlands (valley sides) and Ancient Rolling Farmlands (surrounding farmland) and these are illustrated on drawing 2. Extracts of the landscape character types can be found in Appendix 2 of the report.
- 2.1.3 Earlier landscape character assessments which cover the Evaluation Area have also be reviewed as part of this project to gather any further information on special qualities of the area. The assessments which have been referred to are summarised below:

The Dedham Vale Landscape (1996/7)

- 2.1.4 This landscape character assessment of the existing AONB is relatively dated and not consistent with the 2002 guidance on landscape assessment. It identifies landscape types only. Despite this it clearly articulates the special qualities of the existing AONB providing a description of the 'outstanding qualities' of the AONB as a whole and as such is a useful point of reference in relation to any proposed AONB extension.

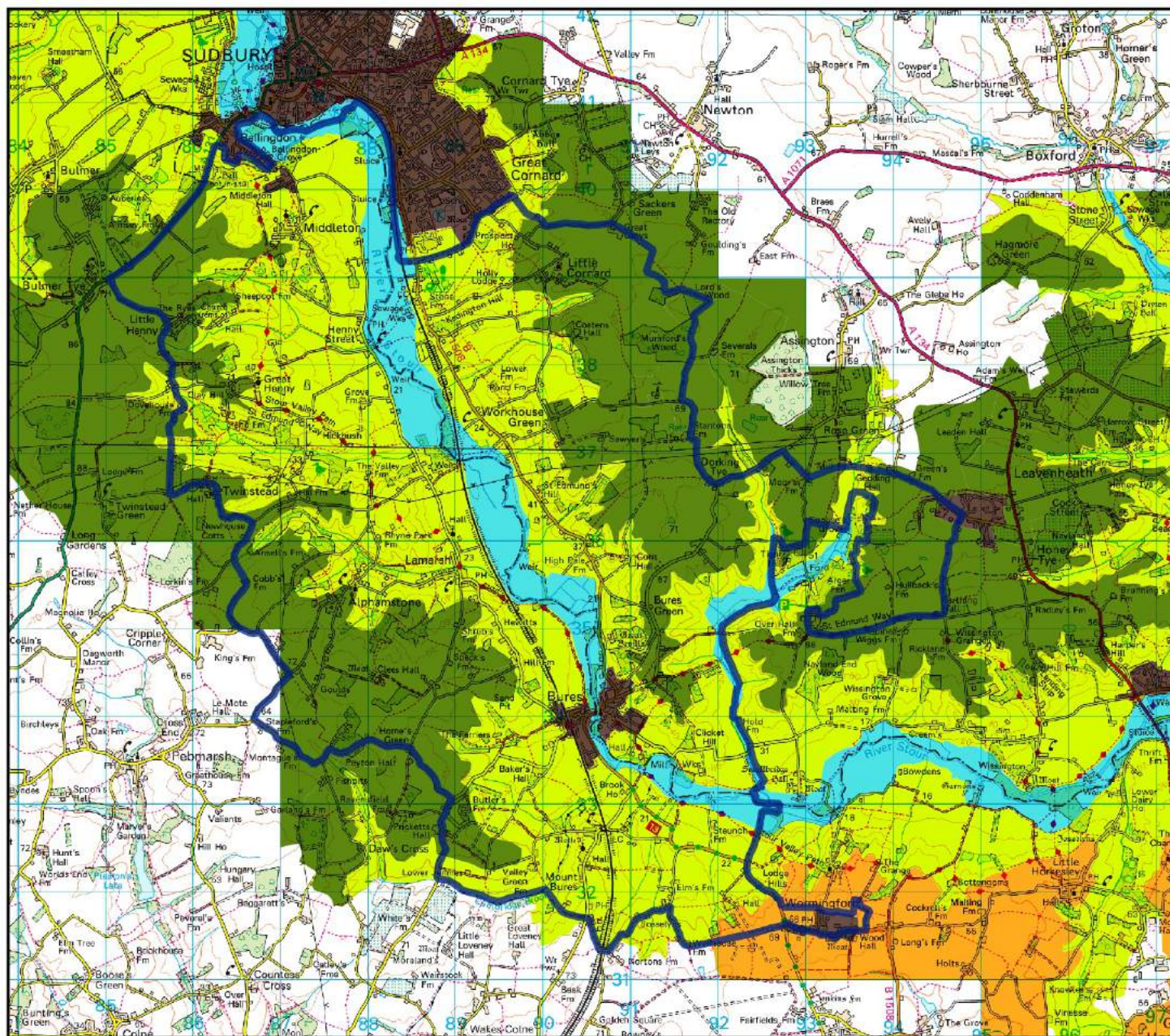
East of England Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

- 2.1.5 This landscape character assessment defines landscape character types only. It covers the whole of Suffolk and Essex and therefore provides a unified classification across the whole of the Stour Valley and evaluation area. Although the written descriptions are not detailed the classification nonetheless illustrates the repetitive pattern of landscape types and provides useful material for evaluation.

Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (2009 and updated 2011)

- 2.1.6 This character assessment defines only landscape character types and covers the Suffolk side of the evaluation area only. There are a range of different landscape types within this part of the Stour Valley and the written descriptions provide useful information relevant to assessing natural beauty. This assessment has been subject to public consultation.

Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003)



Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale Landscape

Drawing 2:
Landscape Character

March 2016




0 1 2 3 4 km

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Ordnance Survey 0100031673


 Evaluation Area

Landscape Character Type

 Ancient rolling farmlands

 Plateau farmlands

 Rolling valley farmlands

 Valley meadowlands

 Urban

- 2.1.7 This county landscape character assessment was prepared in parallel with the district assessment but published slightly later. It identifies 7 landscape types and 35 landscape character areas and covers only half of the Stour Valley within the evaluation area. The landscape descriptions provided are very brief – focusing mainly on land form and land cover – and no reference is made to public consultation.

Braintree District Landscape Assessment (2006)

- 2.1.8 This character assessment defines landscape character areas. Within the evaluation area are two landscape areas namely A2 Stour River Valley and area B6 Wickham Farmland Plateau. The description of character in the assessment provides some useful information relevant to evaluation. The boundaries of these two character areas correlate with the boundaries of the Rolling Valley Sides and Ancient Rolling Farmlands character types.

Colchester Borough Landscape Assessment (2005)

- 2.1.9 This character assessment defines landscape character areas. Within the evaluation area are three landscape areas namely A7 Stour River Valley Sides, A8 Stour River Valley Floor and B5 Rochfords Farmland Plateau. The description of character in the assessment provides some useful information relevant to evaluation. The boundaries of these three character areas correlate with the boundaries of the Rolling Valley Sides and Ancient Rolling Farmlands character types.

2.2 Defining and Reviewing the Evaluation Area Extent

- 2.2.1 An evaluation area comprising all of the Stour Valley between Wormingford and Sudbury as well as tributary valleys especially to the west was defined as part of the project brief. This was taken as the starting point for evaluation.
- 2.2.2 As noted in the NE Guidance (para 4.4) *"The use of Evaluation Areas is intended merely to make the practical work of detailed evaluation of landscapes more manageable. It is not intended to lead to the designation or exclusion from designation of any land merely because of the way in which Evaluation Areas have been defined. That is why the process is intended to be flexible and iterative in its application"*.
- 2.2.3 Therefore, where appropriate during the evaluation stage, land adjacent to the evaluation area was also considered to ensure that features of interest at the margins of the evaluation area were noted in accordance with guidance. The evaluation area is illustrated on Drawing Number 2 in association with landscape character types from the Managing a Masterpiece assessment. The extent of the evaluation area is predominately defined by the upper slopes of the valley sides therefore encapsulating the valley as a landscape unit. It also includes a number on intricate tributary valleys on the western side.

3: Designation History

3.1 References to the Wider Stour Valley in the Designation of the AONB

- 3.1.1 The following chronology sets out the main milestones in the designation of the existing AONB, the occasions when the landscape within the evaluation area was considered for designation, and the reasons why it was rejected.

Table 3.1: Summary of key milestones and consideration of the evaluation area in designation history

Date	Evaluation/Study
Designation History I	
1945	John Dower Report. No mention was made of Dedham Vale
1947	Hobhouse Report. No mention was made of Dedham Vale
1965	Three County planning authorities responsible for Dedham Vale area reviewed the area's possible designation as an AONB in light of increasing pressure for development. They focused on the area between East Bergholt, Dedham and Nayland.
Dec 1966	West Suffolk county planning officer wrote to the National Parks Commission (NPC) to place on record that the study noted above was a preliminary to a study of the wider Stour Valley, the visual character of which was in no way inferior to that smaller part of the valley known as Dedham Vale and ultimately the AONB could be extended westward beyond Nayland. The National Parks Commission (NPC) replied that it was likely that evidence would be provided to support an extension westward up the Stour Valley (Designation History para 12). However, it is not clear from this early correspondence how far westward each party was considering.
1966	National Parks Commission formally agree to proceed with the designation of the area around Dedham and East Bergholt.
1967	During the consultation on the boundary of the proposed AONB, Essex Rivers Authority and the Suffolk Preservation Society suggested a westward extension of the proposed AONB along the Stour Valley into an area which both bodies believed merited AONB designation (Designation History para 16)
1970	Minister of Housing and Local Government confirmed designation of the area around Dedham under National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. No consideration was given to a wider AONB to the west.
1970	Dedham Vale Joint Conference created to administer the AONB
Designation History II	
1972	Dedham Vale Conference wrote to the Countryside Commission (Co Co) indicating that all three County Councils had adopted the Dedham Vale Joint Conference's recommendation to consult the Commission on the possibilities of extending the AONB.
1972	County Councils presented proposals for an extension westwards to include Box Valley, Polstead and Sulley Hills, Raydon.
1971-73	Countryside Commission reviewed the proposals and selected the Polstead and Raydon extensions to take forward.
1976	Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council were asked by Co Co to prepare a preliminary map of the proposed extensions.

1976	Countryside Commission prepared a paper "Proposed Extension to the Dedham Vale AONB Polstead (Box Valley) and Raydon Areas". This document made it clear that although requests had previously been made to extend the boundary further west along the Stour Valley towards Sudbury, the Countryside Commission did not favour this, noting that although the Stour Valley was pleasant and attractive in local terms, it was not of national landscape significance, and the local authorities had accepted this view.
1977	Consultation on boundary extensions - Polstead and Sulleys Hill, Raydon Extensions. CPRE commented on the proposed extensions expressing regret that the extensions did not cover a wider area up the Stour Valley to Sudbury (Designation History para 43).
1978	Formal designation of the first boundary extension to the AONB.
1978	Dedham Vale Joint Committee pressed the Countryside Commission to extend the boundary westwards to Bures.
Designation History III	
1978	<p>Party of Commissioners for the Countryside Commission visit the AONB to consider requests for a further extension westwards to Bures and beyond nearly to Sudbury.</p> <p>Countryside Commission agreed to consider the designation of a "potential AONB" from the western boundary up to Bures on the basis that the work of the Dedham Vale AONB Joint Conference could improve the area's quality through conservation work and development control so that it could be considered in years to come and not before the end to the 1980's (Designation History para 58).</p>
1981	Dedham Vale Landscape Project was established to cover the existing AONB and "potential AONB area" up to Bures.
1982	Secretary of State for the Environment invited the Countryside Commission to review the boundaries of all AONBs in England.
1985	Countryside Commission publishes programme of boundary reviews including Dedham Vale AONB.
1988	<p>Countryside Commission Officers considered three boundary options (Map 6 of the Designation History):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) whole of 1978 "potential AONB" 2) smaller area with closer associations with Constable and landscape 3) slight larger area than b) utilising land contours but excludes Bures <p>A further wider option as far north as the tributary valleys around Alphamstone was also put forward by the newly formed Dedham Vale Joint Advisory Committee.</p> <p>Option 3) was preferred.</p>
1989	Dedham Vale JAC prepared a draft Dedham Vale Management Plan for the Project Area with appropriate emphasis on the AONB
1991	Formal consultation on Option c) and formal designation. This was to be the second boundary extension to the AONB - Nayland-with-Wissington Extension. Wider Stour Valley including Bures and to the north of the village was rejected by the Countryside Commission on the basis that the valley slopes were less distinct and resembled rolling lowland, with a predominately arable

	appearance, especially the valley bottom. The Countryside Commission went on to comment on the wider area proposed by the JAC was different in character and somewhat degraded (Designation History Series, para 61).
1991	Consultation response from Braintree District Council on the proposed extension to Wormingford made it clear they wished to see an extension which comprised land within the parishes of Alphamstone, Lamarsh and Bures Hamlet, though excluding the settlement of Bures Hamlet itself.
1991	Confirmation of the Designation Order for the Extension (Nayland-with-Wissington) to the Dedham Vale AONB.
Designation History IV	
1997	Landscape character assessment of Dedham Vale prepared by Landscape Design Associates and published by Countryside Commission.
2004	First Dedham Vale Management Plan published.
2009	Dedham Vale Landscape Partnership agreed to seek an extension to the AONB boundary.
2010	Second Dedham Vale Management Plan published.
2010	Dedham Vale AONB Designation History published (Ray Woolmore).
March 2012	Natural England Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for National Park and AONB Designation approved by Natural England Board.
2014	Assessment of natural beauty between existing AONB boundary and Sudbury prepared by the AONB and Stour Valley Project Team.
2016	Draft third Dedham Vale Management Plan published for consultation.

3.2 Countryside Commission Designation History Series

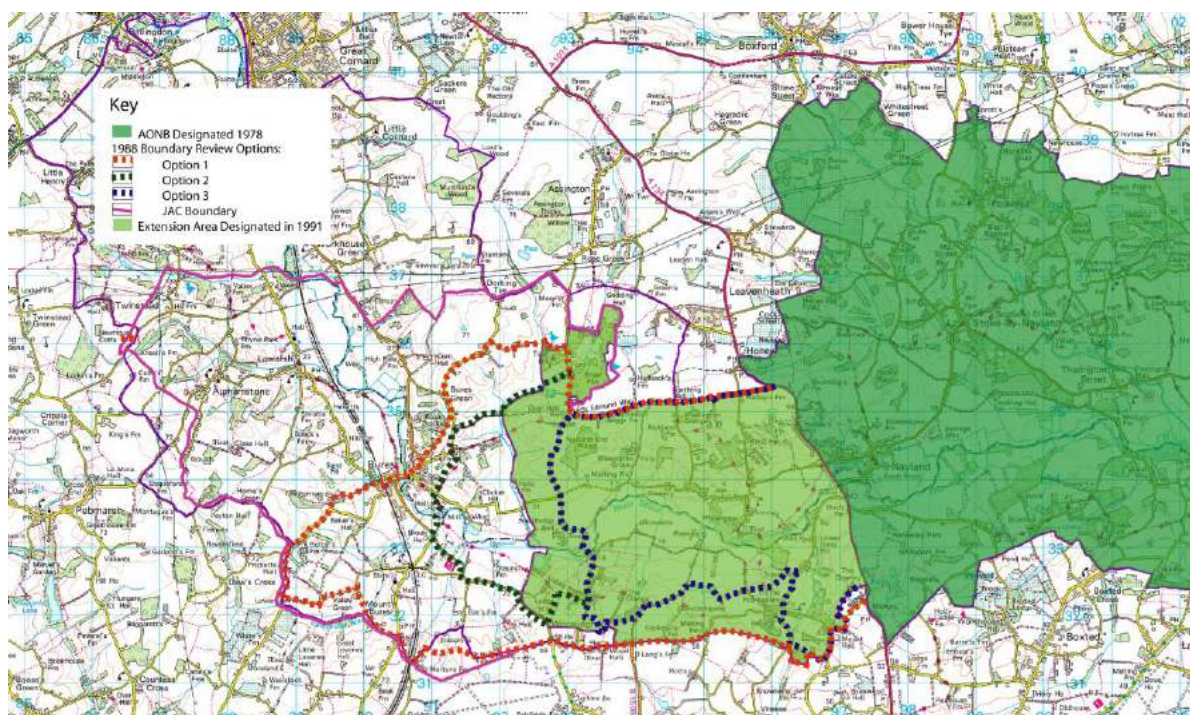
3.2.1 The Countryside Commission Designation History series for the Dedham Vale AONB indicates that the Stour Valley was not identified for designation by Dower or Hobhouse but that the Stour Valley west of Wormingford was put forward on a number of occasions for designation as part of a much larger AONB. Each time however it was rejected.

3.2.2 The most significant period when the evaluation area was considered for designation was between 1988 and 1991. In 1988 the Countryside Commission felt able to consider formally whether there was justification for a further extension of the existing AONB westwards. In December 1988 the Commission reviewed three possible options which are illustrated on Drawing Number 3. Option 1 extended to just beyond Bures; Option 2 was a smaller area extending as far as the unclassified road between Over Hall Farm and Wormingford; and Option 3 which fell between Options 1 and 2 including more of the valley but excluding Bures. A further option was also put forward by the JAC and included the valley beyond Bures and included the tributary valleys to the west around Alphamstone. The evaluation of these areas was carried out utilising the Countryside Commission Approach to Landscape

Assessment (CCP 423)⁴. However, natural beauty was measured against three general criteria as follows:

1. the potential AONB should be of similar character to the existing AONB;
2. the potential AONB should be of equal quality to the existing AONB; and
3. the potential AONB should be of higher quality than that of the landscape outside of the AONB.

