

Touching the Tide



**Sense of Place and Landscape in the Suffolk
and Essex Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

A Guidance Note for preparing Neighbourhood Plans

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Cover image:
View across View towards Cattawade in Suffolk
Coast & Heaths AONB.



1 Introduction

Neighbourhood Plans give communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood. They help shape the development and growth of the local area. They also highlight opportunities for enhancement and conservation of features and areas which may have particular local value, and/or be nationally significant. Neighbourhood Plans therefore offer great scope for benefiting the built, natural and historic environment.

This guidance document has been produced by the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs, in conjunction with the Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme along the Suffolk coast, "Touching the Tide". It is aimed at Parish Councillors and other people with an interest in shaping their local place through the planning system, by preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Specifically this guidance has been written with the land within and around the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in mind.

The landscapes within and around the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs have a rich and varied built, cultural and natural environment. Estuaries, river valleys, biodiversity and geological sites; extensive open spaces and

countryside, landmarks and key views; cultural associations, conservation areas and historic buildings; all contribute to the distinctive characteristics of the area and its sense of place. Collectively they make the AONBs special, and are the reasons why they are nationally valued (and legally protected) for their natural beauty. Neighbourhood Plans are an important opportunity for local communities to protect and enhance these qualities, for current residents and for the generations to come.

Policies and initiatives developed within a Neighbourhood Plan should be backed up by solid evidence on the local landscape. This document provides guidance on how to achieve this, ensuring reference to all appropriate and up to date sources. A glossary of terms is provided at the back of this document.

2 What is Landscape?

Landscape is defined as¹:

“ an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”

Our landscapes vary because of their underlying geology, soils, topography, land cover, hydrology, historic and cultural development, and climatic considerations. These physical and socio economic influences combine to make one landscape different from another.



◀ The landscape wheel from 'Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland'. Countryside Agency 2002 and Landscape Layers diagram © Countryside).



Dunwich cliffs
in Suffolk Coast
& Heaths AONB
(photo: Tony Pick)

Landscape which are different from one another are said to have their own landscape character comprising a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics.

¹ European Landscape Convention (ELC)
<http://www.landscapeinstitute.co.uk/policy/EuropeanLandscapeConvention.php>. The ELC was ratified by the UK in 2006.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a means of understanding the variations in landscape and establishing what makes a place distinctive and what matters and why. A character assessment may define **Landscape Character Types and/or Landscape Character Areas**.

Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are generic and repeat across an area – for example 'saltmarsh' or 'river valleys' and allow different landscapes to be compared.

Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), on the other hand, are geographically specific and unique, have a specific name such as the Alde Estuary, and focus on the distinctiveness of a place.

Information contained within landscape character assessment documents is a key source of information which should be used to inform the

preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Landscape types and areas articulate the differences between places, help in understanding processes and change and enable us to plan for the future and celebrate what is special.

Landscape character assessments illustrate the variety of landscape character present in any given area and set out key characteristics and special qualities. Each assessment provides detailed descriptions of the landscape and in some cases also provide strategy and guidance for the future of the landscape, including its planning, management and conservation. This helps inform the drafting of policy within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Landscape Character Assessments are undertaken at different scales from national assessments (National Character Areas - NCAs) and regional assessments (such as the East of England Typology), through to County, District or AONB assessments, or other local assessments for specific areas (such as the Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland LCA).

▼ **Sculpture on the banks on the Stour in Dedham Vale AONB; the cultural heritage of Dedham Vale, notably its associations with John Constable, is important to its identity.**



Four shingle beaches in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB – despite the apparent similarities, all have very different characters.



Benacre beach, near Covehithe



Dunwich beach



Aldeburgh beach



Bawdsey beach – photo Garry Simmonds

3 Where to Find Information on Landscape

Landscape Character Assessments

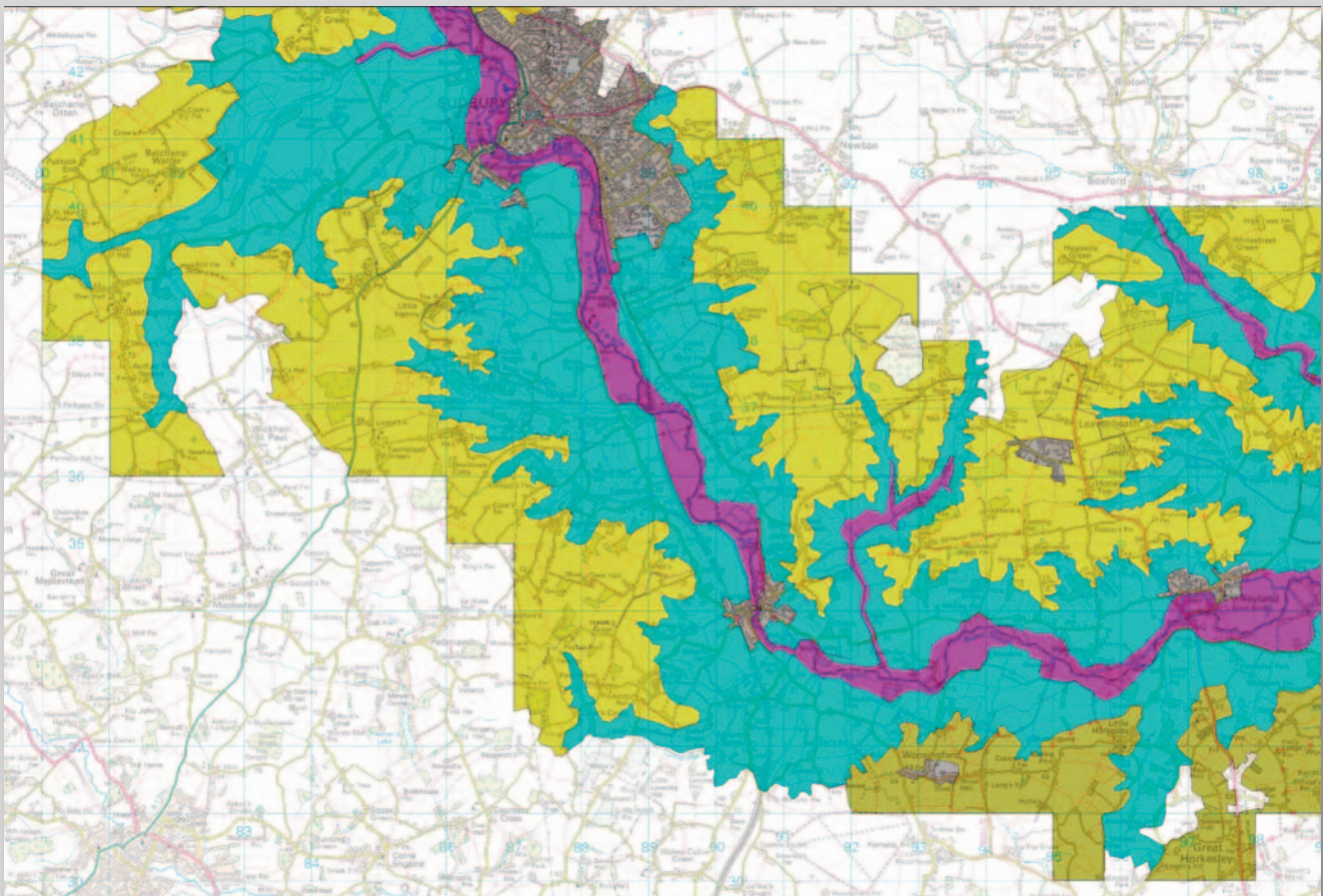
Landscape character assessment documents are a primary source for landscape information when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, although there are other sources which are useful and these are explored further below. There are a number of existing Landscape Character Assessments which cover the land within and around the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONBs. These vary in their geographical scale and extent as well as level of detail and classification. The classifications within each assessment generally relate to one another and all provide relevant information, becoming progressively more detailed and specific the more local they are. The assessments relevant to the Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast & Heaths areas are detailed in Appendix 1 of this guidance with web links for easy access. Often a Neighbourhood Plan area will have more than once assessment relevant to it.