Drawing 3: Options considered as part of the 1988 boundary review



3.2.3 This approach is now not fully supported by the Natural England Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for Designation⁵. For example following the South Downs National Park Inquiry it was confirmed that Characteristic Natural Beauty is not the criterion for designation and that it is not necessary for the land to be included in a proposed designation to be of the same or similar character (2nd bullet, page 10 and para 6.10). Secondly, landscapes being assessed for designation should not be compared with other designated areas or adjacent areas but against wider countryside (para 6.10, 3rd bullet).

3.2.4 The results of the Countryside Commission review can be found in full in Appendix 3 of this report. It concluded that an extension could be justified to just beyond Wormingford. West of here the broad river valley, marked by clearly defined slopes (as in the AONB) was less distinct and resembled rolling lowland, with a predominately arable appearance, especially the valley bottom. It went on to comment on the wider area proposed by the JAC stating that much of this area was '*different in character and somewhat degraded*' (Designation History Series, para 61).

⁴ The criteria for evaluation in this approach are not dissimilar to those set out in the current Natural England Guidance on assessing landscape for designation.

⁵ Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, March 2011 Natural England

It should be noted that the Commission in their assessment work did not have access to detailed landscape character assessments that exist today.

- 3.2.5 The Countryside Commission review also commented on the success, or otherwise, of the "potential AONB project" which had been operational since 1981. It noted that it had been successful in extending active conservation activities, including the planting of thousands of trees and miles of hedgerow, throughout the existing AONB, the potential AONB and from 1988 the Upper Stour Valley (Designation History Series, para 65). Nevertheless, it concluded that only a relatively small area should be included in the AONB (as illustrated on Drawing Number 3) and that the wider area west of Bures and as far as Sudbury was not of AONB quality (Designation History Series, para 70). During the consultation on the proposed extension the local authorities of Essex, Suffolk and Colchester all supported. Braintree commented that they wished to see the wider area included, including the parishes of Alphamstone, Lamarsh and Bures, although excluding the settlement itself (Designation History Series para 75).
- 3.2.6 Significantly the Commission's report on the proposed second extension to the AONB, also noted concern that the concept of a 'potential AONB' area had raised an unrealistic expectation about the ability of countryside management to significantly change a landscape (Designation History para 65).
- 3.2.7 Three issues arise from understanding this background as follows:
1. The approach adopted at the time of the last boundary extension is not the approach adopted now, although there are similarities;
 2. The landscape character of the area is now more fully understood as a result of extensive landscape character assessment;
 3. The presence of a 'project area' raises the question as to whether management alone can enable a landscape to become suitable for designation or whether landscape has to have inherent physical attributes, not necessarily affected by management, which significantly contribute to the expression of natural beauty.

3.3 Similarities and Comparison with the Existing AONB

- 3.3.1 Notwithstanding the points raised in paragraph 3.2.4 above, it is helpful to understand the similarities between the evaluation area and that of the existing AONB by way of background. The special qualities of the existing Dedham Vale AONB are set out in a separate report titled '*The Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB*'. This report draws together existing information on Dedham Vale and sets it out in relation to the factors which are used to determine the existence of natural beauty and therefore landscape designation.
- 3.3.2 A statement of the significance of the Dedham Vale AONB is set out in the 2016-2021 Management Plan as follows:

'The Dedham Vale AONB is a subtle lowland river valley with an assemblage of features associated with this landscape still in place and intact. These features include a gently winding river and tributaries; gentle valley sides with scattered woodlands; sunken rural lanes; picturesque villages with imposing churches and historic timber framed buildings; scattered farmsteads and agricultural buildings; small fields enclosed by ancient hedgerows; riverside grazing meadows with associated drainage ditches and visible and hidden archaeology providing evidence of human habitation over previous millennia.'

The area remains an overwhelmingly agricultural landscape, free of incongruous development and large scale industrial developments. Despite some intrusions of human activity in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, the area retains a rural charm and tranquillity and is largely free of infrastructure associated with modern life.

The essential character of the Dedham Vale AONB was established in the middle of the previous millennium and has remained intact despite social, technological events. The fundamental beauty of the area and the scenes of a working landscape were captured by England's finest landscape artist, John Constable RA. The sites of those outdoor paintings are still recognisable in the heart of what is now the AONB.'

3.3.3 It also sets out the special qualities of the existing AONB as:

- Iconic lowland river valley associated with the artist John Constable RA, the views he painted and still recognisable today;
- Historic villages with timber framed housing and prominent churches;
- Valley bottom grazing marshes with associated drainage ditches and wildlife;
- Naturally functioning River Stour with associated tributaries, meres and historic river management features;
- Semi natural ancient woodlands on valley sides and associated wildlife;
- Traditional field boundaries intact and well managed;
- Apparent and buried archaeology indicating millennia of human occupation;
- A sense of relative tranquillity;
- Surprisingly long distance views from higher ground along the valley in an area associated with large skies.

3.3.4 The management plan, in covering the Stour Valley Project Area as well as the AONB, describes the former as:

'predominantly rural and often demonstrates medieval settlement patterns. In places the growth of villages and change to agricultural practices have altered the landscape but not fundamentally changed it. Many of the villages retain their historic centres and have timber framed buildings, imposing churches and village greens. Historic hamlets and isolated farm buildings are scattered throughout the landscape.

The area has many woodlands situated within the tributary valleys but much of the valley floor is given over to arable crops with the notable exception of Sudbury Common Lands where large tracts of water meadows remain as an important feature of the landscape'.

3.3.5 The assessment of the evaluation area set out in section 3 below reveals that whilst some area share the special qualities of the existing AONB, not all areas do, as reflected in the quotation above.

3.4 Factors Which Previously Influenced the Extent of the Existing AONB

3.4.1 The landscape character assessment for the Stour Valley including the AONB and evaluation area shows that it comprises the same range of landscape types namely Valley Meadowlands, Rolling Valley Farmlands and Rolling Estate Farmlands as the AONB (refer to Drawing Number 2).

3.4.2 Historically the extent of the existing AONB has been shaped by the valley form of the Stour Valley. The valleys sides are pronounced and on their outer reaches

interface with the edge of a much wider 'plateau' landscape. Where the edges of the plateau landscape form the upper lip of the valley they are often included in the designation. Woodland in this edge plateau landscape is often visually significant in views across the valley providing a wooded skyline.

- 3.4.3 However, the existing AONB is not limited to the main Stour Valley. The northern valley sides of the existing AONB include larger tributary valleys namely the Brett and the Box which penetrate into the wider plateau landscape to the north. Here the AONB boundary extends further north to include the main parts of these tributary valleys which are often small scale, incised and intimate landscape in contrast to the more open and expansive valley floor of the Stour.
- 3.4.4 The Designation History for Dedham Vale records decisions on defining the extent of the existing AONB. Examples include the following:

Table 3.2: Decisions on extent documented in the designation history.

Designation History Reference	Justification for Extent
Para 9	Use of administrative boundaries such as Parish boundaries instead of contours in the area to the north of Stoke-by-Nayland.
Para 17	In reviewing the consultation responses on the proposed boundary of the AONB, the guiding principle on extent was that the AONB should be restricted to the Vale itself. Therefore where land sloped away from the Vale, it was preferable not to include it, despite its landscape attractions and particularly if a strong boundary along a road could be used.
Para 23	In the area around Dedham Heath, Long Road was adopted as the boundary despite being over the break in slope to the Vale because it offered the most suitable recognisable boundary line and was preferable to hedgerows.
Para 32	The designation of the AONB in 1970 demonstrated that both the Countryside Commission and Minister of Housing and Local Government (MHLG), had interpreted "natural beauty" in its widest sense, giving it a strong, and in this case, unique "cultural landscape" component.
Para 39	In considering the boundary extension at Polstead (Box Valley) and Sulleys Hills, Raydon the former included a major tributary valley which had the same gentle landscape character of the Vale itself, and the small village of Polstead with its church, village pond and former deer park and the latter an area of attractive minor wooded tributary valley. In this latter area the boundary had been drawn to coincide with the skyline edge of the low plateau seen from Dedham Vale itself.

- 3.4.5 When the first proposed extension of the AONB to include tributary valleys to the north was consulted on, representations were received to take the boundary further to include the upper reaches of the tributary valleys. These proposals were rejected on the basis that the upper reaches formed part of the plateau, and did not contain outstanding landscape qualities. In the area around Edwardstone and Groton it was concluded that the landscape was pleasantly attractive but that the overall

dominance of the typical open Suffolk landscape meant that the area did not warrant AONB status.

- 3.4.6 The above factors which affected the extent of the existing AONB boundary are useful to understand as background when defining the potential extent of any extension. Any extension should be consistent with past decisions where these are not in conflict with current Natural England Guidance.
- 3.4.7 The extent of the western AONB boundary follows the valley floor from Arger Fen and then cuts across the main Stour Valley following ditches and hedgerows. In many respects this boundary is arbitrary in terms of landscape, bisecting the tributary valley, such that the eastern slopes are within the AONB and the western slopes are not. Similarly, where it cuts across the valley floor it separates two areas of very similar valley floor landscape.

4: Detailed Evaluation

4.1 Undertaking Evaluation Based on Natural England Guidance

- 4.1.1 As noted above, the existing landscape character assessments and evaluative work by the AONB provide useful and relevant information to assist in the evaluation of natural beauty within the evaluation area. In addition recent landscape character assessment work has provided further evidence. This has been supplemented with field evaluation and evidence gathering on aspects such as scenic quality, condition and tranquillity.
- 4.1.2 During the course of the study consideration was given to refining the evaluation area however there were no occasions where it was felt necessary to bring additional land into the evaluation area. The evaluation area therefore remains unaltered and the candidate area has been defined within it.
- 4.1.3 The table below sets out in detail the evidence for the factors which are used to assess natural beauty. Importantly this evidence provides a description of the geographical variation of evidence within the evaluation area. The purpose of this is to be able to take a step back at the end of the fact gathering exercise and determine the weight of evidence for different parts of the evaluation area hence providing robust reasoning for the identification of some areas as suitable for taking forward as a Candidate Area and not others.
- 4.1.4 The evaluation contained in the table below demonstrates that part of the Stour Valley evaluation area has a weight of evidence which enables it to be considered further as a candidate area for designation (refer to Drawing 4). Further consideration as to extent/boundary, and significantly the desirability of designating this land, is needed before any final conclusion is reached.

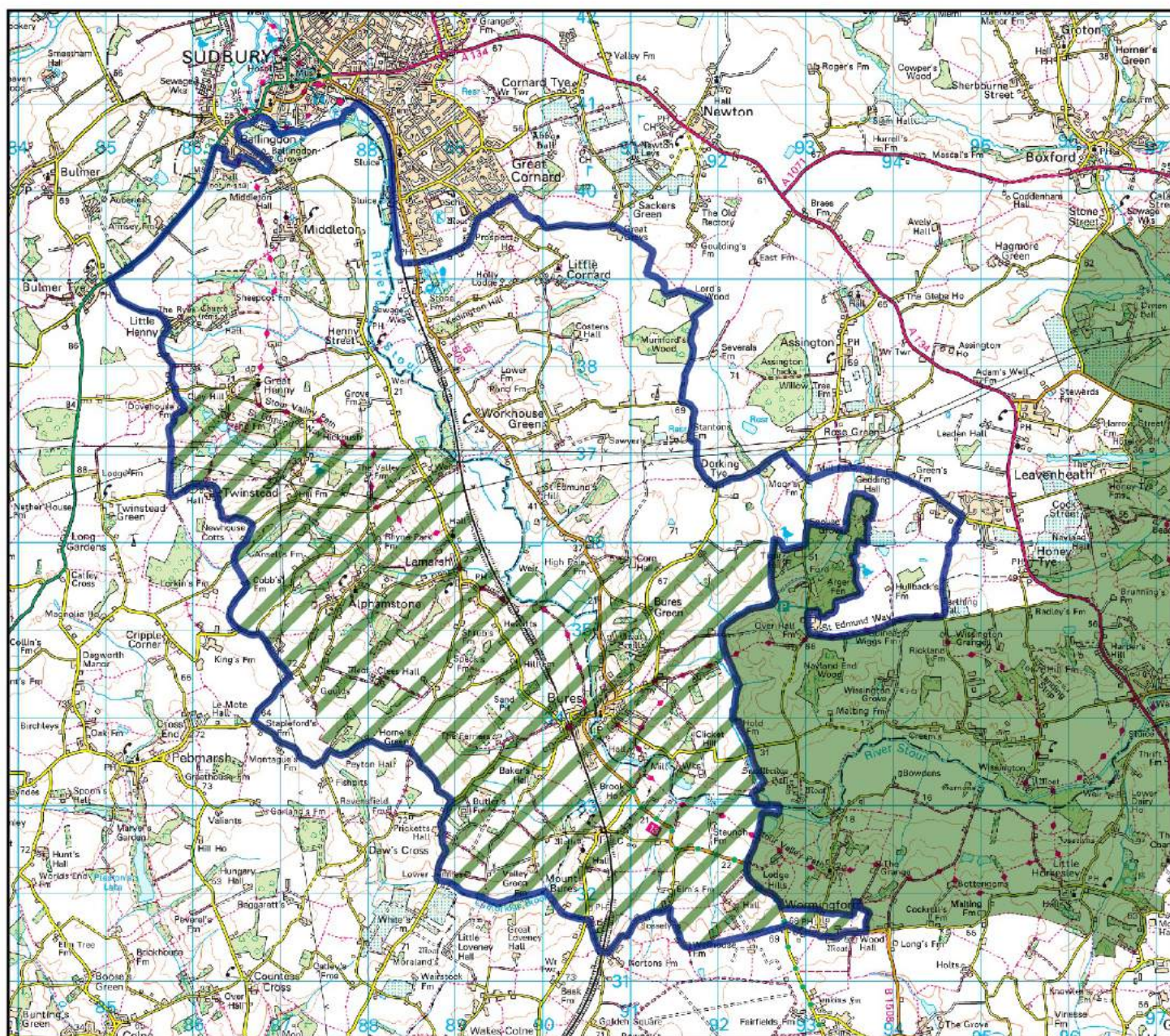
Photographs illustrating positive qualities of the area





Photographs of landscape outside recommended Candidate Area

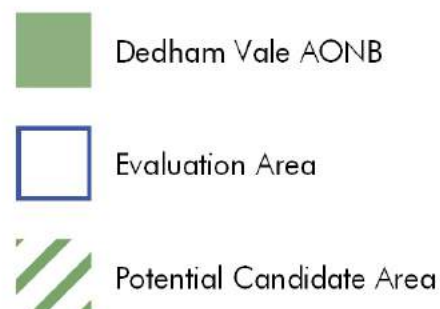




Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale Landscape

Drawing 4: Proposed Candidate Area

March 2016



4.2 Evidence in Support of the Natural Beauty of the Evaluation Area

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
Landscape quality <i>Intactness of the landscape in visual, functional and ecological perspectives</i>	Broad, flat, valley floor comprising pastures which retain their traditional small scale, defined by ditches and include areas of wetland mere with riverside trees of willow and black poplar.	These patterns are most strongly evident to the north and south of Bures. Here the pattern remains relatively intact. Elsewhere traditional meadows have been drained, ditches filled in and in some places the land ploughed. This is particularly evident in the middle section of the evaluation area east of Lamarsh. The planting of cricket bat plantations and poplars on the valley floor away from the course of the river has reduced the legibility of the traditional land use patterns.	1st Edition OS mapping Aerial photographs GIS data Braintree District LCA
	Small to medium scale pasture fields on valley sides defined by bushy hedgerows and interlocking woodland copses and increasing field size with predominance of arable land use where the valley sides meet the adjoining plateau.	<p>This pattern is clearly evident in the tributary valleys to the west of the Stour Valley around Alphamstone, to the south of Bures and within the tributary valley towards Arger Fen. Field boundaries often echo the lie of the contours. The pattern has become fragmented on the eastern valley sides north of Dunstead Farm and western valley sides north of Boutell's Farm.</p> <p>There has been some fragmentation of woodlands for example Assington Thicks was once much larger and included Mumford's Wood and Lord's Wood. Reference to historic maps also reveal that there has been a general increase in woodland across the evaluation area, however in places the character of new woodland can have string geometric boundaries and when combined with enclosure loss alters the pattern and character of the landscape. This is notable on the eastern valleys sides whereas in the western valleys increases in woodland are generally on the steeper slopes reinforcing the pattern of the valleys.</p>	<p>East Anglian Archaeology Report 124 (2008)</p> <p>Braintree District LCA</p> <p>Historic Maps</p> <p>East Anglian Archaeology Report 124 (2008)</p> <p>Historic Maps</p>
	Ecological networks are strongest along hedgerows and ditch networks, and	The greatest concentration of nature conservation sites occurs in the tributary valleys to the west of the Stour. Here the intact	Essex Wildlife Trust Riversearch Report

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
	along the Stour. These linear features connect woodland copses, grassland and wetland sites.	hedgerow network connects sites of value including grassland complexes, woodland and wetland. It is in this part of the evaluation area where ecological networks are most intact.	Braintree District LCA
<i>The condition of the landscape's features and elements</i>	The pattern of boundaries, woodlands and steep winding sunken lanes is generally in good condition	Approximately 50% of the Evaluation Area is covered by Higher Level Stewardship (the remainder being in entry level or no stewardship agreement) for example the valley floor east of Bures, the valleys around Alphamstone and east of Great Henny where there has been considerable new planting of hedgerows. Other specific areas which have experienced landscape enhancement include Bevills (enhancement of landscape grounds) and Shrubs Farm (recently re-thatched with wheat straw). On the valley floor there have been biodiversity projects including the re-introduction of Black Poplar. The wooded sinuous lanes around Little Connard are also intact and have a deeply rural character with some glimpsed views across the Stour Valley.	Stewardship Agreements - Natural England Bures: Farm manager at Bevills Estate on restoring an ancient beauty.
	The River Stour retains meandering course despite its past used as a navigable waterway.	Natural meandering course of River Stour is evident southeast of Bures.	Natural England Suffolk River Valleys target area
	Pattern of small scale nucleated hamlets and villages often located at the top of the slope within tributary valleys and connected by sinuous historic sunken lanes.	This pattern remains relatively intact although there has been peripheral development in Bures and infill and linear development in Lamarsh as well as considerable development on the southeastern side of Sudbury. This development has altered the way in which settlements sit in the landscape and relate to the Stour Valley and also the way in which the valley is experienced. Nevertheless the majority of Bures is designated a conservation area which includes the valley floor to the south and north of the town and the valley sides to the northeast including the parkland of Bevills. Elsewhere the pattern of rural hamlets such as Twinstead, Great Henny and Little Henny and Middleton remain intact associated with	OS Historic Maps Conservation Area Appraisal for Bures Landscape character assessments

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
		<p>small rural parish churches or in the case of Little Henny the remains of a former church.</p> <p>Alphamstone has a typical arrangement around a linear green.</p> <p>Overall the villages/hamlets of Alphamstone, Great Henny, Henny Street, Little Cornard and Middleton are all typical historic villages found along the Stour Valley which remain intact and add to the distinctiveness of the area and sense of place.</p>	<p>Historic Landscape Character Study, Managing a Masterpiece.</p>
<p><i>The influence of incongruous features or elements (whether man-made or natural on the perceived natural beauty of the area)</i></p>	<p>Whilst much of the area is unaffected by incongruous features there are two pylon lines cross the valley between Grassmere Farm and Boutell's Farm and TV masts at Yorley Farm (beyond the evaluation area, but visible from it breaking the skyline above the valley).</p> <p>National Grid's has proposed a new 400 kV line between Bramford to Twinstead which would pass though the Evaluation Area. However this is currently on hold. Consideration has been given to the undergrounding of the existing older kV line should this proposal go ahead.</p>	<p>These pylons are visible crossing the open valley floor in an area where the traditional landscape patterns have become fragmented. When viewed from the western valley sides they are seen breaking the skyline and in association with the TV masts at Yorley Farm.</p> <p>There is currently no degree of certainty regarding future possible undergrounding of existing pylons within a reasonable timescale (i.e. 10 years). The potential benefits of this and or the effects of any future proposals for additional kV lines cannot be given significant weight in this evaluation as a result.</p>	<p>Bramford to Twinstead Undergrounding proposal through the Stour Valley</p>
	<p>Single track branch line between Bures and Sudbury (Gainsborough Line) runs along the valley floor.</p>	<p>This railway line has little effect on the visual unity of the valley and is often imperceptible in views. However the northern section, between Sudbury and Stock's Farm Cottages, lies close to the B1508 (main road connecting Bures to Sudbury) and visually separates the lower valley sides from the wider Stour Valley landscape. In the central section of the valley there is an area where Network Rail have temporarily stored equipment which is visually intrusive particularly when viewed from Lamarsh. The cumulative negative effect of intrusive development in association</p>	

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
		with pylons, masts, and encroachment of arable onto the valley floor is notable in this area.	
Scenic quality <i>A distinctive sense of place</i>	The sparsely settled, gentle lowland valley landscape of this part of the Stour is typical of the river valleys of Suffolk and Essex. The local vernacular of timber framed buildings, coloured render and thatch also reinforce sense of place.	Where the valley sides are steep and come close together to define the valley the sense of place is strongest. This is evident in the area around Bures. In the area around Great Henny the valley sides are set back from the river resulting in a more open and less defined landscape and weaker sense of place.	Field assessment and GIS data
	The pattern of sunken lanes, old wooden barns nestled into the hillsides, small patchwork of fields, isolated moated halls and remote churches, wetland sites associated with watercourses, ancient woodland copses on steep slopes, coppiced hazel stools and open flood meadows combine to create a classic English lowland farmland scene.	This combination of features is most evident in the western valley tributary valleys and the valley floor north and south of Bures - here the contrast between valley floor and valley sides is clearly legible. Elsewhere the pattern is less strong either due to topography and/or a lack of traditional landscape features/land uses. Around Great Cornard the enclosure pattern comprises parliamentary enclosure and this combined with less steep topography and adjoining development reduces the area's scenic quality.	Filed assessment and LCAs Braintree District Protected Lanes Assessment 2013
<i>Striking landform</i>	The landform within the evaluation is gentle but nevertheless there is a clear contrast between the valley floor and valley sides.	<p>This is most evident north of Bures where the valley sides reach an elevation of 70m (where the valley landscapes meet the surrounding plateau) and the valley floor is relatively narrow. From elevated locations there are long distance views across and down the valley towards Bures. Here the pattern of traditional land uses on the valley sides and valley floor are evident and hedgerows and woodland patterns interconnect and are intact.</p> <p>North of Dunstead Farm towards Sudbury the valley sides are less pronounced or incised and to the east around Great Henny the western valley sides are set back and the lower slopes very gentle such that the valley in this central portion of the evaluation area is less distinct and weakly defined.</p>	Field assessment and GIS OS mapping

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
	Where the valley sides are incised by tributary streams and the plateau landscape extends into the valley as shoulders of land, there is greater topographic and visual complexity. Here tributary valleys can be steep and complex and contrast with the regular flat valley floor.	Tributary valleys south of Lower Farm Cottages are of high scenic quality as is the valley leading to Arger Fen. Here intricate, incised small streams which flow east into the Stour River result in a sequence of tight valleys and higher shoulders of land. This complex landform is distinctive and disorientating and similar in character and quality to the landscape around Polstead and Arger Fen within the existing AONB. Incised lanes, old hedge banks and coppiced hazel stools, traditional barns nestled into hillsides, small hamlets, and a matrix of small woods and pastures are key components of the landscape which contribute to the area's scenic quality.	GIS data and LCAs Field assessment OS mapping
<i>Visual interest in patterns of land cover</i>	<p>The strong aesthetic appeal of this landscape comes from the intricate and historic patterns and features which are seen and experienced at close range and the clear relationship between the topography and vegetation/land use.</p> <p>Wooded skylines formed by woodlands on the crest of the valley slopes are characteristic and add definition to the valley.</p>	<p>Historic buildings such as old agricultural barns nestled in the landscape and local landmarks such as the church towers of Lamarsh and Great Henny or the Norman motte at Mount Bures add visual interest. Ancient woodland with veteran trees and old wood banks with coppiced hazel stools also add time depth while along the river the sound of running water and smell of damp or the sound of the wind in the trees is evocative of this lowland pastoral landscape.</p> <p>Wooded skylines are most intact on the western valley sides and on the eastern valley sides south of High Pale Farm. North of here the skyline is more open and less defined.</p>	Braintree District LCA Field assessment
<i>Appeal to the senses</i>	The small human scale of the Stour Valley and its sense of tangible history along with attractive visual patterns of enclosure and land uses resulting in a variety of colours and textures through the seasons mean that parts of this landscape strongly appeal to the senses.	<p>This is particularly apparent along the Stour River where water, wetland and views to the wider valley sides combine (e.g. immediately to the north of Bures) and also in the tributary valleys to the west.</p> <p>In times of heavy rain water meadows can become flooded and the valley floor appears as a series of vast lakes.</p>	Field assessment

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
	Eye catching features invariably relate to built features nestled within a rural scene. These include church towers, water mills and weirs, isolated farm buildings and Mount Bures castle which offers views along the valley.	Built features which add to the scenic qualities and appeal of the area are scattered throughout the area. The extent to which they appeal to the visual senses is dependent on the intactness of their setting. As noted above the most intact landscapes occur in the southern half of the evaluation area.	Field assessment Braintree District LCA
Relative wildness <i>A sense of remoteness</i>	The settled nature of this landscape means that there are no areas where a real sense of remoteness is experienced. However, it is most felt in those parts of the landscape which are difficult to reach, which are enclosed and which are disorientating.	This is most evident in the tributary valleys to the west of the Stour and Arger Fen valley where the incised narrow rural lanes which are infrequently used give rise to a sense of remoteness and a timeless quality.	
<i>A relative lack of human influence</i>	Semi natural vegetation is restricted to ancient woodland sites and wetland meres and pastures. There are no extensive areas of semi-natural vegetation.	Woodland and wetland habitats are common in this landscape but are relatively small in scale forming a patchwork of habitats where natural processes can be perceived although all areas are clearly derived from human management and intervention.	
	The evaluation area is often called a 'forgotten corner'. The landscape is, in the main, deeply rural and infrastructure is not intrusive over much of the area.	Where a number of infrastructure elements are seen together the effects of human influence is more evident i.e. where the pylons, masts, railway can be seen together around Lamarsh or where from the elevated valley sides around Great Henny or Cornard there are views across the valley to the fringe of Sudbury. Those areas where visually obvious structures intrude into the landscape feel less remote. In particular new development/redevelopment of wharf and mill buildings south of Sudbury is visually conspicuous in views from the north western part of the valley.	

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
<i>A sense of the passing of time and a return to nature</i>	The passing of time and a return to nature is most evident where old traditional farm buildings are in a poor state of repair.	There are occasional areas where old barns in a dilapidated state give a sense of time passing and are typical of the paintings of John Nash e.g. Barn at Sparrows Farm.	Site Assessment
Relative tranquillity <i>Contributors to tranquillity</i> <i>Detractors from tranquillity</i>	All parts of this landscape reveal the influence of human activity and those areas which reveal the greatest tranquillity are those which are off the beaten track and where historic land use pattern are most readily perceived.	<p>The small quiet incised rural lanes leading to and from Alphamstone and other small hamlets have a high degree of tranquillity. Here the landscape experience is deeply rural and the traditional and rural settlement pattern imparts a sense of remoteness.</p> <p>Although the B1508 is a busy road between Bures and Sudbury the noise of traffic is not intrusive on the wider valley.</p> <p>Tranquillity is less in the north of the evaluation area. Although the historic core of Sudbury sits comfortably in a bend in the river Stour and much of the settlement to the west of the river remains rural in character, the later 20th century expansion of the town northwards and expansion of the former village of Great Cornard to the southeast has increased visibility of urban development which extends up the valley sides and a reduction in dark skies. Furthermore there are significant housing allocations to the east of Great Cornard and also a protected route for the western Sudbury by-pass along western valley side of the Stour extending into the northwest part of evaluation area south of Ballingdon. If implemented, these changes are likely to result in further localised loss of tranquillity and further urbanising influence on the Stour Valley.</p>	<p>Braintree District LCA</p> <p>Site assessment</p> <p>OS Mapping</p> <p>Strategic Site Allocations and Designations, Babergh District and Mid Suffolk District Councils, January 2015.</p>
	Sights and sounds of nature are evident away from the main settlements and roads.	<p>Along the Stour Valley Path within the valley meadows and along the footpaths and narrow lanes in the tributary valleys there are many sights and sounds which appeal to the senses and contribute to the perception of tranquillity in particular birdsong (including distinctive call of lapwing, skylark and owl) and running water which combine to create melodious and peaceful atmosphere.</p> <p>Dark skies at night can be appreciated from this landscape away</p>	Site assessment

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
		from the larger settlements.	
	Limited crossing points over the River Stour means that the valley floor is relatively inaccessible except on the Stour Valley Path long distance route between Lamarsh and Wormingford. This inaccessibility increases the sense of tranquillity and being 'away from it all'.	In the section of river valley floor from Lamarsh to the weir west of Boutell's farm there is no access along the river. Similarly there is no access between the weir going north as far as Greathouse Farm. Much of the river bank is inaccessible and there are many popular peaceful fishing points along the valley.	Site assessment OS Mapping
Natural heritage features <i>Geological and geo-morphological features</i>	The valley of the Stour was formed by meltwaters from the retreating ice-sheet of the great Anglian Glaciation, about 400,000 years ago. The geology of the area and subtle geo-morphological features are evident in various places through this landscape.	Local sand and gravel pits reveal the underlying geology and deposits of the area e.g. Ferrier's Farm Pit now disused. Between Sudbury and the Cornards there are distinct river terraces along the edges of the valley floor reflecting different episodes of meltwater activity. Depressions in glacial drift deposits have resulted in the formation of ancient meres such as Cornard Mere (SSSI). There is an unusual concentration of possible Sarsen stones in and around Alphamstone Church.	
<i>Wildlife and habitats which make a particular contribution to distinctive sense of place.</i>	River Stour, and associated reedbeds and meadows support a number of important fauna.	Recognition of the River Stour as an important wildlife corridor managed as part of a wider catchment. It is the heart of the valley landscape and essential to the area's sense of place. The River Stour supports populations of Otter and Water Vole, Kingfisher, reed warblers and sedge warblers. These species are representative of a healthy and thriving watercourse.	River Stour Enhancement Project Natural History Compendium
	County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and Local Nature Reserves	Concentration of CWS on valley sides to west including woodland, mosaic of unimproved and semi-improved grassland and habitats. Daws Hall located on the valley floor north of Lamarsh and	GIS data and LCAs Daws Hall Nature

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
		<p>comprising a mosaic of grassland and wetland habitats.</p> <p>Loshes Meadow set within the tributary valley southeast of Great Henny has been unfarmed since the 1950's and comprises woodland, glade, thick hedgerows and marsh and adds to the intimate and timeless quality of the tributary valley.</p>	<p>Reserve</p> <p>Loshes Meadow Nature Reserve</p>
	Occurrence of black poplar	The parish of Alphamstone is home to one of only a few Native Black Poplar clone banks nationally. It holds all clones for the Essex and Suffolk border regions and plays an important role in producing young trees for planting in this region.	
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p><i>Built environment, archaeology and designed landscapes which make a particular contribution to distinctive sense of place or other aspects of scenic quality</i></p>	Concentration of structures along the Stour reflecting its use as a navigable waterway since 1709.	Weirs, riffles and old navigational structures including locks. These structures occur periodically along the Stour River. The River Stour Trust is a charity which seeks to conserve and restore the river's heritage. Projects have included the restoration of the lock at Great Cornard. Bures Mill is a landmark white building in the landscape.	<p>Bures Mill</p> <p>The Stour Valley Heritage Compendia, The Stour Navigation Compendium, Sean O'Dell and Styve Munro</p> <p>River Stour Trust</p>
	Many listed buildings within the historic villages including landmark churches, church and hall complexes and dispersed pattern of moated sites. This pattern reflects a relatively intact medieval settled landscape.	<p>Listed churches at Great Henny, Little Cornard, Alphamstone, and Bures. Listed moated sites include Clees Hall, Alphamstone. Other historic halls associated with churches/hamlets include Twinstead.</p> <p>In Bures there are over 150 listed building and the village is a Conservation Area.</p> <p>In Lamarsh Parish one third of the 65 dwellings are listed.</p>	<p>GIS data and Heritage England register of listed buildings</p> <p>Bures Conservation Area Appraisal</p> <p>Historic Landscape Character Study, Managing a Masterpiece.</p>
	Scheduled monuments which form upstanding archaeological remains and	Remains of church and churchyard at Little Henny, Roman villa south of Alphamstone church and castle mound at Mount Bures.	