The detailed descriptions as well as strategy and guidance in LCAs can be used to help inform the drafting of policy within the Neighbourhood Plan.

However, when relying on a particular assessment it is important to consider how recent it is and if the information, and in particular any associated guidance, is up to date. It is also helpful to consider which is most relevant to the area covered by the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. This is not just a matter of scale, some may have better consideration of the historic landscape for instance, or some other feature that is particularly important to a local area. Be selective and use the character assessment(s) which contain(s) the most relevant information for your area.



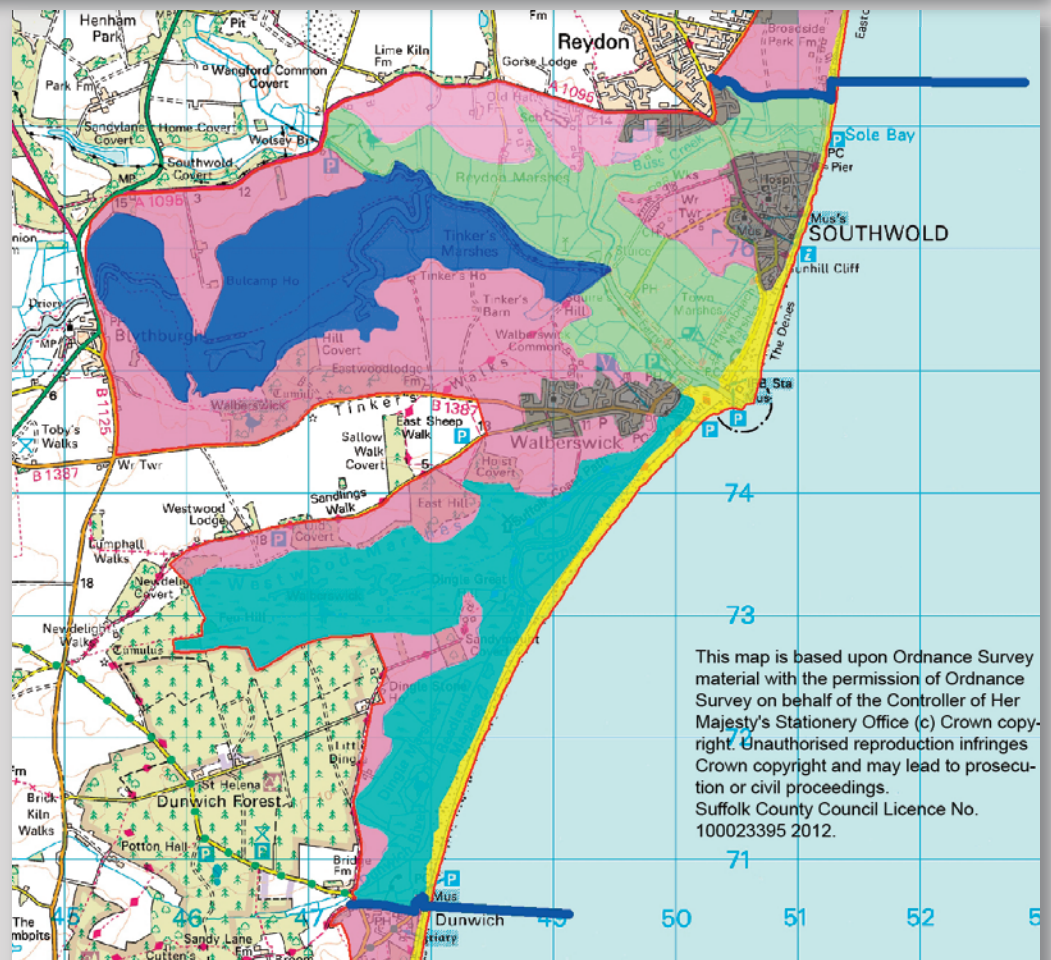
**Extract from 'Managing a Masterpiece'
Historic Landscape Character Assessment
(2009)**