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
	contribute to local distinctiveness.	Bronze Age (BA) burial urns have been found near Alphemstone Church and are now in the Colchester Museum. However many BA burial mounds are now only visible as crop marks.	History of Alphemstone Church, Mark Dawson
	Historic parkland landscapes which make a particular contribution to sense of place are scattered through this landscape on the valley sides.	<p>Bevills, northeast of Bures on the Stour Valley sides which originally was a traditional farm and became a park at the start of the 20th century. Close to the house are Italianate Style gardens and terraces with a wider landscape park including trees, woodland and from the hillside position view across the Stour Valley. Garden is part of National Gardens Scheme.</p> <p>The Ryes at Henny - Grade II Georgian House overlooks the hamlet of Little Henny. The grounds have undergone restoration and include the remains of Little Henny Church within them.</p> <p>Aubries at Bulmer - associated with Thomas Gainsborough as the setting for 'Mr and Mrs Andrews. (currently north of evaluation area).</p>	OS Mapping GIS
	Significant number of protected lanes	<p>High concentration within the tributary valleys to the west of the Stour but also around Little Connard.</p> <p>Around Great Henny and Alphemstone the lanes are deeply set, caused by the long use on soft substrata.</p>	Braintree District Protected Lanes Assessment 2013 Historic Landscape Character Study, Managing a Masterpiece.
<i>Historic influence on the landscape</i>	Chalk pits and lime kilns as well as brick making was significant in this landscape and formed part of the area's industrial heritage	<p>This activity was the principle reason for the development of the Stour Navigation. Ballingdon Grove Works (near Sudbury) were former chalk pits and lime kilns, but also important for producing red and white bricks, while clays at Little Connard were exploited in the 19th and 20th centuries for making white bricks.</p> <p>At Ballingdon Cut 20 barges (lighters) were sunk in 1914 because of fear of invasion at the start of WWI. These barges are still there but one which was restored in 2012 as part of the Managing a</p>	Stour Navigation Heritage Compendium

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
		Masterpiece Landscape Partnership scheme. The restored barge named 'John Constable' is used for passenger trips along the Stour by the River Stour Trust and overwinters at Little Cornard.	
	Importance of defence through the ages is depicted in this landscape.	<p>Mount Bures motte offers panoramic views of the River Stour and would have been a defence strong hold in the Medieval period.</p> <p>The Eastern Command stop line (1940) of pillboxes and gun emplacements along the Essex side of the village is still visible. Several now serve a new purpose following sensitive conversion to bat hibernacula.</p>	<p>Built Heritage Compendium</p> <p>Site assessment</p>
Characteristic land management practices	Traditional building practices, such as thatching and grazing livestock are readily apparent and give a continuity and harmony to this landscape.	<p>The 13th century Chapel of St Stephens Bures; Holly Barn, Bures and the great barn at Shrubs Farm, Lamarsh are all examples of local thatching using wheat straw.</p> <p>Grazing livestock on the small pasture fields on the valley sides is still apparent particularly on the western valley sides and in the tributary valleys.</p> <p>There is a relatively strong sense of historic integrity as a result of the presence of historic features and patterns.</p>	<p>Historic England register of listed buildings.</p> <p>Aerial photographs and site assessment.</p> <p>Braintree District LCA</p>
Associations with written descriptions	Literary connections with Pevsner, Marcus Crouch, Ronald Blyth and Shell Guide to Essex by Norman Scarfe	<p>Pevsner described Bevills as a "spectacular house" built in 1500.</p> <p>Marcus Crouch described the area around Great Henny stating: <i>"In the softly luminous air which Constable found so challenging and so inspiring the fields and woods of these gentle hills take on delicate hints....I leave this country with great reluctance being most willing to waste my time in it".</i></p> <p>Ronald Blyth in his book titled 'John Nash at Wormingford' wrote <i>"Take the landscape round here at Wormingford...some would find it pretty tame.,....yet there is a subtlety about this landscape which I feel and see, but which remains very difficult to define. I never look</i></p>	<p>Pevsner</p> <p>Essex by Marcus Crouch (1969)</p> <p>John Nash at Wormingford by Ronald Blyth (1992)</p>

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
		<p><i>for more than reality, the farming, the trees and the river”.</i></p> <p>In the Shell Guide to Essex the description for Middleton reads <i>“Delectable village of wooded slopes and footpaths.....the large white brick Victorian Parsonage, a rushy pond, beeches and crumbly urns and the motto Cave Stagnum...”</i></p>	Shell Guide to Essex, Norman Scarfe (revised 1975).
Associations with artistic representations	Artists have been and continue to be inspired by this landscape	<p>Association of this area with Gainsborough - locations of his paintings include Ryes valley looking towards St Mary's Church, Great Henny (painting title: 'Wooded Landscape with Herdsman Seated'; watering place near Bevills (painting titled 'River with a distant village') and Cornard wood (painting titled 'Cornard Wood and the Watering Place'.</p> <p>John Constable painted 'Lamarsh House (1799) which depicts the house known as Daws Hall north of Lamarsh.</p> <p>Rowland Suddaby painted 'Evening View of Sudbury from the South-west' (1940) and 'The Pond, Cornard'.</p> <p>Patrick George's 'Hickbush' depicts a scene from the vantage point over the Stour Valley from Great Henny.</p> <p>Local artist Mike Petterson painted the Church and Mount at Mount Bures.</p>	<p>Thomas Gainsborough paintings</p> <p>Artistic Heritage Compendium</p>
Associations of the landscape with people, places and events	The legend of the dragon in Wormingford Mere	The giant 'Bures Dragon' is etched into the hillside just within the existing AONB and was created in 2012 to celebrate this legend. The best views of the dragon are from St Stephen's Chapel from the evaluation area looking east into the existing AONB.	
	Suggested Anglo Saxon Royal residence at Bures and possible site of battle north of Bures.	<p>King Edmund King of the East Angles was allegedly crowned here in AD 856.</p> <p>Battle between the Angles and Vikings thought to have taken place</p>	

Natural Beauty Factors/ Considerations	Evidence	Geographical Variation	References
		at Shaffit Meadow in the 9 th century.	

Evaluation	
Overall weight and spatial distribution of natural beauty evidence	<p>The evaluation area shows similarities with the AONB include the incised rural lanes connecting small hamlets, patches of hazel coppice and ancient woodland copses set within steeply sloping and intricate stream valleys. The flat open valley floor with meadow pastures drained by open ditches and the meandering course of the Stour which is often tree lined, framed by pronounced valley sides clothed in a pattern of pasture and arable fields. These patterns and land uses are all the more valued through artistic association with Gainsborough, John Constable, Rowland Suddaby and Patrick George.</p> <p>However, these qualities are not evenly distributed across the evaluation as indicated in the analysis above. In simple terms the evaluation has revealed that the evaluation area can be divided into three broad areas as follows:</p> <p>Land to the south/east of Bures – this area is a continuation of the AONB landscape and includes the west valley sides of the Arger Fen Valley.</p> <p>Land north of Bures – this area comprises a high quality river valley with well defined valley sides, narrow valley floor with meadows and the tributary valleys to the west.</p> <p>Land north of Boutell's Farm – this landscape lacks the physical distinction of the river valley landscape to the south and has become fragmented. Although there are some areas of interest and higher quality, they are often isolated, surrounded by areas of lesser quality. Overall this area is not considered suitable to take forward in terms of AONB designation.</p>
Recommendation as to land that should be considered a candidate area <i>Extent and key reasons</i>	<p>It is recommended that land south/east of Bures and land north of Bures as far as Boutell's Farm is considered further for designation. This area comprises an intact landscape which expresses qualities and contains features which give it potential to be designated as AONB. Land to the north and east of this is not considered to have sufficient natural beauty to justify designation in part due to simple and unremarkable valley form and features, condition of the landscape and less visual interest/scenic quality as well as a greater influence of incongruous features.</p> <p>The extent of the area considered suitable to take forward as a candidate area is indicated on drawing 4.</p>
Need for further scrutiny	Care will be needed in relation to the following:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent of any extension to the AONB especially at the edges of the area where the influence of the wider Ancient Rolling Farmlands; • Current effects of incongruous features; • Inclusion/exclusion of settlement of Bures, Lamarsh and Twinstead. <p>These issues are considered in more detail below.</p>
Issues to be Addressed in Defining Extent (the issues raised below relate to the area which is considered to form a candidate area for designation and should be considered in more detail at the boundary setting stage)	
Transition <i>Extent and nature of transitions in character and quality</i>	There is a gradual transition from the Rolling Valley Farmland landscapes onto the more open plateau or Ancient Rolling Farmlands which fringe the Stour Valley. Where these peripheral landscapes contain features of interest such as historic site and ancient woodland they have been identified for inclusion. Care will need to be taken to ensure that any boundary line is drawn conservatively within the area of transition.
Fragmentation <i>Is the landscape fragmented - physically, visually or perceptually?</i>	<p>There is some fragmentation of the valley floor landscape caused by arable land use and loss of valley floor pastures south and east of Bures. Care will need to be taken to ensure that any boundary does not include tracts of land which has become so fragmented they can no longer meet the natural beauty criterion.</p> <p>There is notable poplar planting on the valley floor particularly along ditches resulting in greater enclosure and loss of legibility north of Bures. Care should be taken that this does not overly disrupt the otherwise typical historic landscape patterns of the Stour Valley.</p>
Incongruous features <i>Are there any and how extensive is their influence?</i>	Care should be taken to assess the effects of the TV transmitter masts near Yarley Farm and the extent to which they intrude into the valley landscape in combination with the double line of electricity pylons crossing the valley. A review of the effects they have on the western valley sides should be undertaken in order to inform boundary setting.
Settlements <i>Do the settlements have historic interest?</i> <i>To what extent is there new development?</i> <i>Does the settlement have a strong sense of place - why?</i>	<p>When assessing the suitability of settlements for inclusion within an area of qualifying land it is important that they have a strong sense of place and lie within a tract of qualifying land, not on the edge. Three settlements need to be considered in detail at the boundary setting stage including Bures, Lamarsh and Twinstead. These are discussed in more detail below:</p> <p>Bures - this village may well be one of the largest settlements in Dedham Vale AONB if included. The historic core remains relatively intact and there is a strong vernacular character to buildings although some modern development has occurred to the west and there have been two housing estates extending to the southwest and southeast onto the valley floor. Nevertheless the settlement is considered to be surrounded by high quality landscape which forms an attractive and distinctive setting. Particular scrutiny should be given to the extent to which modern housing effects the intact character of the settlement and also its relationship to the valley floor.</p>

<p><i>Do the settlement lie within a wider tract of qualifying land or is it at the edge?</i></p>	<p>Lamarsh - this hamlet has experienced modern infill development along the road such that the vernacular character of the settlement is mixed and includes modern, non-vernacular development. Views from the settlement to the wider valley are also affected by pylons and TV masts such that the land to the east of the settlement is of lesser quality. Care will need to be taken at the boundary setting stage in determining if this settlement should be included or excluded.</p> <p>Twinstead - this small hamlet has a high concentration of listed buildings and is associated with a medieval hall. However it lies at the top of the valley slopes at the edge of the wider farmed landscape. The evaluation area cuts through the settlement splitting it. A boundary line will need to include the settlement as a whole or exclude it. However it is located close to the edge and arguably does not lie within a wider tract of qualifying land - this will need to be considered carefully at the next stage.</p>
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5: Conclusions

5.1 Recommendations

- 5.1.1 This piece of work has reviewed the previous data gathered in 2014 and updated and expanded it to be in line with Natural England Guidance.
- 5.1.2 The table in section 4 above illustrates that the factors which contribute to natural beauty are not expressed everywhere in the evaluation area. For example, at a broad scale the valley may in places be weakly defined, the valley sides set back from the valley floor and subtle in terms of topographic variation such that the landscape has a more open and gently undulating appearance rather than distinctive valley landscape. In these locations the landscape may lack distinction and appear similar to the wider Suffolk or Essex countryside. On the valley floor some meadowlands have been converted to arable, tree lined watercourses have become obscured by poplar planting, while on the valley sides small scale enclosures may have become enlarged through hedgerow removal and larger towns have expanded and smaller villages/hamlets experienced infill development. These changes have resulted in reduced legibility of the traditional land use patterns of the Stour Valley. Added to this is the cumulative effect of infrastructure including pylons, TV masts, railway and roads. Individually these incongruous elements may not undermine natural beauty factors but in places a number come together resulting in the visual and or physical fragmentation of the landscape.
- 5.1.3 Collectively these issues mean that, in places, the character and quality of the landscape appears fragmented. In these circumstances a tract of land may not exhibit the special qualities commensurate of a nationally significant landscape. For these reasons not all of the evaluation area is identified as suitable to be taken forward.
- 5.1.4 In conclusion the additional areas recommended for further study/potential inclusion are:
- Land between Bures and the existing AONB boundary;
 - Land north of Bures;
 - Tributary valleys west of the Stour Valley.
- 5.1.5 Areas not recommended for further study are:
- Land north of Bevills and Boutell's Farm.
- 5.1.6 Areas requiring particular scrutiny are:
- Bures;
 - Lamarsh and surrounding valley landscapes affected by incongruous features;
 - Twinstead.

5.2 Current Resources Available to the Area

- 5.2.1 An understanding of the current resources available to the area can assist with determining the benefits which may be derived from designation and therefore whether it is desirable to proceed with designation.

Finances

- 5.2.2 The local authority representatives for the evaluation area are an established part of the governing structure for the Project – i.e. the AONB & Stour Valley Partnership. An AONB service is provided by the Project within the evaluation area and beyond, to include all of the Stour Valley and its tributaries within a defined boundary. The evaluation area (and the wider Project area) benefits from access to the Stour Valley Environment Fund, established to support communities to deliver projects beneficial to the landscape, wildlife and communities of the Stour Valley area.
- 5.2.3 Local authorities make a financial contribution to the work of the Stour Valley Partnership if their administrative area falls within the AONB or the Project Area. However, land falling within the AONB designation, as oppose to the Project Area, requires relevant authorities to have a *duty of regard* to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB under the CROW Act section 86. This provides a stronger obligation to work jointly to produce a management plan and to contribute financially and greater certainty over the longer term. The most likely way this is achieved is a financial contribution to the AONB Partnership which in turn delivers on the Local Authorities' behalf, the *duty to have regard* to the natural beauty of the area.
- 5.2.4 An increase in the area of the AONB as a result of an extension to the boundary is also likely to result in an increase in funds from Defra to take account of the greater area covered by the designation.
- 5.2.5 In addition designation of land as AONB would result in areas becoming more eligible for funds applicable to AONBs, such as Sustainable Development Fund, (Defra), National Grid Visual Impact Provision and Landscape Enhancement Initiative (Ofgem) and other Ofgem schemes to improve visual amenity on the Distribution Network.
- 5.2.6 Designation of some of the area and not all of the land between Bures and Sudbury is unlikely to significantly affect future proposals regarding pylons. Existing studies and proposals for pylons in the area have been undertaken in the context of the Project Area but importantly with the existing AONB boundary being a considerable distance away to the south and east. Formal consideration of land closer to the pylon routes for AONB designation is likely to increase the need for significant mitigation measures.
- 5.2.7 At least 50% of the Evaluation Area falls within Higher Level Stewardship with the rest being either entry level or with no stewardship agreement. Designation of the area as AONB is unlikely to result in increased support to landowners regarding stewardship agreements as the AONB partnership already works closely with landowners within the Project Area.

Working Arrangements and Partnerships

- 5.2.8 Designation of land within the Dedham Vale AONB is likely to give greater clarity in terms of working relationships and consolidate existing partnerships. Should the

areas identified in this report be taken forward for designation they would bring a new Local Authority into the partnership namely Braintree District. Braintree District would therefore become a section 86 authority with a *duty to have regard* to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB when exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the AONB.

- 5.2.9 In planning terms the AONB Partnership is consulted on proposals which potentially may affect the AONB. Thus if a wider area of land is included in the AONB this is likely to lead to an increased number of consultations on matter such as overflying, development proposals and nationally significant infrastructure projects.
- 5.2.10 This analysis demonstrates that there is likely to be some benefit of designation in relationship to finances and working relationships but further work surrounding this will be required if this proposed designation is taken forward.

5.3 Overall Conclusions

- 5.3.1 The detailed evaluation contained within this report concludes that there is a weight of evidence that part of the evaluation area meets the natural beauty criterion forming a wider track of land associated with the Dedham Vale AONB to the east. The evaluation work set out here relies on up to date information and is in accordance with Natural England Guidance on assessing landscapes for designation.
- 5.3.2 Drawing 4 sets out the extent of land which is considered to qualify as a candidate area for designation and within which a boundary line may be drawn.
- 5.3.3 Significantly this candidate area does not include land within the main valley north of Lamarsh and includes the tributary valleys to the west. Overall the area includes the main valley floor and valley sides where they are pronounced and reflect traditional land management patterns and contain a concentration of natural and cultural interest and associations. Where the edges of the upland plateau landscapes afford views across and down the valley, or contain features of interest which contribute to the natural beauty of the wider area they have also been included. Where there are cumulative effects of incongruous features, these areas have been excluded.
- 5.3.4 The evaluation area has not been formally considered for designation since the Countryside Commission looked at it (in part) between 1988-1991, some 25 years ago. Since this time the AONB has encouraged positive conservation management in the area. In addition both the AONB and the evaluation area have been analysed in detail using the latest techniques in landscape character assessment and landscape evaluation. The collation of this additional understanding and past conservation work has resulted in this assessment concluding that there is some merit in investigating the designation of part of the evaluation area further. It will however be important to consider the benefits of designation given that the management of the area already falls within the work of the Stour Valley Project Area.

Appendix 1:

Factors and Indicators used to Assess Natural Beauty (extract from Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for Designation, Natural England 2011)

Appendix 1:

Evaluation Framework for Natural Beauty Criterion

The sub-factors and associated indicators should be regarded as a “menu” of examples (developed from past designations and subsequent consultation) from which those appropriate to the character of the landscape under consideration should be chosen, adapted or added to. There is no “scoring” involving accumulations of indicators and it is possible for a landscape to exhibit natural beauty or offer opportunities for open air recreation even if a number of the indicators shown in this appendix are not present.

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

Factor	Example sub-factor	Example Indicator
		urban influences
	A sense of openness and exposure	Open, exposed to the elements and expansive in character
	A sense of enclosure and isolation	Sense of enclosure provided by (eg) woodland, landform that offers a feeling of isolation
	A sense of the passing of time and a return to nature	Absence or apparent absence of active human intervention
Relative tranquillity	Contributors to tranquillity	Presence and/or perceptions of natural landscape, birdsong, peace and quiet, natural-looking woodland, stars at night, stream, sea, natural sounds and similar influences
	Detractors from tranquillity	Presence and/or perceptions of traffic noise, large numbers of people, urban development, overhead light pollution, low flying aircraft, power lines and similar influences
Natural heritage features	Geological and geo-morphological features	Visible expression of geology in distinctive sense of place and other aspects of scenic quality
		Presence of striking or memorable geo-morphological features
	Wildlife and habitats	Presence of wildlife and/or habitats that make a particular contribution to distinctive sense of place or other aspects of scenic quality
		Presence of individual species that contribute to sense of place, relative wildness or tranquillity
Cultural heritage	Built environment, archaeology and designed landscapes	Presence of settlements, buildings or other structures that make a particular contribution to distinctive sense of place or other aspects of scenic quality
		Presence of visible archaeological remains, parkland or designed landscapes that provide striking features in the landscape
	Historic influence on the landscape	Visible presence of historic landscape types or specific landscape elements or features that provide evidence of time depth or historic influence on the landscape.
		Perceptions of a harmonious balance between natural and cultural elements in the landscape that stretch back over time
	Characteristic land management practices	Existence of characteristic land management practices, industries or crafts which contribute to natural beauty
	Associations with written descriptions	Availability of descriptions of the landscape in notable literature, topographical

Factor	Example sub-factor	Example Indicator
		writings or guide books, or significant literature inspired by the landscape.
	Associations with artistic representations	Depiction of the landscape in art, other art forms such as photography or film, through language or folklore, or in inspiring related music
	Associations of the landscape with people, places or events	Evidence that the landscape has associations with notable people or events, cultural traditions or beliefs

Appendix 2:

Extract from Managing a Masterpiece Historic Landscape Study (2013)

Valley Meadowlands

Key Characteristics

- Quietly-flowing rivers, fringed with vegetation, running through flat valley-floor landscapes composed of alluvium or peat
- Cattle-grazed meadows divided by a network of wet ditches, but also sizeable areas converted to arable production
- Riverside trees, including pollards
- Plantations of poplars and cricket-bat willows, with occasional alder carr woodlands
- Occasional meres and small reedbeds
- Largely unsettled, but with former watermills and occasional other buildings on the higher pieces of land.

Location

- The Stour valley from Manningtree upstream to Great Wrating
- and in the valleys of the Stour's main tributaries:
 - The Stour Brook from Wixoe upstream to Haverhill
 - The Glem from Glensford upstream to Boxted
 - The Belchamp Brook for a short stretch on the Brundon/Borley border
 - The Box from Stoke-by-Nayland upstream to Boxford
 - The Brett from Higham upstream to Shelley

Geology, soils, landform and drainage

The River Stour is central to this landscape character type. It rises near the hamlet of Burton End on the border of the parishes of West Wrating and West Wickham in Cambridgeshire and flows for 42 miles to the sea at Harwich. Since 1971 the flow of water in the Stour has been supplemented by water diverted from the Great Ouse at the Denver Sluices in Norfolk under the Ely Ouse-Essex Transfer Scheme. Enabled by the Ely Ouse-Essex Water Act of 1968, this was first major inter-river transfer scheme in England and through it water is diverted down the Cut-Off Channel from Denver to Felthwell, and then piped 21 miles to Kirtling Green, where it is pumped into the Kirtling Brook, which joins the Stour at Great Bradley. Part of the water is further diverted from the Stour at Wixoe to the Colne and Pant, and from Wormingford to the Abberton Reservoir, all in Essex.

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The valley of the Stour was formed by meltwaters from the retreating icesheet of the great Anglian Glaciation, about 400,000 years ago. These laid down variable mixtures of gravel, sands, silts and clays in the valley bottom. The larger tributaries are virtually all on the northern side of the valley, reflecting the main direction of flow of the meltwaters. In many places, particularly around Sudbury and the Cornards, there are distinct river terraces reflecting different episodes of meltwater activity. Depressions in these glacial drift deposits sometimes resulted in the formation of ancient meres, such as Cornard Mere and Wormingford Mere. In a few places some more recent lakes have been created by the exploitation of underlying gravel deposits, as at Flatford.

The river is first mentioned (as the *Sture*) in connection with battles at its mouth between King Alfred and a Viking fleet in AD 885. The name, which it shares with four other English rivers, is of ancient Celtic origin and probably means 'strong, powerful river'. Pronunciation varies from Stowr to Stoor.

In 1705 Parliament passed *An Act for making the River Stower navigable from the town of Manningtree, in the county of Essex, to the town of Sudbury, in the county of Suffolk*. It featured horse-drawn pairs of barges known as 'lighters' that took goods, particularly bricks, down the river and other goods back. The entire Sudbury fleet of about 20 lighters was scuttled in the Ballingdon Cut in 1914 because of invasion fears at the start of the 1st World War. The navigation never recovered and was largely disused by the 1920s, but it has an enduring fame through the depiction of its lighters and locks in the paintings of John Constable. There is also a substantial legacy of locks and weirs on the river. In the 2nd World War the western bank of the Stour from Bures to Long Melford formed part of the Eastern Command 'stop-line' of 1940 and was defended with a chain of pill-boxes and gun emplacements, most of which still survive as features on the river bank.

The soils of the flanking flat valley floors are mainly seasonally wet clays overlying alluvial deposits and peat.

Archaeology

The 20th-century exploitation of the gravel-terrace deposits in the adjacent Rolling Valley Farmlands LCT have yielded important prehistoric faunal assemblages, as at Brundon, indicating the presence of mammoths, wild horses, wild cattle and bison in a temperate, but rather open grassy environment, c.230,000 to 170,000 years ago. A human presence is indicated somewhat later, perhaps around 200,000 to 70,000 years ago,

Later prehistoric human activity is more abundantly indicated by cropmarks, which are only seasonably visible and then mainly from the air. At Stratford St Mary, again near the junction with Rolling Valley Farmlands, there is an important complex of cropmarks of Neolithic date: a linear cursus monument, numerous rings and a probable long barrow, suggesting that this was an important ritual centre around 3,500 to 3,000 BC. There are cropmarks of another cursus at Bures and numerous ring-ditches indicative of flattened Bronze Age burial mounds along the Stour valley and in the Brett valley. These date mainly from c.2000 to 1700 BC and are sometimes grouped into cemeteries.

Settlement and the built environment

Due to their wetness, these landscapes are now generally unsettled except for former watermill sites. At least 40 mills, some dating back to the time of Domesday Book, are known to have existed along the Stour and its tributaries. Most were flour mills, but some had more specialised

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uses such as fulling and paper-making. Virtually all have ceased production and have been converted to other uses, mainly domestic. The list includes Flatford Mill in East Bergholt, a brick building of 1733 made famous because of its ownership by the Constable family and its appearance in the paintings of John Constable.

There are also occasional farmsteads on the edge of the valleys or on locally higher spots. A number of medieval religious houses also occur within this landscape: Stoke College at Stoke-by-Clare and Clare Priory. The important Norman castle at Clare is similarly located, as is the Norman ringwork at Court Knoll in Nayland. There are also some significant medieval and Tudor moated sites: Parsonage Farm in Melford, Boxted Hall, Smallbridge Hall in Bures St Mary, and Shelley Hall.

Parsonage Farm, on Long Melford's western boundary, was formerly the Rectory and has the remains of a moat around it, reflecting the status of the medieval rectors. The additional possession of a *ponde yarde* with a *swann's tofte* and *two fish pondes*, and a *Dovecoate with a smal flight of Doves* doubtless added to their status.

Landholding and enclosure pattern

The damp nature of the land has led to a long use as meadows. The meadows of the burgesses of Sudbury, which now form part of the Sudbury Common Lands, are actually mentioned in Domesday Book. These meadows are now used as animal pastures rather than for hay production, as is the case with most of the surviving meadows. In the upper reaches of valleys the meadows are often narrow, but in the middle and lower reaches can be broad and substantial, as in the case of Dagfen or Henny Common Meadow at Great Henny. The meadows are divided by wet ditches or dykes that may sometimes be lined by trees or scrubby hedges. Common meadows, such as Dagfen, were also formerly partitioned internally into strips – as can be seen on the 1840 tithe map of Great Henny. The introduction of more effective land drains in the 20th century has, however, resulted in the conversion of many meadows to arable land. In the wettest areas there are occasional small reedbeds.

Trees and woodland cover

Historically, the agricultural value of the meadows precluded their use for woodland, except in the wettest areas where alder carrs were a more viable option. Some of the alder carrs still survive, but the decline in the value of meadows in the 20th century led to plantations, particularly of poplars and cricket-bat willows, being introduced into the valleys. The cricket-bat willow (*Salix alba* var. *caerulea*) is a particularly fine strain of the white willow that is said to have been discovered in Eriswell in NW Suffolk in 1803 and its descendants are used, as its name indicates, for the production of cricket bats. Commercial plantations of these were recognised as being of 'some importance' in the *Land Utilisation Survey* of the 1930s and are still a common feature in the broader parts of the valleys.

The edges of the rivers are studded with trees, notably willows, black poplars and alders, with some oaks and ashes in the drier spots. Native black poplars (*Populus nigra*) are now rare in the UK and the specimens on the Suffolk/Essex border are a significant proportion of the national total. Riverside willow and alder pollards are a recognised feature and are now more frequent than they were in the days of the Stour Navigation, when they would have been obstructions for the horse-drawn barges. The pollarded crack willows (*Salix fragilis*) in a popular stretch of the river between Dedham and Flatford can be seen as young specimens in photographs taken around

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1900. The working of the 'willow tops' for poles, stakes and hurdles was a local industry in the early part of the 20th century, but was largely over by the early 1950s.

Some 'amenity' planting of trees in the valleys has also occurred which is out of character with the pattern, species and extent of tree cover of this landscape character type.

Visual experience

Despite its size, the Stour is often almost invisible as it flows through a flat landscape, its margins camouflaged by vegetation – it is often only at bridging points that the river becomes visible. The flanking lands are more visible and often offer wonderful examples of pristine and picturesque meadows in a wider arable landscape and, if accessible (such as the meadows of the Sudbury Common Lands), they can provide an oasis of enclosure and confined views. They are often enhanced by the presence of cattle grazing. On the drier sites or where the valley is very narrow, such as in the upper Stour, arable cultivation is the dominant feature. Many of the meadows were converted to arable in the second half of the 20th century, but in some places this has been replaced by set-aside, or grassland recreated with the aid of government environmental schemes.

Condition

Some of these landscapes are in excellent condition, However many are affected by intakes into arable production, by horse grazing and by under grazing. The sense of tranquillity and isolation of this landscape can also be intruded upon by the development of the adjacent rolling valley landscapes which are often a focus of settlement and development.

Land management issues and options

Geology, soils, landform and drainage

- Protection and investigation of palaeo-environmental deposits
- Conservation of former navigation structures

Archaeology

- Conservation of upstanding heritage assets
- Identify priority sites for arable reversion to protect buried heritage assets

Settlement and the built environment

- Maintain and enhance the setting of the valley floor through sensitive and appropriate development control on this landscape character type and on the Rolling Valley Farmlands on the valley sides.
- Maintain the visual distinctiveness of characteristic structures such as watermills

Landholding and enclosure pattern

- Maintain the historic pattern of field boundaries and ditches

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- Support the continued sensitive management of existing grass land, especially ancient meadows
- Expand the area of grassland on the valley floor

Trees and woodland cover

- Maintain the balance of tree cover on the valley floor
- Identify priorities for re-pollarding willows and to carry out this work
- Identify appropriate sites for the creation of new pollarded willow and to carry out this work

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Rolling Valley Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Gentle valley sides with some complex and steep slopes
- Deep well-drained loamy soils
- Largely organic pattern of fields with some more regular areas
- A scattering of small landscape parks
- Small ancient woodlands on the valley fringes and in the lower Stour valley
- Sunken lanes on the valley sides
- Towns and villages with distinctive medieval cores and fine churches
- Medieval and early modern industrial activity
- Large, sometimes moated, houses

Location

This landscape character type occurs along the sides of the Stour Valley along its most of its length from Lawford and Cattawade in Brantham in the east, upstream to Kedington in the west

There are also extensions along the sides of some of the Stour's tributaries. On the north side, from east to west these are:

- The Brett upstream to Shelley and Lower Raydon
- The Box upstream to Boxford
- An unnamed stream up to Assington
- The Chad Brook up to Bridge Street in Long Melford
- The Glem up to Hawkedon
- The Chilton Stream up to Hundon

On the south side, east to west, these are:

- The Cambridge Brook to Daw's Cross and Mount Bures
- The Belchamp Brook to Gestingthorpe
- The Bumpstead Brook to Steeple Bumpstead
- The Stour Brook to Haverhill

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LDUs (north): 130-27 (nn), 130-28 (nn), 344-30 (E Bergholt south side), 344-63 (Lower Raydon to Cattawade), 344-63A (Stratford St Mary), 344-49 (Gifford's Hall Park pt), 344-51 (Shelley), 344-98 (Thorington), 214-38 (Polstead), 214-37 (Polstead), 214-52 (Tendring Park & another), 214-141 (Polstead), 214-141C (Polstead), 237-47 (Long Melford), 346-140 (Long Melford), 346-139 (Stanstead), 346-138 (Glensford), 346-137 (Stanstead to Hawkedon), 345-78 (Glensford), 345-109 (Cavendish), 345-74 (Clare), 345-73 (Stoke-by-Clare & Clare), 345-72 (Wixoe)

LDUs (south): 314-55 (Lawford), 314-54 (Lawford Park), 314-93 (Langham), 314-95 (Hill House Dedham parkland), 314-91A (south bank of Stour, Bures Hamlet to Great Horkesley), 314-91 (Great Henny), 314-120 (Little Henny Park), 313-62 ((Belchamp Brook), 313-66 (Sudbury), 313-103 (Auberries parkland Bulmer), 313-118 (Belchamp Hall parkland), 313-105 (Liston Hall Park), 345-77 (Steeple Bumpstead to Melford), 345-114 (nn), 345-13 (Baythorne Park), 345-68 (Helions Bumpstead), 345-2 ((Kedington)

Geology, soils and landform

These landscapes occur on the sides of the valleys that cut through the thick layer of chalky till deposited by the retreating icesheet of the Anglian Glaciation. Chalk underlies the whole area, but there are only a few places where it outcrops on the valley sides, as at Ballingdon, near Sudbury, where there are disused 19th-century chalk pits and lime kilns. The valleys themselves are filled with gravel, sand and silt deposits left by torrential glacial meltwaters.

Clay laid down in meltwater lakes at the beginning of the Hoxnian interglacial at Little Cornard, south of Sudbury, were exploited in the 19th and 20th centuries for making white bricks by the Tricker family and then the Cornard Brick and Tile Company. Basal deposits of 'Lower London Tertiaries' were also used for making red bricks. Similar deposits were used for the Allen family's 19th-century Ballingdon Grove Works for making both red and white bricks. London Clay deposits are used for the Bulmer Brickworks.

A large former embayment on east side of Stour to the south of Sudbury contains part of a former river channel, now largely peat-filled and known as Cornard Mere. The Polstead Ponds in a tributary of the Box valley similarly gave rise to their parish name (Polstead = 'place at the pool') and must also represent an ancient mere.

Topography is generally sloping valley sides, usually relatively gentle, but sometimes with surprisingly complex and steep slopes, as at Shelley in the Brett valley. The soils are mainly well-drained deep loams of the Ludford series, overlying glaciofluvial drift. In places there are patches of the heavier Melford loams, while on the upper slopes and in the upper valleys there are deep clay soils of the Hanslope series. All have a good arable potential.