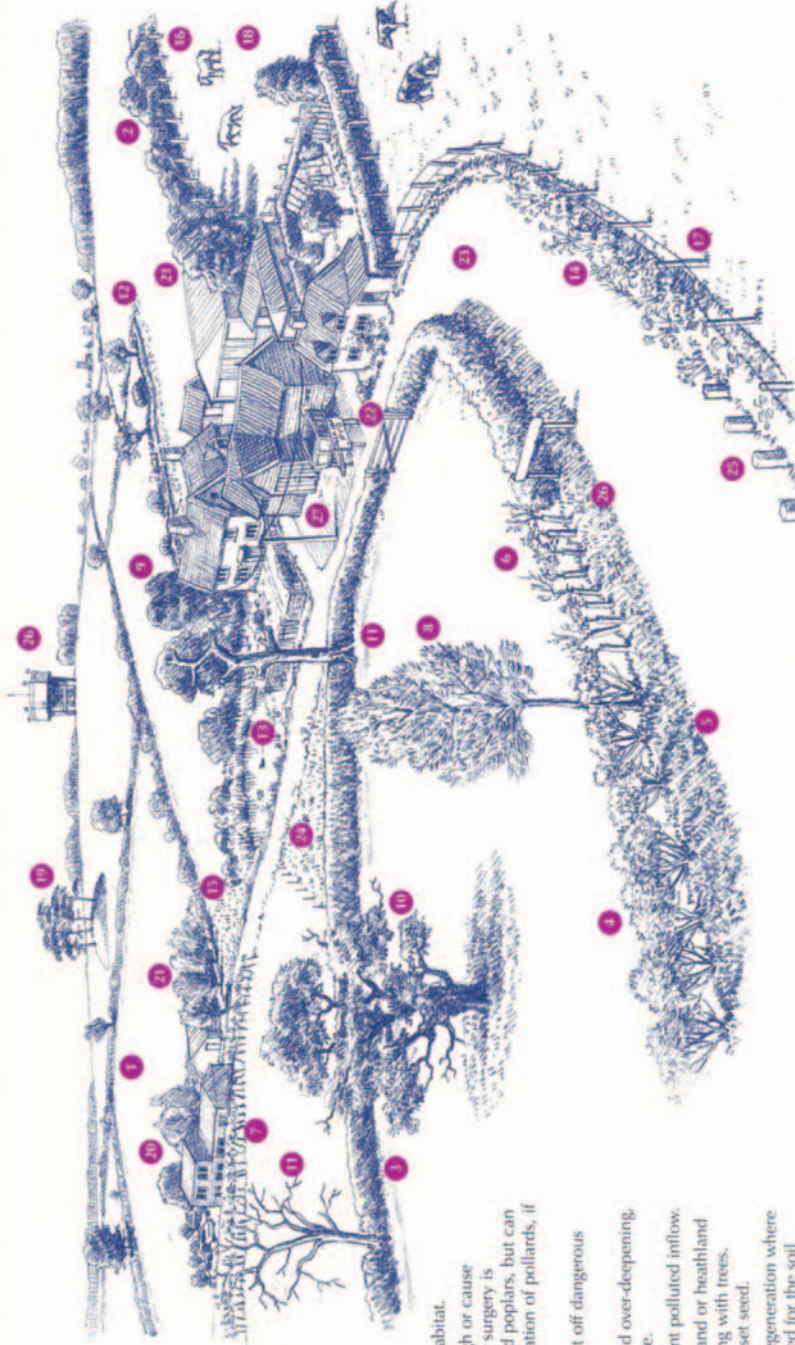
▲ Extract from
Suffolk
Landscape
Character
Assessment
(updated 2011)

▶ Extract from
Touching the
Tide Landscape
Character
Assessment
(2012)



Management Guidelines

- 1 Do not grub out hedges or level hedgebanks.
- 2 Create a variety of hedgerow shapes – some trimmed or coppiced and others allowed to grow freely to their full height.
- 3 Where possible, trimmed hedges should be cut only every other year in winter and allowed to develop a good height and width.
- 4 Elm hedges need to be periodically coppiced to ground level and allowed to regrow; or at least cut back occasionally to prevent Dutch Elm Disease killing the plant.
- 5 Do not spray established hedgebanks and hedge bottoms with herbicide.
- 6 Plant up gaps in hedgerow.
- 7 Reinstatate lost hedgerows along field margins or roadsides where possible.
- 8 Encourage the growth of new hedgerow trees.
- 9 Wherever possible, retain ivy on mature trees as a habitat.
- 10 Protect veteran trees and avoid felling. Do not plough or cause compaction below the crown. Repollarding or other surgery is sometimes recommended, especially for willows and poplars, but can kill very old trees of all species. Create a new generation of pollards, if possible.
- 11 Retain dead trees as a habitat wherever possible. Cut off dangerous branches rather than felling.
- 12 Avoid filling in or culverting ditches and dykes. Avoid over-deepening, and manage according to good conservation practice.
- 13 Protect ponds. Clear scrub encroachment and prevent polluted inflow.
- 14 Protect verges and small blocks of flower-rich grassland or heathland by avoiding spraying, ploughing, fertilising or planting with trees. Ideally verges should be cut only after flowers have set seed.
- 15 Let disturbed and bare ground regenerate by natural regeneration where possible. If seeding is unavoidable use a mix designed for the soil type, rather than a standard commercial mix.
- 16 Where possible, erect fences along hedges or woods etc., rather than cutting across open views.
- 17 In open countryside unobtrusive post and wire fencing is usually preferable to standard wooden post and rail, or urban style fencing. If obtrusive fencing is unavoidable consider planting a hedge alongside to soften its effect.
- 18 Horse paddocks should not dominate the scene. Avoid overgrazing and excessive use of fencing, jumps etc. Where possible, avoid subdividing fields into small fenced paddocks.



- 19 Protect historic and archaeological features – avoid ploughing, excessive scrub encroachment, or other damage.
- 20 New developments should be well sited and sit well in the landscape.
- 21 Screen intrusive buildings with native trees and shrubs.
- 22 Traffic, business, tourist, recreational or information signs can create unattractive clutter in the landscape. Limit their number and choose their design and siting carefully.
- 23 Avoid unnecessary use of lighting and excessive traffic calming measures on rural roads.
- 24 Prevent the development of informal parking especially on verges.
- 25 Protect small and winding lanes, especially from the effects of hedge removal, widening or verge damage.
- 26 Wherever possible, site telecommunication aerials on existing structures or masts rather than erecting new masts.
- 27 Underground cables wherever possible.