Archaeology

Quarrying for gravel on the river terrace at Brundon in the early 20th-century yielded important prehistoric faunal assemblages indicating the presence of mammoths, wild horses, wild cattle and bison in a temperate, but rather open grassy environment, c.230,000 to 170,000 years ago. A human presence is indicated somewhat later, perhaps around 200,000 to 70,000 years ago,

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There is abundant evidence of later prehistoric settlement in the river valley. At Stratford St Mary, on the junction with **Valley Meadowlands**, there is an important complex of cropmarks of Neolithic monuments: a linear cursus monument, numerous rings and a probable long barrow, suggesting that this was an important ritual centre around 3,500 to 3,000 BC. There are cropmarks of another cursus at Bures St Mary and numerous rings indicative of the buried ditches of flattened Bronze Age burial mounds or barrows. These ring-ditches date mainly from c.2000 to 1700 BC and are sometimes grouped into substantial cemeteries, as at Belchamp St Paul, Mount Bures, Wissington, Stoke-by-Nayland, Higham and Dedham. Many of these cropmarks are now protected as Scheduled Monuments, in recognition of their national importance.

The large D-shaped earthwork enclosure on the outskirts of Clare, now called Clare Camp but formerly *Erbury* (Old English for 'earth-fort'), may be Late Saxon or possibly even Iron Age in origin. In the Middle Ages it was certainly used as a manorial enclosure with barns, other buildings and yards, but since the 16th century it has been used as a common pasture for the poor of Clare and forms a part of Lower Common.

The grave of a Late Iron Age (early 1st century AD) nobleman, furnished with iron firedogs, wine amphorae and other pottery and glass vessels, was found at Mount Bures in 1849. There is also some evidence to suggest that there may have been an Anglo-Saxon royal residence at Bures, where King Edmund of the East Angles was crowned in AD 856 (Edmund was later killed by the Vikings and declared a saint). The early 12th-century Annals of St Neots record the event as having taken place at a *villa regia* called *Burna*, which a later source says lay on the boundary of Essex and Suffolk on the river Stour. The identification is not certain, as the earliest certain forms of the name, in Domesday Book, are *Adburam*, *Bura* and *Bure*; it could even be that Sudbury was meant, as this was, and is, a much more important place (see below) and there are indications that the name was occasionally used without the Sud- prefix. St Stephen's Chapel in Bures is said to have been erected by Abbot Sampson of Bury on the coronation site, but in fact this was a private manorial chapel built for Sir Gilbert de Tany and dedicated 1213-24 by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. The chapel now contains three fine tombs of the de Vere family, earls of Oxford, removed from Colne Priory in Earls Colne, Essex.

Also at Mount Bures there is a well-preserved Norman castle motte beside the parish church (Norman too, but restored). There is no direct evidence for the building of the castle, but in 1086 the land here was held by Roger of Poitou (or the Poitevin – so-called because his wife was the heiress of La Marche in Poitou, France), an important Norman nobleman with lands in many counties. Roger's main interests lay elsewhere, particularly in Lancashire, but this may have formed a local centre. Curiously, Roger's mother, Mabel countess of Shrewsbury, had a castle at Bures-sur-Dive in Normandy. Alternatively, the castle may be an early 12th-century creation by Robert de Sackville, steward to Count Stephen of Blois (later King Stephen) or his son Jordan. Because of their ownership, the parish was sometimes called Bures Sackville.

Settlement and the built environment

Overall the growth and development of villages and small towns in this landscape has been driven by the quality of the land and the agricultural prosperity that it brought. The area is also blessed with the steepest and fastest flowing rivers in the county, providing an important and reliable source of power for early industries.

Clare was one of the early centres of East Anglia's medieval wool trade and that trade was responsible for the growth of many towns and villages in the Stour valley and its tributaries, as at Cavendish, Glemsford, Long Melford, Sudbury, Bures, Nayland, Stoke-by-Nayland, Stratford St Mary, East Bergholt and Dedham. Their medieval and Tudor prosperity shows in their exceptionally rich heritage of fine timber-framed houses and magnificent churches – the latter often termed 'wool churches' in recognition of the industry that paid for them. That industry was in decline by the 17th century, slowing growth and changes to the housing stock. The centres of all these towns and villages have retained their much of their mediaeval structure, and the majority of expansion and change has occurred on the periphery.

At Clare, Callis Street and the Market Place, together, form an elongated rectangle that stretches almost from Clare Camp to the foot of Clare Castle, with the parish church near the centre. This layout is a planned layout dating from the late 11th century: the market forming a link between the two main administrative centres (the castle for the huge feudal estate and Clare Camp for the Manor farm in Clare), with the church as a central feature. The northern part, called Callis Street, narrows at the site of the ford (bridged by the 14th century) before joining the main market place. The present High Street was earlier the High Rowe of the market. This original large open area was encroached upon by houses and shops in the later Middle Ages.

Sudbury is the major town on the Stour and it had a market and burgesses by 1086. It is strategically situated on a promontory in a loop of the river and has probably been occupied since prehistoric times. Its name is recorded as *Sudberi* in AD 798 (when Bishop Ælfhun happened to die here) and means 'the south(ern) fortified place'. Its fortifications can no longer be seen, but their line is fossilised in the town's circular street-plan. 10th-century ditches have been found through excavations and the presence of Iron Age material hints at even earlier defences. It was important enough to have a mint producing coins from c.AD 997 to 1140. Around 1100 the town's moneyer, Wulfric, gave the church or chapel of St Bartholomew to Westminster Abbey, for the foundation of a small priory cell at Sudbury. The single cell chapel still survives on the edge of the town. The town expanded in the 12th century, with the addition of a new market place and two new churches – St Peter's in the market place and All Saints near the bridge across the Stour. The original church, St Gregory's, is specifically mentioned in Domesday Book and from its large endowment it must have been an Anglo-Saxon minster church. In 1375 St Gregory's was made into a college of canons by the sons of Nigel Theobald, one of the town's wool merchants. One of the sons, Simon of Sudbury, became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1375 and Chancellor of England in 1380 – in the latter role he introduced the hated Poll Tax and was beheaded by rebels in the Peasants Revolt of 1381 (his skull is still preserved in St Gregory's church). The college was surrendered to the king in 1544 and the college building was granted to Sir Thomas Paston (it has since disappeared under a 19th-century workhouse which later became a hospital). The Archbishop and his family also played a part in enlarging the Dominican friary in the town, which had been founded before 1247 by Baldwin de Shipling. This was

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suppressed in 1538 and the site granted to Thomas Eden, clerk of the king's council – its site is now remembered only by the name Friars Street. The artist Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88) is one of the town's most famous former residents and he has a statue in the market place and his house (in Gainsborough Street) is now the Gainsborough Museum. Commercial life in the town expanded with the implementation of the Stour Navigation c.1709 and by the arrival of the railway in 1849. Urban development has now expanded into the neighbouring parishes of Ballingdon, Chilton and Great Cornard.

Dedham, which has been described as 'easily the most attractive small town in Essex', was involved with the wool trade by the mid 13th century and its prosperity reached its peak in the 15th century. It did however experience a revival as a 'genteel' town in the 18th century and gained an Assembly Room c.1745. Shermans in the High Street is one of the town's most visually striking buildings – its pediment, multi-coloured brick and other decoration being added 1730-1 to an earlier timber building. It takes its name from Edmund Sherman, a clothier who founded a school here in 1601 (his son Edmund emigrated to Massachusetts – as did many Protestants from the Stour valley – and was the ancestor of the American Civil War general, William Tecumseh Sherman). John Constable went to school in Dedham and the town features in many of his paintings. He used the term 'Dedham Vale' for several sketches and paintings from 1802 and this has become a recognised name for the lower Stour Valley – it was used for the Dedham Vale Society in 1938 and as the name for the Stour valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) when it was declared in 1970. Castle House on the outskirts of Dedham is a 15th-century timber-framed house that was the home, 1919-59, of the painter Sir Alfred Munnings and is now the Munnings Museum.

Hall-and-church complexes that did not expand into large settlements abound in these landscapes, often architecturally significant and frequently visually stunning. At Wissington, on the Stour, the small 11th-century church containing a well-preserved 13th-century cycle of wall-paintings forms a very atmospheric group with the late-18th-century hall designed by Sir John Soane. At Polstead, on the Box, the 12th-century church contains a brick chancel arch and arcades that are possibly the earliest surviving example of English brickwork, whilst its 73ft-high stone spire is said to be the oldest in Suffolk.

The high arable capability of these landscapes is reflected in a preponderance of former manorial halls, some of which show their status by being moated, such as Ashen House, Blacklands Hall in Cavendish, Smeetham Hall in Bulmer, Shelley Hall and Braham Hall in Brantham. At Shelley, the brick hall built for Sir Philip Tilney in the 1520s is unmoated, but its contemporary garden is. The Tilneys were cousins of Queen Elizabeth I and in 1561 she visited their house.

Not moated, but with an imposing brick gatehouse giving access to an enclosed courtyard, Gifford's Hall in Stoke-by-Nayland was described by Pevsner as 'one of the loveliest houses of its date in England'. This imposing 15th-century timber and brick complex was built by the Mannock family, who had previously acquired wealth as local clothiers and merchants. The fine hammerbeam roof of the hall may be the work of the master carpenter Thomas Loveday (*fl.* 1503-36), whose work can also be seen in Gestingthorpe church (which is inscribed with his name) and probably at Steeple Bumpstead and Sturmer. The property takes its name from the knightly Gifford family, who were here from the mid 13th century; the ruined chapel of St

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Nicholas in front of the Hall is even older, having been founded by Richard le Constable in 1216, indicating that this is an old manor site.

The workshops of the medieval cloth trade have left few obvious traces as most were accommodated within domestic settings. More intensive industrial use is only recorded to the south of Sudbury in the Stour valley and in the Gipping valley. The former comprised the former Ballingdon Grove Works, where a grouping of 19th-century chalk pits, lime kilns, a maltings and a brickworks were linked by the Ballingdon Cut to the Stour, which had been made navigable under an Act of 1705. A number of Stour lighters (timber barges) were scuttled in the Cut during World War I and twelve still remain submerged in the water of the canal. In the lower Stour valley, the late-19th-century xylonite works at Brantham necessitated the building of Brantham New Village as an extension to the Cattawade hamlet. This was accompanied by sports fields and areas of allotments for the factory workers.

Landholding and enclosure pattern

This landscape type is largely concerned with the valley sides, for, except in the smaller valleys, the valley bottoms are included in **Valley meadowlands**. These valley sides have a long history of arable use. The evidence for the former presence of 'common' or 'open' arable fields in these valleys is strongest in the western and central parts of the Stour valley. There was 19th-century parliamentary enclosure that included some common arable at Haverhill (1853 and 1857), Kedington (1853) and at Cornard (1813). On the Essex side of the Stour, there was parliamentary enclosure at Sturmer (1853), Belchamp Otten and Walter (1840) and Middleton (1843); there was also some at Dedham on the lower Stour (1802). There is map evidence of 1600 for some common arable at Great Henny, but only very limited suggestions of common fields on the detailed 1580 and 1613 maps of nearby Long Melford.

The overall impression is one of limited panels of former common fields on some of the valley sides, particularly in the west, but counterbalanced by a large amount of anciently enclosed fields without a common field ancestry. The field patterns reflect this, with large amounts of sinuous field boundaries with substantial hedges interspersed with some more rectilinear fields where larger units have been enclosed or reorganised. Roads running up the valleys sides can be deeply set, caused by long use on soft substrata, as can be seen at Great Henny.

It is noticeable that in the upper Stour valley, from Long Melford westward to Steeple Bumpstead, all the larger villages are on the north (Suffolk) side of the valley; to the south (in Essex) there are only small hamlets and dispersed farmsteads. The reasons for this are not completely clear, but it may be linked to the extent to which the land was organised into common fields in the Middle Ages. Another factor may be the strong involvement of the Suffolk villages with the medieval wool trade.

The high arable potential of most of the soils means that greens and other areas of common pasture are infrequent. Some of the place-name evidence for 'commons' – such as Sturmer Common and Dane Common in Kedington, Kedington Common, Southfield Common and Welchmere Common in Little Cornard – refer to former common arable fields not common pastures (a usage more typical of counties such as Hertfordshire than Suffolk).

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The soils on these valley sides are deep, easily worked and loamy, so there has been little opportunity or incentive for the creation of large parks. Tendring Park at Stoke by Nayland is one of the more significant exceptions. Originally a medieval deer park called Stoke Park, it takes its present name from its medieval owners who came from Tendring in Essex. Their heirs were the Howards, dukes of Norfolk, who had one of their principal seats here in the 15th and early 16th centuries. Their mansion was rebuilt before 1723 by Sir John Williams, a London merchant who was 'the greatest exporter of cloth in England'. Williams also added a fashionable garden canal to the park which still exists, together with a beautiful Fishing Lodge or Temple at one end, which was added later in the 18th century. The Williams mansion was replaced in 1784 by a new one on a new site, designed by Sir John Soane for Sir Joshua Rowley. The park was redesigned by Humphry Repton (Red Book 1791) for Sir William Rowley. The Hall was demolished in 1955, but the park and the estate still survive.

Other, smaller, parks include Baythorne Park in Birdbrook (stuccoed brick house 1668 for George Pyke), Liston Hall (largely demolished 1951, but two of its four mid-18th-century corner pavilions remain), The Ryes at Little Henny (brick house 1809 for Nathaniel Barnardiston; property named after John de Ry, living 1269), Auberries in Bulmer, Langham Hall (stuccoed house 1756 for Jacob Hinde) and Lawford Hall (timber-framed house 1583 for Edward Waldegrave, but hidden behind a brick front of c.1756), together with Belchamp Hall on the Belchamp Brook and at Gifford's Hall and Polstead Hall in the Brett valley. Auberries provided the setting for Thomas Gainsborough's iconic portrait, c.1750, of Mr and Mrs Andrews (now in the National Gallery). He shows the newly-wed (and only recently gentrified) Robert Andrews and Frances Carter proudly surveying their estate – the oak tree behind them is still there, but their house was rebuilt by a new owner after Robert's death in 1806, and further enlarged in 1835 (the property's name commemorates a medieval owner, Thomas Aubery, living 1361). Red-brick Belchamp Hall in Belchamp Walter was built c.1720 for John Raymond and still has elements of its 18th-century garden (though with 19th- and 20th-century modifications) – a raised terrace with summer houses at each end and a now-dry garden canal (another longer canal with a curved end lies a short distance to the south-east).

There has been little in the way of common pasture in this landscape because of the quality of the soils. Where common pasture existed at all it was found in valley floor locations such as at Sudbury. Other reference to commons in this landscape usually refers to former common arable land, such as *Kedington Common*, *Southfield Common* and *Welchmere Common*. There were, however, a few small greens which are now remembered, if at all, by their names – such as Smith's Green at Steeple Bumpstead, Cranmore Green in Long Melford, and the vanished *Bures Green* and *Weston's* or *Wiston* Green on the north side of Smallbridge Hall (the names reflect the fact that the green was divided by the Bures St Mary/Wissington (or Wiston) parish boundary).

Trees and woodland cover

In the upper Stour valley the ancient woodland is mainly confined to the upper slopes of the valleys and is mostly in relatively small parcels. Two significant large woods partly in this landscape are the adjacent Lineage Wood and Spelthorn Wood in Long Melford (both recorded by name from the 14th century). Ancient woodland is more numerous in the lower valley, with examples at Arger Fen in Bures St Mary, Nayland

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End Wood in Nayland, Creak's Grove in Little Horkesley, Slough Grove in Great Horkesley, and Little Wood, Boxtedhall Wood, Cophedge Wood and Ash Wood, all in Boxted (Essex). Modern plantations are also more numerous in the lower valley, as around Boxted, Langham and in the nearby Black Brook valley.

At Polstead, the decaying remains of its famous Gospel Oak lie between the church and the Hall. Reputed to have been the oldest living thing in Suffolk, it collapsed in 1953. Polstead was also reputed for its cherries (Polstead Blacks) by the early 19th century. Few cherry orchards now remain, though they are still commemorated in local place-names: Cherrytree Farm, Cherry Billy's Lane and Cherry Meadow.

Visual experience

This is a rich and varied landscape with its concentration of prosperous mediaeval towns and villages, contrasting with the smaller and less glamorous settlements of the surrounding plateaux. The steeper valleys and sunken lanes contrast clearly to most of the other valley networks in the county.

This landscape type embraces some of the most famous views and sites of Suffolk, East Anglia and England. The Stour valley is internationally renowned as 'Constable Country', being the inspiration for many of the landscape paintings of John Constable. The landscape has also inspired other artists, such as Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Alfred Munnings, Sir Cedric Morris and John Nash. This artistic legacy led to its designation as an Area of Outstanding National Beauty in 1970. The Constable-related complex at Flatford Mill features on many tourist itineraries, as do the monumental 'wool churches' and picturesque villages such as Cavendish and Nayland with their wealth of medieval and Tudor timber-framed buildings.

Condition

Much of this landscape retains its historic patterns, of both the agricultural and built environment. However, the western parts of this landscape beyond Melford and Liston are of a more open arable character. Eastwards from here the valley sides are dissected and wooded and grassland is often much more in evidence, as is the presence of small parks and designed landscapes. The Stour and its tributaries have been subject to some gentrification, with significant changes in land use, such as the increase in horse pastures and the loss of much commercial orchard production, however much of this landscape is in excellent condition.

Land management issues and options

Geology, soils, landform and drainage

Archaeology

- Conservation of upstanding heritage assets
- Identify priority sites for arable reversion to protect buried heritage assets

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Settlement and the built environment

- **Undergrounding of wires** - In valley side landscapes such as these this can create significant improvements in the condition of these landscapes
- Maintain and enhance the landscape setting through sensitive and appropriate development control

Landholding and enclosure pattern

- Maintain the historic pattern of field boundaries and ditches
- Support the continued sensitive management of existing grass land, especially parkland
- **Changes in landuse** that effect character and condition of the landscape, such as the expansion of horse. Support the use of best practice that minimises the impact of these changes on the wider use through use of sympathetic materials and sitting.
-

Trees and woodland cover

- Maintain the balance of tree cover
- **Woodland management** - encourage and support the removal of conifers from ancient woodland sites as well as appropriate deer management to maintain the condition of these important historic landscape features

Plateau Farmlands

Key Characteristics

- Plateaux of land between and above the river valleys
- Loamy soils amenable to arable farming, though with considerable former heathland areas
- Large areas of planned landscape with straight roads and field boundaries interspersed with areas with more sinuous lanes and boundaries
- Strong tendency for linear settlements, often gappy, along roads in the southern part
- Irrigated crops
- Distinctive use of holly in hedges
- Plantation woodland

Location

This landscape character type occurs in two relatively small areas on the edges of the valley at its eastern end:

- Firstly, on the north side of the River Stour, on the plateau edge extending from Holton St Mary in the west, through Great Wenham to East Bergholt in the east.
LDUs: 130-9 (east edge of East Bergholt), **130-29** (no name), **130-31** (East Bergholt), **130-35** (no name), **130-84** (no name), **130-124** (East Bergholt), **344-63N** (Lower Raydon to Cattawade).
- Secondly, on the south side of the Stour, from Wormingford in the west to Lawford in the east.
LDUs: 0-101 (Langham to Great Horkesley), **0-96** (Hill House Park, Dedham), **0-100** (Dedham Heath), **0-53** (Lawford Park part) and **0-57** (Lawford, west of Lawford Park).

Geology and landform

The plateaux are generally flat or very gently rolling and consist of mixed glacial till or glaciofluvial deposits. In the both areas there are surface layers of variable thickness of fine-grained loess deposits, derived from windblown material from glacial sources. The soils are mainly deep loams (mainly Tendring and Hornbeam 3) which can experience some seasonal waterlogging, but are generally free draining. This allows for the

Plateau Farmlands

production of irrigated crops, as well as cereals, in what is a predominantly arable landscape.

The presence of puddingstone – a sandstone conglomerate with flint pebbles – is a feature of the Norman church tower at Boxted and the chancel walls of Langham church.

Archaeology

There is a burial mound or barrow at Lawford, which is an outlier to the very rich series of prehistoric funerary sites and enclosures that are more extensively seen in the adjacent Rolling Valley Farmlands. A Roman presence is indicated by the arterial Roman road (now the A12) that runs up from the south Langham to Stratford St Mary and beyond. Another Roman road runs through Great Horkesley northwards to Nayland. Roman bricks are also found in the Norman tower of Wormingford church and in the walls of Langham church, indicating nearby sources of Roman building materials.

The Priory, to the north of Little Horkesley church, incorporates part of a small Cluniac priory founded c.1127 by Robert son of Godebold and Beatrice his wife. This was a daughter-house of the larger Cluniac priory at Thetford and was suppressed by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey in 1525, to provide endowments for his ill-fated college foundations at Oxford and Ipswich.

Settlement and the built environment

The settlement pattern is generally one of hamlets, with occasional larger villages and dispersed farmsteads in the north, whilst in the south there is now a strong linear character to the settlements as houses have spread along the roads. At East Bergholt, several of the settlements on the edge of the former East Bergholt Heath (enclosed 1817-8) have experienced significant 20th-century growth, becoming more nucleated villages, their origin being only dimly acknowledged in place-names such as East End and Gaston End. The enclosure of even larger areas of heathland in Dedham, Boxted and Great Horkesley (mainly 1803 for Dedham and 1815 for Boxted and Horkesley) has however resulted in the growth of linear settlements along the post-enclosure road, though the more nucleated hamlet of Boxted Cross has grown at the northern end of the former Boxted Heath.

There was some earlier linear settlement beside the long *Horksley Causeway* (so-called in 1838) in Great Horkesley, a narrow linear green on the line of a former Roman road. This was *Horkesley Street* in 1443, *The Causeway* in 1777 and is now the A134 road – the wide ‘roadside wastes’ having been enclosed in 1815. *Hey Green*, also in Great Horkesley, was another smaller linear green – it was *Heyestreet* in 1328-9 and *Hey Green* in 1777, but is now a deserted spot in farmland. A third linear green in that parish was called *Westwodetye* in the late 14th century, *Westwood Green* in 1777 and seems to have been partially replaced soon afterwards by the enlarged grounds of Westwood House, now Westwood Park. The small triangular green called *Langham Moor* (1777) is now just a hamlet at a crossroads.

Plateau Farmlands

Boxted church with its Norman tower lies on a slight promontory not far from Boxted Hall. The latter is a timber-framed house of mixed date, part of which follows a layout that was documented in 1325 on the death of Peter de Boxted. The house was then moated and had an upper chamber over its drawbridge – some ponds east and north-east of the house may be the remains of the moat. Rivers Hall, also in Boxford but on another promontory, takes its name from Richard de la Riviere (living 1310) and was called *Ryvereshalle* by 1391. It had an 'outer' moat in 1586, but is now only partly moated and the existing timber-framed L-plan house is 16th century in date, with pargetting dated 1715. Songers, an isolated house in Cage Lane near Boxted Cross, is perhaps the oldest non-manorial house in Essex and is small two-bayed aisled hall of the first half of 13th century.

Lawford Hall, set within its own park, is a timber-framed house of 1583, built for Edward Waldegrave, which is hidden behind a Georgian brick façade of c.1756. The grazed parkland has some large tree, mainly oaks. Lawford church, just outside the park, has a chancel that has been described as 'one of the most splendid monuments of its date in Essex' – its date is early 14th century and material whitish-yellow bricks banded and chequered with flint and other stone.

In a much more modern style is the Boxted Waterworks, built in 1932-3 for the South Essex Waterworks Company.

Landholding and enclosure pattern

The landscape of this LCT is variable in character: there are areas of 'ancient countryside' with old, sinuous hedge lines, but also substantial areas where the boundaries are the straight type of 'planned landscape'. In the southern part, there was Parliamentary enclosure of common field arable in Dedham in 1803. The enclosure award also included a large area of open heath, and the large areas of heathland were similarly enclosed in nearby Boxted and Great Horkesley in 1815. East Bergholt Heath, in the northern part of this area, was also enclosed by a Parliamentary act, in 1817-8. The enclosure of all these heaths has resulted in a landscape with straight 'surveyors' roads and the geometric fields and land units typical of late enclosure. The straight Long Road in Dedham is a good example of this.

The farm sizes are not large although the large amount of parliamentary enclosure often gives an 'estate' character. Parkland grazing is also a feature.

Trees and woodland cover

The large heaths in the southern part were originally part of a large royal forest that extended southwards into West Bergholt, Lexden and Mile End. Named as a wood called *Cestrewald* in 1181 and as *foresta regis de Cestrewald in Kingeswod* in 1249, its name means the 'fort at/in the wood' and is probably a reference to Pitchbury Ramparts, an Iron Age fort in the southern part of Great Horkesley. Originally it was much wooded, and timber was being taken from it for buildings in the 13th century. A heath is first recorded at

Plateau Farmlands

Dedham in 1412-3 and the *heth of Boxted* is noted in the early 16th century, though John *atte Hath* and Geoffrey *attehethe* are recorded in Boxford in 1250 and 1272. Dedham Heath was largely enclosed in 1803 and part of the former heath area became Hill House Park. Horkesley and Boxted heaths were enclosed in 1815.

Medieval deer parks also seem to have evolved out of this forest – at Great Horkesley there was a park attached to the manor of Nayland (on the Suffolk side of the Stour) which later became the Horkesley Park estate. There was an ancient oak here called King John's Oak which finally blew down in 1928. In 1189 Henry of Cornhill was granted the right to enclose and impark his woods at Langham. This is referred to as the *parcum de Leineham* in 1221 and as *Leyngham Park* in 1292; it now is represented by Park Lane Farm. Large areas of woodland associated with the park were still surviving in 1777 (as *Langham Lodge Woods*), but these have disappeared and the area bears the imprint of the 2nd World War Boxted Airfield, built 1942-3, closed 1947.

A large area of woodland called *Great Dedham Birch Wood* (*Byrcherde* 'birch yard' in 1432) was still surviving beside Dedham Heath in 1838, but has now disappeared, leaving behind a hamlet called Birch Wood and the Birchwood service station on the A12. The birch component of these heathland woods is reinforced by other 'birch' names in the area, such as Burckett's Lane (= *le Birchet* 1291 = 'the birches'). In contrast, Boxted is 'the place with beech trees' (Old English *boc* = beech).

Despite these substantial losses, woodland is still a consistent feature of this landscape, but in smaller units and mostly in the form of plantation woodland often associated with parklands. In these instances non-native landscape planting makes a major impact with important specimens of species such cedar and *wellingtonia*.

Visual experience

In the landscape around East Bergholt, once away from the transport corridors, there is a strong sense of isolation and tranquillity in a network of quiet lanes and tall hedgerows. The farmland is all in arable cultivation, with medium to large fields in a sub-regular pattern defined by rough, gappy hedges of hawthorn; there are a few field oaks and small copses with a little holly, typical of these light soils.

At Dedham, the flat former has mainly 20th-century ribbon development along the straight roads, but slightly dispersed to give a semi-rural rather than a suburban character. Horse pastures at the eastern end modulate to arable cultivation at the western end. This former heathland has been significantly modified but retains its open character due to the poor soils that inhibit tree growth. The small enclosure parcels have given fields that are among the smallest in the Stour Valley area. There are some good hedges, with scrub oak trees within them.

At Langham, the land is mainly in arable cultivation, with a very irregular field pattern, defined by low, gappy hedges with few hedgerow trees, except to the south-east where there are some hedges and tree rows, with holly as a distinctive local element.

Condition

The condition of this landscape is mixed, with some areas slightly degraded, but there are also gems such as the lanes, hedges and pollard oaks of area to the north of East Bergholt.

Land management issues and options

Geology, soils, landform and drainage

Archaeology

- Conservation of upstanding heritage assets
- Identify priority sites for arable reversion to protect buried heritage assets

Settlement and the built environment

- Maintain and enhance the landscape setting through sensitive and appropriate development control

Landholding and enclosure pattern

- Maintain the historic pattern of field boundaries and ditches
- There is considerable potential for restoration and replanting of hedges in this landscape. Although care should be taken that the design and species selection reflect local variation in character, especially in areas of enclosed heath and common.
- Changes in landuse that effect the character and condition of the landscape, such as the expansion of horse paddocks need careful consideration. Support should be given to examples of best practice that minimise the impact of these changes on the landscape through the use of sympathetic materials and siting.
- There are opportunities to recreate some of the lost heathlands in this landscape, especially where there are indicators of surviving heathland flora and fauna.

Trees and woodland cover

- Maintain the balance of tree cover
- There are opportunities to recreate some of the lost woodlands within this landscape, if the location is chosen to reflect the local landscape character and to avoid archaeological sites

Appendix 3:

Countryside Commission Paper 90/31 "Dedham Vale AONB: Boundary Review" (1990)

DEDHAM VALE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY : BOUNDARY REVIEW

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

1. a. review the background of the Dedham Vale boundary issue
- b. inform Commissioners that a landscape assessment has now been carried out by Commission staff. This is summarised at Annex 1
- c. seek Commissioners' approval to some of the 'potential AONB' being proposed for AONB status
- d. seek Commissioners' approval to embark on the informal consultation stage
- e. agree not to repeat the experiment of declaring a "potential AONB"

Background

2. The Dedham Vale AONB, 22 square miles on the boundaries of Suffolk and Essex, was designated in 1970 following approaches from the counties then involved: Essex, East Suffolk and West Suffolk.
3. Subsequently the Commission was consulted by the county councils on the possibility of the AONB being extended along the Stour Valley as far as Sudbury as well as including two small areas at Polstead and Sulley's Hill, Reydon. The Commission agreed to the Polstead and Sulley's Hill extensions (CP77/1) and they were approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1978.
4. The local authorities continued to make representations to the Commission over the proposed extension along the Stour Valley, but the Commission remained unconvinced. Finally a compromise solution was reached. A 'potential AONB' was agreed in 1978. This was seen as an open statement that the landscape was, in certain respects, of lower quality than the existing AONB, but capable of being improved. It was considered that it would give positive encouragement to the local authorities to develop and strengthen their management arrangements. To this purpose a statement of intent which declared a potential AONB up to Bures was agreed by the Countryside Commission and the Dedham Vale Joint Conference.
5. When the statement of intent was drawn up it was anticipated that the possible designation of the potential AONB would be reconsidered in 1986. Dedham Vale was subsequently included in a very much reduced programme of boundary reviews which was agreed by the Secretary of State in July 1987. The review was to consider the improvements to the landscape within the potential AONB and any extension which might be appropriate. It was also suggested in Commission Paper 88/55 that there might be scope for considering other small amendments to the existing boundaries.
6. During a visit in April 1989, Commissioners indicated that they did not feel that the whole 'potential AONB' area was worthy of designation. During 1989 Commission staff assessed the existing boundary and the potential AONB. This was done by setting up a working party from the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), chaired and steered by Commission staff. This group worked on the basis of three options for an extended boundary. These options were outlined

in CP 88/87. Briefly, these options were as follows (see map 1):

- a. option 1 - the whole 'potential AONB'
- b. option 2 - the area to the east of the unclassified road between Over Hall Farm and Wormingford
- c. option 3 - follows an intermediate line between options 1 and 2 and stops short of the built up area of Bures

At that time Commissioners agreed with officers' preliminary view that an extension in line with option 3 would be appropriate.

7. While the Commission preferred option 3, the JAC were keen to have a major expansion of the AONB beyond the original potential AONB. The line proposed by the JAC is also shown on map 1. It was therefore considered advisable to have some form of objective landscape assessment.

The Stour Valley Extension

8. Annex 1 concludes that the Stour Valley East of Wormingford is worthy of inclusion in the AONB, but that West of Wormingford the landform and landcover no longer reflect the character and quality of the existing AONB. This proposed extension, an area smaller than option 3, is shown on map 1.

9. Although the local authorities under the grouping of the JAC expressed a desire to have the AONB boundary extended beyond the 'potential AONB' officers' view is that only the extension proposed above meets the stated criteria. Although they will be disappointed, it is believed that local authorities will be supportive of the proposal. The indications are that concerted opposition from local landowners is unlikely.

10. Existing and proposed management and planning policies in the proposed extension would satisfactorily reflect AONB status. There is an effective Joint Advisory Committee for Dedham Vale and a well established Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Countryside Management Project. The project area exceeds that of the AONB and 'potential AONB'. Through the JAC special development control policies have been agreed by all the local authorities concerned together with a programme of management action. Of particular interest is a system of voluntary consultation by farmers and landowners over the development of farm buildings. Planning policies for the AONB are included in both the Essex and Suffolk county structure plans. The local plans of Babergh, Braintree and Tendring Districts and of Colchester Borough all stipulate particularly strict control of development in the AONB. There is now a consultation draft management plan for the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Countryside Project which has been drawn up for the JAC. The costs of the project are shared between participating authorities. These measures apply to the whole JAC area and not just the AONB and 'potential AONB'.

The Review of the Remaining Boundary

11. Although Commission Paper 88/87 recommended that any small scale changes to the boundary of the existing AONB were considered, officers do not now propose to proceed with this for the following reasons:

- a. Dedham Vale is a relatively recent designation (1970) and any amendments to the boundary would probably only be minor.
- b. Commission staff have carried out a preliminary examination of the existing boundary and have concluded that there are no obvious.

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important changes required. The JAC has not proposed any amendments to the existing boundary.

c. Commissioners have already concluded that no new boundary reviews of AONBs should be embarked upon due to the disproportionate amount of staff time involved.

12. Although the whole boundary is not being reviewed, it should be noted that the Stour valley extension is being considered under the programme of AONB boundary reviews requested of the Commission by the DoE in 1982 as opposed to the Commission's own programme of new designations. It is the last review to be carried out under the review programme.