General Guidance

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths - Landscape Guidelines



4 Other Relevant Information Sources and Documents

Other information sources and documents provide further factual and descriptive data about the local area, (inc. settlements), relevant to the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. These include the following:

Data Source/Document	Description and Location
Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)	HLC is the assessment and characterisation of the historic landscape. Amongst other things it provides information on how the landscape has evolved and how history is expressed in the current day landscape.
Conservation Area Appraisals	Conservation Area Appraisals describe the character of a conservation area and what makes it special including the identification of local vernacular styles, important open space and key views. Web links to Conservation Area Appraisals can be found on local authority websites.
Village Design Statements (VDS)	A VDS is a document that describes the distinctive characteristics of the locality, and provides design guidance to influence future development and improve the physical qualities of the area. Many are web based or can be accessed via the local authority.
Listed Buildings	Information on listed buildings is held at County Level - Suffolk and Essex and can be accessed on the web. New development within the setting of a listed building should be very carefully considered.
Historic Environment Records (HERs)	This is an online database of historic information and can be accessed by the following weblink: www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/CHR
Ecological and habitat data - SSSI citations, County Wildlife Sites (CWS) data, habitat surveys, ecological network studies and wildlife strategies	Local plan maps identify the location of wildlife designations. Information on habitat surveys or network strategies can be found on the web. The Suffolk Biological Records Centre - www.suffolkbrc.org.uk and Essex Wildlife Trust Biological Records Centre - www.essexwtrecords.org.uk can also provide further information.

5 When to Undertake Your Own Assessment

Having reviewed the existing landscape character assessments and other relevant documents listed above, a decision needs to be made as to whether there is sufficient information on local character for the Neighbourhood Plan area or not, and if the information is sufficiently up to date. Do the existing studies and reports capture the area's "sense of place"?

If they do, then you will simply need to draw the evidence together as a statement of Local Character – essentially a summary of available information written in a way that makes sense to you, but is also written to explain the areas for a reader who doesn't know the area so well. Make sure to reference your sources.

If they don't capture what you think is important, you may want to consider commissioning a local Landscape Character Assessment of your own.

Local Character Assessments

It may be that a new local character assessment should be carried out as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. Advice on undertaking a new assessment can be gained from Planning Aid England² and can be done by the local community or by suitably qualified professionals such as landscape architects. Any new assessment work should follow published guidance³ and best practice.

Whole Settlement and Parish Studies

If the Neighbourhood Area relates to a settlement then it may be helpful to undertake a more detailed settlement or Parish study. This may include analysis of the following:

- the range of housing types and character areas within the settlement;
- the location of gateways and sense of arrival;
- how the settlement sits and relates to the landscape;
- the built edges and interface with the landscape;
- key views and the way in which different parts of a settlement may function and contribute to local distinctiveness;
- open spaces, landscape parklands, and trees which are of particular value.

Village Design Statements and Conservation Area Appraisals very often contain this information, so it is worth checking if these already exist. If you undertake your own assessment it should include a description of the special qualities of the settlement as well as maps showing analysis.