Review of the Success of the 'Potential AONB' Mechanism

13. When the statement of intent between the Commission and the JAC was drawn up for the 'potential AONB' it was agreed that:

"The success of the 'potential AONB' will not be judged solely by the extent and quality of landscape enhancement in the area, and whether or not that leads to designation. Positive landscape management of the type proposed is aimed at reconciling the conflicts between landscape beauty, agriculture, nature conservation, recreation and development, with the active participation of all concerned. It is in this wider context that the success of the 'potential AONB' will be judged."

14. In this wider context the "potential AONB" can be judged to have been successful because:

a. The Dedham Vale landscape conservation project which was formally launched in January 1981 has been very successful. It was extended in 1988 beyond the potential AONB into the Upper Stour and it now receives financial support from 7 local authorities. It has made a considerable impact on the landscape eg. over 60,000 trees and 15 miles of hedge have been planted since 1980. It has also achieved less tangible though influential results through liaison with and the dissemination of ideas to local interest groups, landowners and farmers, local authority members and staff etc.

b. The purview of the JAC has been extended to cover the whole project area.

c. A management plan has been prepared for the project area.

15. However, two points arise about the desirability of using a 'potential AONB' as a means of encouraging local authorities to improve the quality of the landscape, through countryside management.

a. Even if, as in this case, it is emphasised that the main contribution of countryside management is the reconciliation of conflicting pressures on the countryside, it still raises an unrealistic expectation about the ability of countryside management to significantly change a landscape. Countryside management seeks to bring about small changes on the ground with a limited budget. Many of these works will be geared to recreational opportunities rather than landscape enhancement. The project relies mainly on volunteer labour to carry out work on the ground. Ten years on from the inception of the statement of intent which was written, when countryside management was still in its experimental stages, it has become clear that this approach is not an engine of large scale landscape change.

b. The concept of a 'potential AONB' implies that at least some of the potential AONB will eventually be designated. To not designate any of it would be to suggest that the local authorities had "failed". The creation of such a hostage to fortune leaves the Commission little room for manoeuvre.

16. It is therefore considered that the carrot of a 'potential designation' as a means of achieving landscape improvement created problems of expectation. The countryside management and integration of policies which followed was, of course, extremely beneficial but a different 'trigger' for this activity might have been appropriate.

Recommendation

17. The Commission is invited to:

a. approve the preliminary map for the Stour Valley extension to the Dedham Vale AONB as the basis for publicity and informal consultation. Commissioners may wish to visit the area first.

b. endorse the officers decision not to review the boundary of the existing AONB.

c. agree that the concept of a 'potential designation' has not been helpful and to decide not to repeat the experiment elsewhere.

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(CP 90/31)

The Commission endorsed the recommendations in paragraph 17 of the paper.

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Annex 1

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT OF DEDHAM VALE AONB

1. This annex is a summary of a more detailed report which is available on request.
2. The approach used for this assessment is based on the Commission's publication "Landscape Assessment - A Countryside Commission Approach" (CCD18). This is a "broad, multidimensional approach based on aesthetic taste operating within the context of informed opinion, the trained eye and common sense".
3. Natural beauty was measured against the following criteria:
 - i. Potential AONB must be of similar character to the existing AONB
 - ii. Potential AONB must be of equal quality to the existing AONB, including having a connection with John Constable
 - iii. Potential AONB must be of higher quality to that outside the AONB

The following specific criteria as agreed by the Commission (paper 87/7) were used to assist in drawing a line on a map:

- i. Settlements were totally included or totally excluded on the basis of architectural character and conservation value of the settlements
- ii. New boundaries relate closely to clearly identifiable features
- iii. Areas were not included where they were solely of recreational value
- iv. Boundary changes which would bring additional counties or districts into the AONB were not considered unless there were overriding landscape reasons for such change.

Existing AONB

4. The existing AONB around Dedham and Flatford (area 1 on map 2) is characterised by a river valley which runs in an East/West direction. The gently sloping valley sides are clearly defined. The meandering river is evident on the valley floor, its course being accentuated by a line of mature willows along its banks. There is a wide skyline in all directions.

The landcover is a patchwork of grazing pastures on the valley floor and woodland, arable and grassland on the valley sides. There is a general impression of the valley sides being well wooded, especially on the skyline. The other significant landscape elements are the poplars, the hedges and the mature hedgerow trees, the lack of obtrusive buildings, masts, pylons or fences and the presence of several church spires.

Moving on to the more subjective part of the landscape description, it is around Flatford that one gets a real sense of being in a 'special' landscape. The gentle rounded shapes, the patchwork of pastures, hedges and trees. The river and willows all combine to give a strong sense of enclosures and intimacy. The landscape is very evocative of Constable. There is a sense of being cut off from the outside world. One cannot see beyond the valley sides, and one has the impression of having stumbled upon an undiscovered, hidden valley. The valley feels comfortable and safe. It rings a chord of

familiarity with what we imagine (rightly or wrongly) rural England to have been like. There is a strong harmony and tranquillity about the valley.

5. As one moves Westwards from Flatford and Dedham (area 2 on map 2) the landscape is less enclosed. The fields are larger. There is more arable land and less pasture. Hedges are slightly more gappy, and the bigger fields on the valley sides are particularly evident. This all contributes to a loss of intimacy. Despite this greater sense of openness there is still a sense of harmony and the area is still evocative of Constable.

'Potential AONB'

6. The landform for the 'potential AONB' (area 3 on map 2) is very similar to that of the Western end of the existing AONB up to Wormingford. West of Wormingford the valley sides are more undulating both to the North where a tributary valley runs in through Tiger Hill and Arger Fen and to the South where Cambridge Brook runs into the main valley. The sense of being in an enclosed river valley from which one cannot see out is lost. Layers of hills and trees disappear into the distance.

The landcover in the 'potential AONB' is very similar to that of the Western end of the existing AONB the main difference being that there is less pasture on the valley bottom and less woodland. This gives the area a predominantly arable appearance, especially in the valley bottom. In the 'potential AONB' there are fewer hedgerows than in the AONB and hedges tend to be gappy. Isolated trees which were formerly hedgerow trees stand around many of the field edges. Their winter silhouettes give the landscape a delicate, fragile feel. There are fewer skyline trees. Buildings are generally inconspicuous here, as are walls, fences, masts and roads. There is little settlement apart from the village of Bures. Bures has a pleasant and historic village centre but the edges of the village consist of modern, often suburban looking buildings.

The JAC Area

7. Beyond the 'potential AONB', in the area proposed for designation by the JAC (area 4 on map 2), the valley changes from running in an East West direction to running South East - North West. It is also narrower and with steeper slopes. The steeper, undulating valleysides, with views through to further undulations behind give an impression of a rolling lowland landscape rather than a broad, flat river valley. The river is contained in banks with few trees along its course.

The landcover here is also different to the AONB and 'potential AONB'. Fields are almost all big arable fields with little or no pasture. In addition to deciduous and mixed woodlands there are now some coniferous plantations. The village of Bures is conspicuous. Away from the village there are scattered settlements and buildings. A very conspicuous double row of pylons crosses the valley and a railway runs down its length marked by a straight line of tree cover. The noise of traffic on the road to Sudbury is also evident. Hedges and hedgerow trees are infrequent and the hedges tend to be gappy.

In this part of the valley the sense of openness almost becomes one of exposure. The scale is large, both within the valley and because it links to landscape beyond the valley. It looks rather bleak and the hillsides appear bare. There is little tree cover. The landscape also appears scruffy with scattered modern houses and gardens, railways and pylons. The sense of rural tranquillity has been lost.

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The area around Althamstone, however, is very attractive. It contains some delightful ancient woodlands and narrow lanes with thick old hedges.

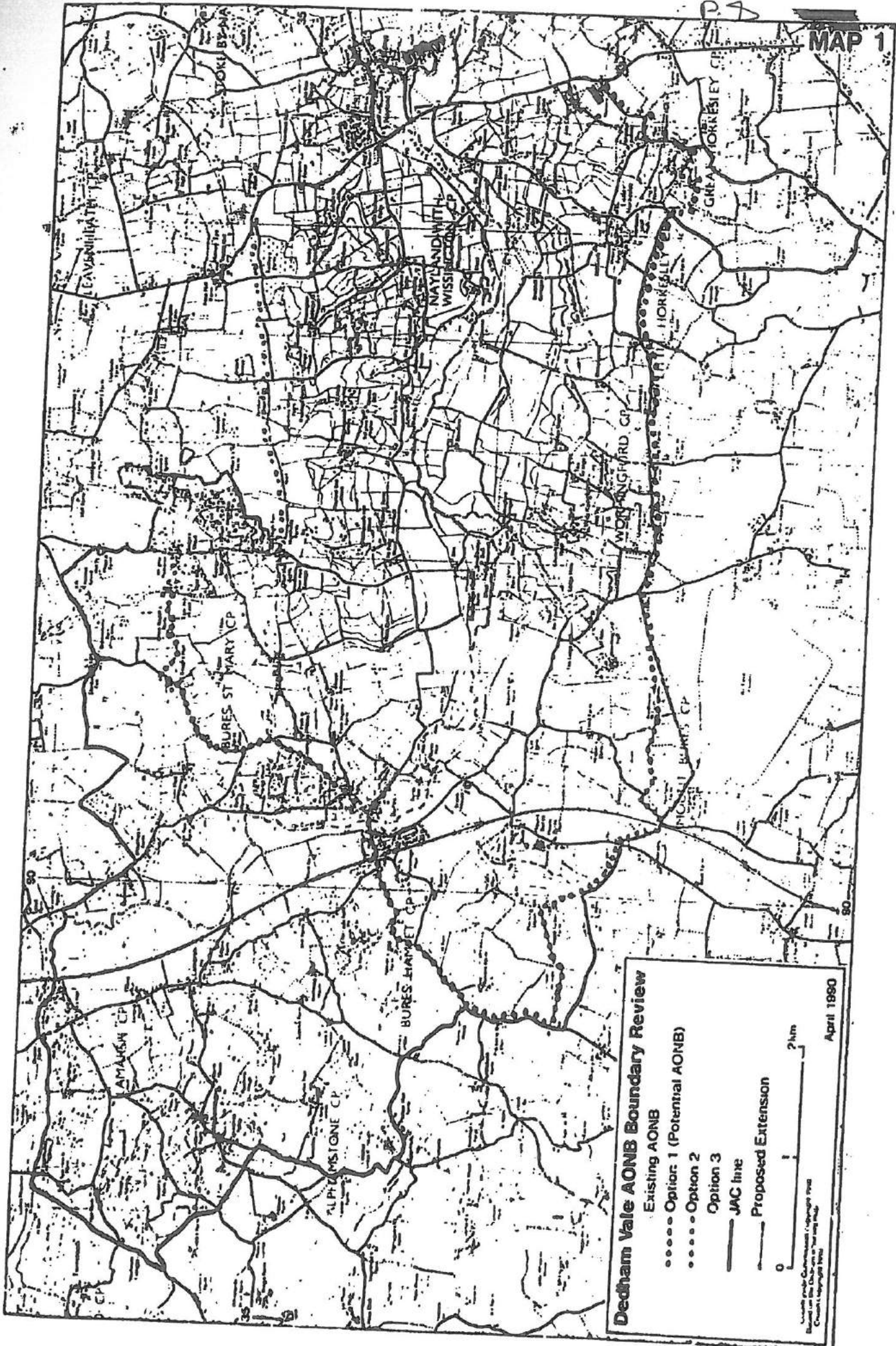
Conclusion

8. On the above analysis it was felt that the extension of the AONB could be justified to the East of Wormingford (see proposed extension line on map 1). West of Wormingford the broad flat river valley with clearly defined sides is less distinct and the landscape resembles rolling lowland. Part of the 'potential AONB' was generally felt to be of similar character to the existing AONB whilst the JAC line incorporated a landscape which was significantly different and somewhat degraded. It was also felt that this part of the potential AONB was a high quality landscape. It has a sense of harmony and tranquility, a sense of being a 'special' landscape, while at the same time being comfortable, safe and familiar. It is evocative of historic rural England, and of Constable's time (although it is not thought that any of Constable's paintings were based in this area).

9. On these conclusions a line has been drawn to extend the existing AONB.

The main features of this line are:

- i. It keeps where possible to the top of the valley sides, ie. the skyline;
- ii. Arger Fen and Tiger Hill have been included because, although not in the main valley they were felt to be of special landscape interest (they are also SSSIs);
- iii. the line follows a tributary valley in the northern slope, marking where the more or less straight valley side gives way to an undulating, rolling valley side;
- iv. The line cuts across the Southern valley side where it becomes flatter and less well wooded;
- v. The historic part of Wormingford village has been included while the less attractive, separate, modern part has been excluded;
- vi. The tributary valley south of Little Horksey has been excluded. Although attractive, it is not felt to be of sufficient significance to merit deviating the line away from the side of the main valley.



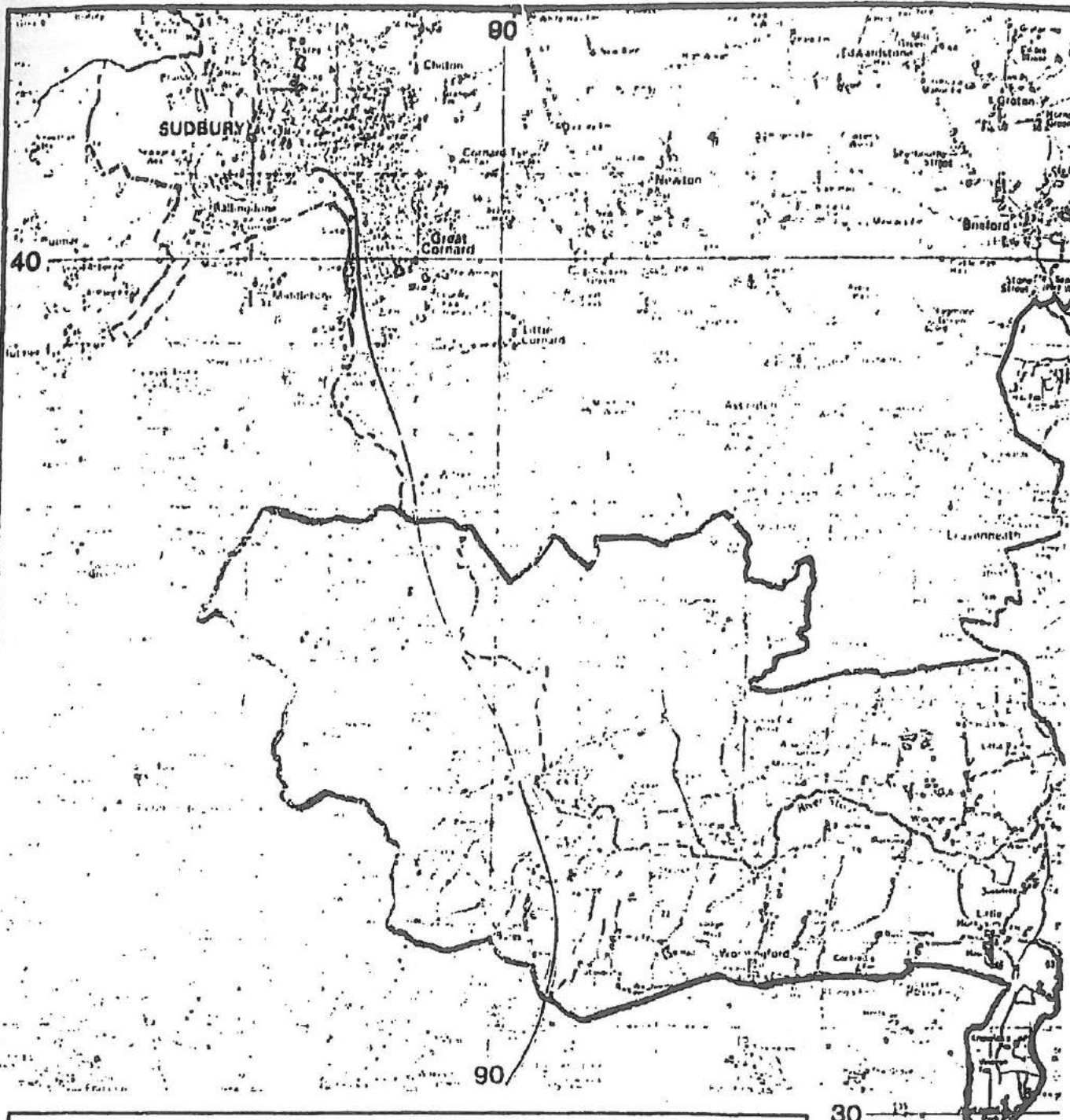
Dedham Vale AONB Boundary Review

Existing AONB
..... Option 1 (Potential AONB)
..... Option 2
..... Option 3
—— JAC line
—— Proposed Extension

0 1 2 km

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Dedham Vale AONB Boundary Review

Existing AONB

JAC line

Area 1

Area 2

Area 3

Area 4

0 1 2 3km

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MAP 2