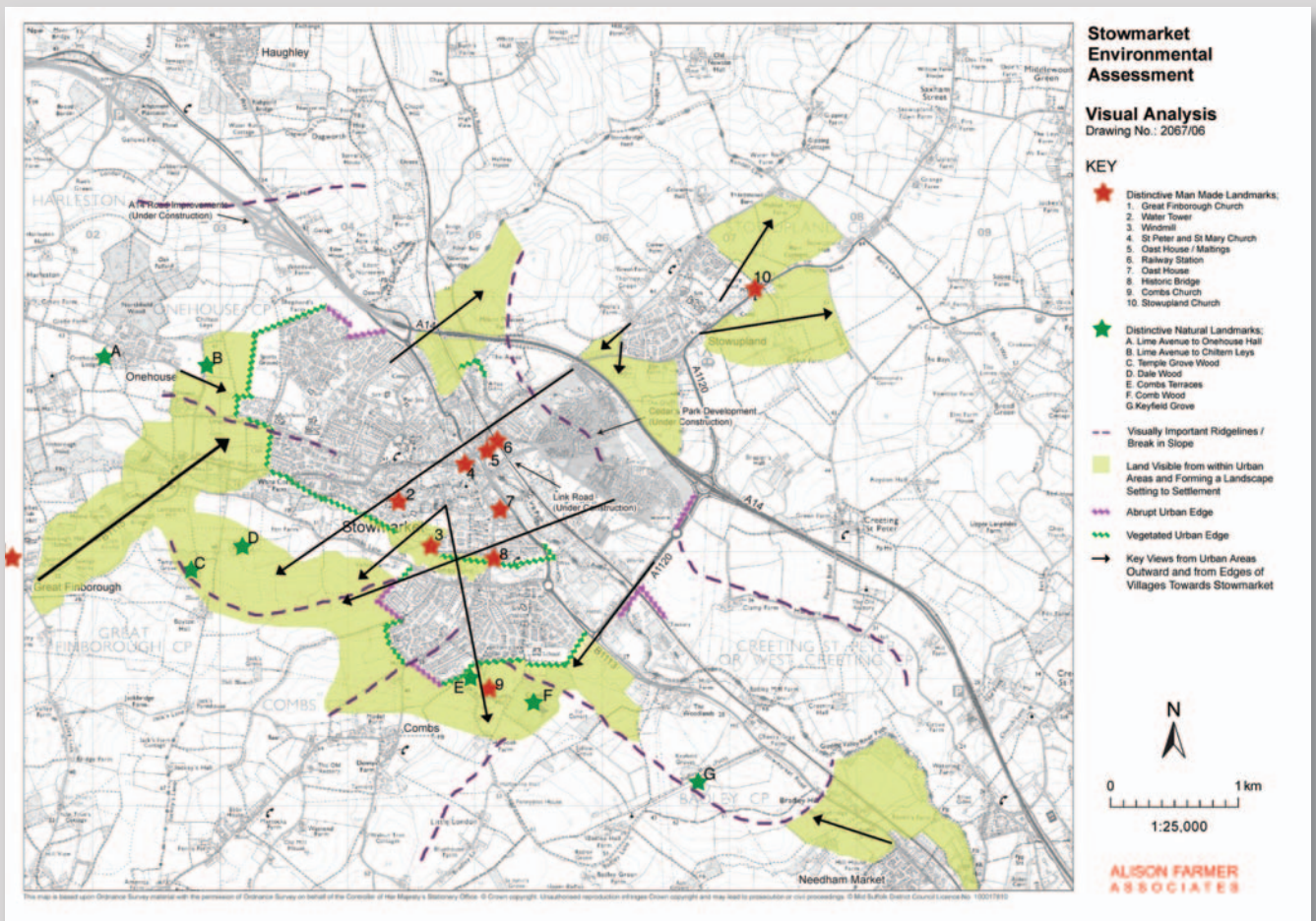
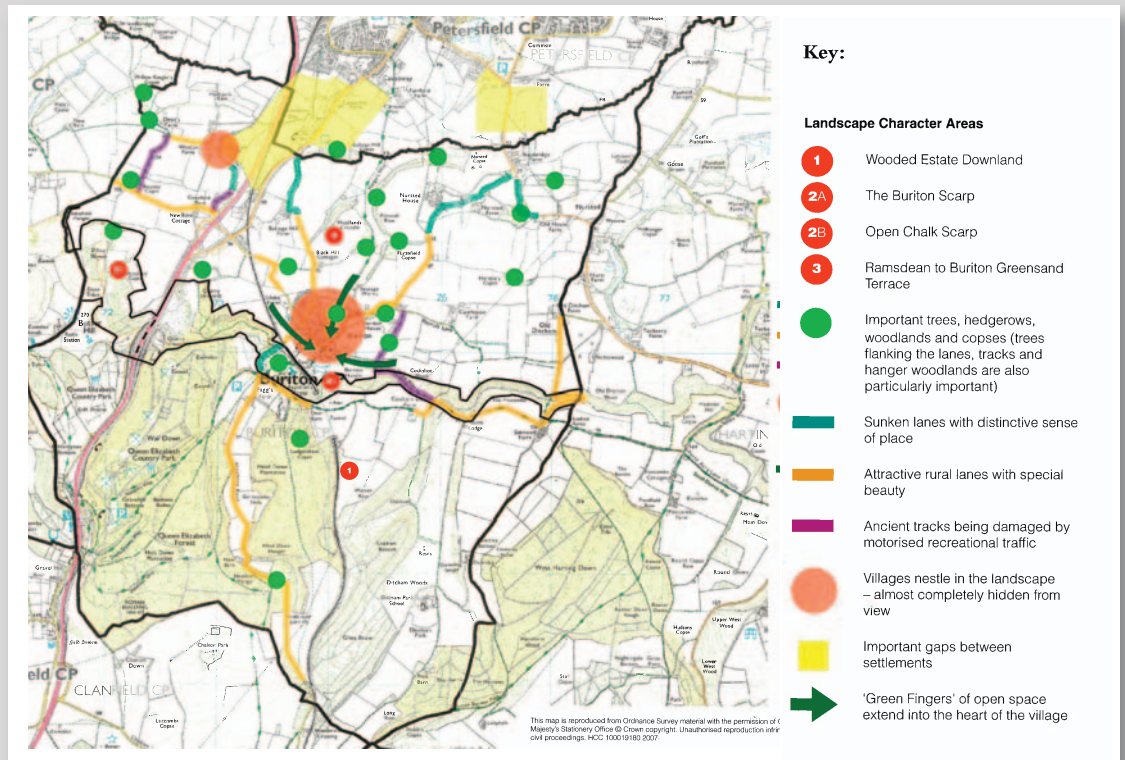
² Planning Aid England offer free, independent, professional advice on planning issues. <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/>

³ An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, October 2012.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396192/landscape-character-assessment.pdf



Important Landscape Character Features in the Parish of Buriton, Hampshire (extract from Buriton Village Design Statement 2009).



Taken from Stowmarket Environmental Assessment - whole settlement analysis, Alison Farmer Associates, 2008 (Copyright Mid Suffolk District Council)

6 What a Neighbourhood Plan can do

The key aim of producing a Neighbourhood Plan is to enable the sustainable growth of an area over the plan period. This will require creating a balance between the need for future development with the protection and enhancement of the built, natural and historic environment. A Neighbourhood Plan is a perfect place to bring these things together.

By considering the existing landscape/settlement character and establishing what matters and why, along with development pressure and forces for change, you can start to shape ideas about where and how change should occur. You can also see what positive environmental initiatives, which support landscape character, can be facilitated.

Local communities often feel that the planning process is top-down, and that they struggle to influence planning decisions particularly at a strategic level. The purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan is to articulate clearly what the community wants and needs in terms of development, and how and where it would like to see those needs met.

The stronger the evidence base behind the Plan, the more influence it will have. That's why Landscape Character matters; it's a recognised and objective way of describing an area's sense of place, and of protecting it for the future.

Setting Out What Matters and Why

In order to develop objectives and policies it is first necessary to set out what matters and why in your local environment. An existing character

▼ **Horse riders in Dedham Vale AONB – maintaining the character of historic villages is an important objective of Landscape Character studies.**





assessment can tell you about your area (including facts and statistics) and help build up your understanding. Because landscape is made up of geology, soils, wildlife and heritage, an assessment may contain information on these elements too. Most LCAs establish the key characteristics that contribute strongly to the area's local distinctiveness and are therefore the elements of the landscape which are often (but not exclusively) most important to conserve/enhance. Alternatively land which is considered to be in poor condition may be identified for improvement. Often it is not just the presence of a landscape element which is of value but its relationship to other features or characteristics e.g. the presence of woodland but in particular its location on hill tops or skylines. Factors which contribute to local



Near Lower Raydon, just within Dedham Vale AONB

distinctiveness should be summarised and described in the Neighbourhood Plan. Any additional assessment carried out as part of the plan preparation may also be summarised.

Care should be taken not to be over zealous in fact finding, as it is possible to have too much information - be selective and use the character assessment which contains the most relevant information for your area. The Neighbourhood Plan should set out what people value about their local environment and why. Attention should be paid both to any written descriptions but also any management strategies within relevant LCAs.

7 Understand Current Development Pressures and Initiatives

Once the character and special qualities of the Plan area are set out it is then necessary to establish what the current development pressures are for the area (including existing development allocations) and/or current environmental initiatives which a Neighbourhood Plan may also support. For the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley area and Suffolk Coast & Heaths area the following planning, management and strategy documents are relevant:

Core Strategies

- Waveney Core Strategy (adopted January 2009)
- Suffolk Coastal Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (adopted July 2013)
- Babergh Core Strategy and Policies (adopted February 2014)
- St Edmundsbury Adopted Core Strategy December 2010
- Ipswich Borough Draft Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan (adopted October 2013)
- Colchester Local Plan Adopted December 2008 (updated July 2014)
- Tendring Local Plan Adopted 2007 and Draft Local Plan 2012
- Braintree District Adopted Core Strategy 2001

AONB Management Plans

- Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project Management Plan (2010-2015) (New plan in preparation to be published before end of 2015)
- Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan (2013-2018)

Green Infrastructure Strategies

Green Infrastructure Strategies cover issues like recreation areas, walking and cycling routes, parks and other greenspace, wildlife areas within a settlement, and sustainable drainage.

- Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)
- Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008)
- Suffolk Coastal District Council Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)
- St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Strategy (Sept 2009)

Other Strategy Documents

- Suffolk's Nature Strategy, A 2020 Vision for Suffolk's Natural Environment, (2014).
- Living Landscape Initiative (www.wildlifetrusts.org/living-landscape/schemes).

These documents set out housing and business development strategies as well as environmental initiatives which can inform the likely development needs within an area, potential pressures for change, or opportunities for improvements.

The following table sets out a range of initiatives/policies which may be developed in a Neighbourhood Plan and how landscape can help inform policy drafting and focus.

Policy/Initiative/Issue	Relevance of Landscape
Conserving and enhancing the character and special quality of the landscape or settlement	Landscape character assessments describe the current character of an area, its distinguishing features and patterns, and the way in which it is experienced including its special qualities. This can help in identifying what should be conserved and enhanced and how any new development should be integrated sensitively.
Avoidance of coalescence between settlements	Character assessments classify land between settlements. Settlement studies and further site assessment can reveal key views, character and qualities which should be safeguarded. It may highlight some areas of land which are more sensitive than others.
Accommodating new housing (including affordable housing)	Settlement studies or further site assessment can reveal what is special about an existing place and where new housing may be accommodated. They can also inform the nature and design of new development so that there is a good fit with existing valued character and ensure that attractive places are created.
Provision of new open space or footpaths	Green Infrastructure Strategies can reveal where there is a need and opportunity for increased open space provision. Settlement studies or Parish Plans may identify the need for footpath/bridleway links.
Improving community facilities and quality of life	Local communities may have a view on what they need. Settlement studies can reveal where these are best located to fit with existing settlement character or reinforce/recreate a local sense of place. Settlement studies may also identify open spaces or trees which are of particular amenity value or have the potential to be.
Improving street scenes or the urban edge	Settlement studies can highlight streets or urban edges which lack distinction and could benefit from enhancement through new planting/hard landscaping as well as addressing issues such as parking or open space.
Improving highways and infrastructure (utilities inc. internet provision)	<p>Landscape assessments often describe the character of rural lanes and can inform the character and specification of new road or junction development ensuring a good fit.</p> <p>Where infrastructure creates visual clutter, such as overhead wires, opportunities to remove and/or rationalise should be sought.</p>

8 Shaping Positive Change

Neighbourhood Plans are development plans, and will be used for determining planning applications. Accordingly they are able to contain policies, identify sites for new development including housing, employment, business use, leisure and other forms of development which may be considered to be appropriate. They can also protect and safeguard areas for future uses (e.g. open space) or features (e.g. trees), and define development or settlement limits.

Specifically Neighbourhood Plans can include:

- Landscape related policies
- Identification of specific development sites
- Design briefs for development
- Environmental initiatives

Developing Appropriate Policies

The development of policies within Neighbourhood Plans should reflect National and Local Plan Policy. Policies in Neighbourhood Plans are therefore more detailed and geographically specific or prescriptive. For example if one of your objectives is to conserve and enhance the character of the village then it will be necessary to set out what characteristics the village has and to perhaps make the policy more specific i.e. retaining key views. Policy should relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area but not be restricted to it if there is potential for change outside of the area which may adversely affect the special qualities of the area i.e. wind farm development.

For example in the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan a specific policy aimed at protecting landscape character specifies that all development exceeding 500 square meters or comprising more than three dwellings, must be accompanied by a landscape assessment which considers impacts and demonstrates that adverse effects are appropriately mitigated.

Identifying Specific Sites for Development

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan can identify specific sites for development. Appendix 2 of this Guidance Note contains a checklist which can be used to help determine the best sites for development within the plan area. Understanding the landscape of potential development sites and how they sit within the wider area and/or settlement is particularly important. Information can be drawn from landscape character assessment and other sources of environmental information such as Conservation Area Appraisals to assist in this analysis. Your own site assessment will also be invaluable. The reasons for the identification of a preferred development site over others must be clearly set out.

Useful questions to ask include:

1. What are the special qualities of the landscape and/or settlements where development may be accommodated?
2. Is there a location for development which is more suitable/less sensitive than others - why?

Preparing Design Briefs

Once a particular site for development has been identified, it is possible to provide guidance on how development should take place, which aspects and characteristics of the site and area should be conserved and enhanced and what opportunities exist for improved environmental initiatives on the back of the development. These may translate into a specific policy which states that development will be permitted if certain criteria are adhered to such as:

- building heights
- layout and materials
- provision of open space
- introduction of natural screening/mitigation planting/boundary treatment
- protection of setting to listed buildings
- protection of existing trees
- reestablishment of particular habitat
- improved public rights of way links or protection and enhancement of key views etc.

In addition, useful questions to ask include:

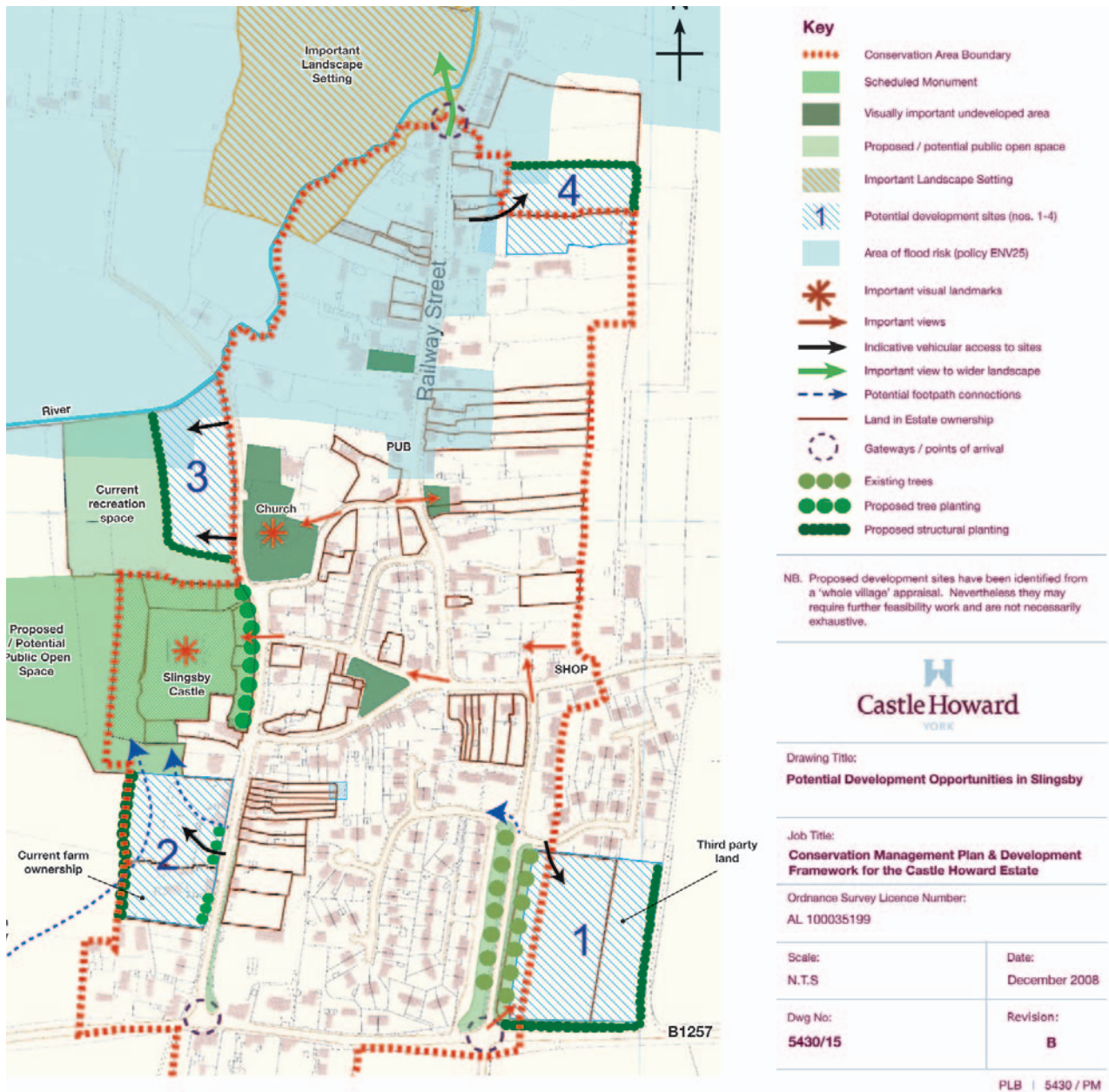
1. Can development bring forward environmental initiatives such as habitat creation, watercourse improvement or green infrastructure (the creation of corridors and networks that connect existing wildlife sites or green spaces) and which reinforce local character?
2. Can development bring forward new infrastructure such as footpaths and cycle routes or new coastal defences which fit well with local character and reinforce sense of place?
3. Are there particular vernacular styles, landscape patterns or design cues which can help shape development and assist its assimilation into the existing fabric of the area?

The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan identified a specific preferred housing site and sets out design parameters including; housing mix; open space provision; natural screening and boundary treatment; protection of the setting of a Grade II listed building; and the need for archaeological investigation.

Reinforcing Landscape Character and Environmental Enhancement

Again policy should reflect National and Local Plan policies. The identification of specific initiatives and delivery mechanisms is a key component of the Neighbourhood Plan. Initiatives may include changes to land uses and management, planting of new woodland or reinstatement of hedgerows, creation of new urban edges, enhancement of watercourses, street scene improvements, new recreation or ecological links/corridors.

The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan identified a site which was considered to be an Asset of Community Value (ACV). This means that if it came up for sale the community would have time to raise the funds to submit a competitive bid for it. The listing of a ACV is a material consideration in any planning application for development of a site. The plan also sought to have Tree Preservation Orders on trees which were regarded as making a particular contribution to the area/street scene.



Whole Settlement Study of Slingsby Village, Yorkshire. Extract from Castle Howard Conservation Management Plan (Copyright Castle Howard Estate).

9 Glossary

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Nationally important landscape where planning control is based on the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.

Asset of Community Value

Part 5 Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011 provides for district and unitary councils to maintain a list of assets of community value, which can be either land or buildings, nominated by local community groups or parish councils. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gives local community groups the time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset when it comes on the open market. The scheme is also known as the community right to bid. The Government has said that the aim of the measure is as follows:

...to give many more communities the opportunity to take control of assets and facilities in their neighbourhoods by levelling the playing field [and] by providing the time for them to prepare a proposal.

Conservation Area

An area of built development and associated spaces with special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which are preserved and enhanced by local plan policies and guidance.

Conservation Area Appraisal

The purpose of a conservation area appraisal is to define the 'special architectural and historic interest' that warrants Conservation Area designation and to identify what it is about the character or appearance of the area that should be preserved or enhanced.

County Wildlife Sites (CWS)

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are areas of land recognised as being at least county, sometimes national, importance for their nature conservation value; this is defined by the presence of important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species.

European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. It is dedicated exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The Convention was signed

by the UK government became binding in this country on 1st March 2007.

The ELC provides a people-centred and forward-looking way to reconcile environmental management with the socio-economic challenges of the 21st century and to help people and communities to re-connect with place.

Evidence Base

The evidence upon which a development plan is based, principally the background facts, statistics and descriptions about an area, and the views of local people.

Green Infrastructure

The network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. As such they often follow and include access networks.

Historic Environment Records (HER)

Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

A Geographic Information System (GIS) - based (computer mapping) archaeological method for defining the historic and archaeological dimension of the present-day landscape. It can explain how and why the landscape looks as it does, identify landscape's 'time-depth' and facilitate sustainable management.

Landscape Policies

General principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes.

Landscape Condition

A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.

Landscape Character Assessment

A process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain why an area is distinctive

Landscape Character Areas

Unique areas which are discrete geographically and express their own individual sense of place.

Landscape Character Types

Generic types of landscape what repeat across an area which share broadly similar characteristics.

Landscape Scale Conservation

An approach to nature conservation that identifies specific areas for landscape scale management and restoration work. Initiatives include Living Landscapes led by the Wildlife Trust, Futurescapes led by RSPB and partnership Nature Improvement Areas funded by DEFRA and run by local authorities.

Listed Building

Any building or structure which is included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

National Character Areas

Assessment of landscape character across England and Wales. National Character Areas (NCAs) integrate a wide range of environmental information to create a 'profile' for each of England's 159 major landscape areas, exploring the characteristic landscape, wildlife, cultural and geological features to be found, and providing information on how the landscape is changing, how it supports economic activity, and what opportunities there are for the future of the local environment.

Neighbourhood Development Order

An order introduced by a parish or town council, or a neighbourhood forum as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process, which grants planning permission for a specific development or type of development that will fulfil the vision and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan for the neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood Plan

A planning document created by a Parish or town council or a neighbourhood forum, which sets out a vision for the neighbourhood area, and contains policies for the development and use of the land in the area. Neighbourhood Plans must be subject to an independent examination to confirm that they meet legal requirements, and then to a local referendum.

If approved by a majority vote of the local community, the Neighbourhood Plan will then form part of the statutory development plan.

Sense of Place

A term used in relation to those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

Nationally important wildlife or geological sites, designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Natural England must be consulted about any operation that might damage an SSSI.

Special Area for Conservation (SAC)

An area designated under the Habitats Directive for its international importance for wildlife. Strong legal protections mean that damaging development on an SAC can only be permitted if there is both an overriding national need and if suitable alternative habitat can be created as compensation.

Special Protection Area (SPA)

An area designated under the Birds Directive for its international importance for birds. Strong legal protections mean that damaging development on an SAC can only be permitted if there is both an overriding national need and if suitable alternative habitat can be created as compensation.

Statutory Development Plan

A plan prepared to aid town planning, development control or development management. The plan is prepared to form part of the planning process in order to regulate and manage changes to land use and development.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)

An order made by a local planning authority to protect a specific tree, a group of trees or woodland. TPOs prevent the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or other deliberate damage of trees without the permission of the local planning authority.

Village Design Statement

A document that identifies and defines the distinctive characteristics of a locality, and provides design guidance to influence its future development and improve the physical qualities of the area. Village design statements have generally been produced for rural areas often by parish councils.

The table below provides details of the date of the assessment, geographic extent, classification and inclusion of guidance and strategy information.

Scale	Assessment Title	Date	Geographical Extent	Classification	Guidance/Strategy	Web link
National and Regional Scale	National Character Areas	Updated 2014	Whole of England and Wales	Landscape Areas	Yes	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles
	East of England Landscape Typology	2010	Whole of East of England	Landscape Types	No	http://landscape-east.org.uk/map.html
County and District Scale	Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment	2008 updated 2011	Suffolk County	Landscape Types	Yes	http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/landscape_map.aspx
	Essex Landscape Character Assessment	2003	Essex County	Landscape Types and Areas	No	http://www.essex.gov.uk/AnalyticsReports/CB_LCA_Essex_2002.pdf
	Tendring Landscape Character Assessment	Nov 2001	Tendring District	Landscape Types and Areas	Yes	http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/planning/planning%20policy/LandscapeCharacterAssessment2001Vol1.pdf http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/planning/planning%20policy/TendringLandscapeCharAssessVol2.pdf
	Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment	2005	Colchester Borough	Landscape Types and Areas	Yes	http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=5439&p=0
	Braintree District Council Landscape Character Assessment	2006	Braintree District	Landscape Types and Areas	Yes	http://www.braintree.gov.uk/downloads/file/653/e40_landscape_character_assessment-section_3_landscape_character_of_braintree_district_september_2006
	Waveney District Landscape Assessment	2008	Waveney District	Landscape Types and Areas	Yes	http://www.waveney.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=742
AONB Assessments	Suffolk Coast & Heaths Landscape Character Assessment	2001	Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	Landscape Types	Yes	http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Planning/2010-03-Landscape-Character-Guidelines.pdf
	Dedham Vale Landscape Character Assessment Managing a Masterpiece	2008	Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley	Landscape Types	Yes	http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/userfiles/pdfs/DV%20Hist%20landscape%20Study/Core_Document_MaM_LandscapeCharacterStudy.pdf
Local Assessments	Touching the Tide Landscape Character Assessment	August 2012	Coastal Areas of Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	Landscape Areas	Yes	http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Projects--Partnerships/Touching-the-Tide/FinalReport.pdf
	Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Landscape Character Assessment	April 2013	Shotley peninsula and hinterland of Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB	Landscape Areas	Yes	http://stourandorwellsociety.org.uk.c31.sitepreviewer.com/landscape_character.html



Appendix 1

The following is a landscape checklist for assessing individual potential development sites.

1. Name of site
2. Area of site
3. Greenfield/brownfield
4. Adjacent/surrounding land uses
5. Relevant policy covering the site
6. Is the site within the settlement boundary or built form, adjacent to settlement boundary or in open countryside?
7. Describe the topography of the site
8. Describe the views into and out of the site
9. Describe the boundaries of the site
10. Describe the internal landscape features of the site and current land use
11. Describe any hydrological features
12. Does the site perform a particular function in relation to an existing settlement e.g. part of gateway experience, important role in providing local distinctiveness etc?
13. Note any public right of way
14. Is access into the site likely to result in change to any landscape features?
15. Relevant character area or type
16. Height and character of surrounding buildings
17. If site is appropriate for development can the whole site be developed?
18. Is the site totally inappropriate, has minor constraints, has minor constraints or is it unconstrained?
19. How soon could the site be developed?
20. How could development be integrated with the surrounding landscape/settlement?
21. What other environmental gains could development on this site deliver?



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Holly Hedges at Withermarsh Green in Dedham Vale AONB

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