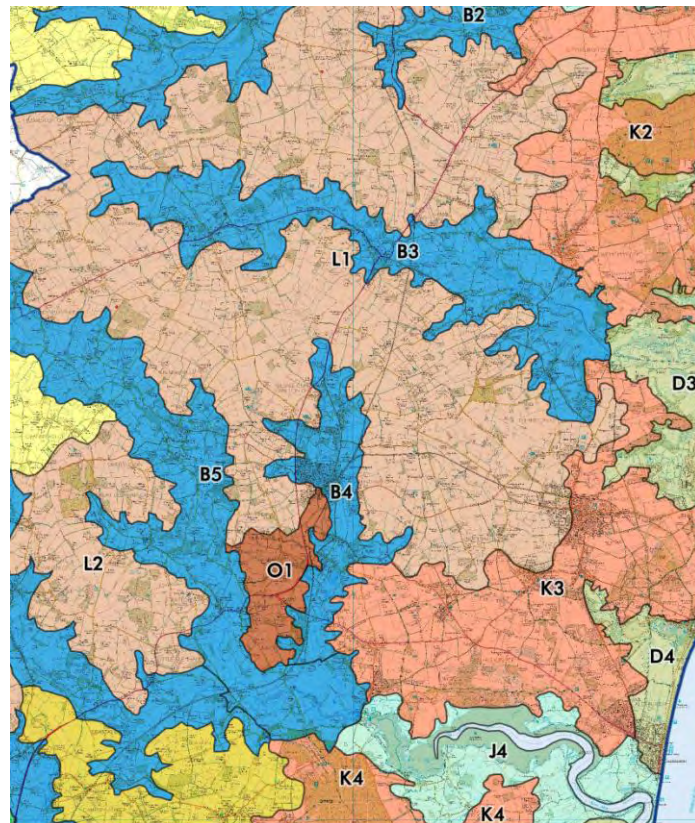


# **Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment**

**Final Report**

**July 2018**



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### **Landscape Character Drawings**

Drawing Number 1: North

Drawing Number 2: South



## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Appointment

Alison Farmer Associates, in association with Lucy Bachelor-Wylam and Countryscape, was appointed by Suffolk Coastal in December 2017 to undertake a landscape character assessment of the District. The landscape assessment was carried out as a standalone piece of work, but also used to inform a parallel settlement fringe sensitivity study for settlements in Suffolk Coastal District as well as around the Ipswich fringe.

The planning authorities in the area are working closely together in terms of developing their local plans. In February 2018 the decision to merge Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Districts to create a single authority called East Suffolk was announced by Government. Waveney District currently has a Landscape Character Assessment which defines local character types and areas<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.2 The Brief and Scope of Work

The aim of the project is to provide a detailed understanding of the landscape. The Study Area comprises the whole of Suffolk Coastal District. Care has been taken to ensure that the classification of character areas is compatible with that established in Waveney District to the north and also the Touching the Tide and Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland character assessments along the coast and to the south respectively.

The overall scope of work included four broad stages – firstly a familiarisation stage, gathering background data from the client team; secondly a desk study stage where digital data and background documents were reviewed and landscape character areas defined in draft; thirdly site assessment where the draft character areas were verified in the field and information on perceptual aspects of the landscape recorded; fourthly a write up phase where the written descriptions for landscape areas were developed.

### 1.3 Approach to Study

This report sets how the Suffolk Coastal landscape character assessment has been prepared, explains what past actions and events have helped shaped the landscape we see today and goes on to provide detailed descriptions of unique Landscape Character Areas. These descriptions highlight local distinctiveness and articulate the special qualities of the area, as well as providing guidance on how to manage change.

The assessment is based on national guidance namely Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland, Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002 and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Waveney District Landscape Character Assessment, Land Use Consultants, April 2008

Landscape Character Assessment is a useful tool, recognised by Government and promoted by Natural England, to identify the special character that gives a landscape its sense of place. Through this understanding the assessment helps inform planning and management of future change. Landscape Character Assessment recognises that all landscapes matter, not just those that are designated.

Landscape character is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes one landscape different from another. Variations in geology, soils, landform, land use, vegetation, field boundaries, settlement patterns and building styles all help give rise to different landscapes. These differences are the product of both natural and human influences.

Landscape character assessment involves mapping, classifying and describing these variations in landscape character. It also involves making judgements about the character and condition of the landscape, and analysing forces for change, to help us make informed decisions about how we should manage change in the future. In classifying the landscape, two categories may be identified:

*Landscape character types* - these are landscapes with broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, vegetation, land use, field and settlement patterns. They repeat across a landscape so that landscapes belonging to a particular type, such as Valley Meadowlands, may be found in different places.

*Landscape character areas* - these are unique areas that occur in only one place and are therefore geographically specific. They have their own individual character and identity. For example, the Yox Valley or Freston Sandlands which are each unique.

Landscape character assessment can be applied at different scales from the national to the local level. The scale of assessment adopted in this study seeks to find a middle ground between existing coverage which comprises National Character Areas and detailed landscape types which exist for Suffolk Country as a whole. This has been achieved by defining landscape character areas which draw out the unique character of each of the river valleys and estuaries as well as the land in between. As noted in current guidance<sup>2</sup> *'Where an assessment draws upon a more detailed landscape character assessment, landscape types and areas are amalgamated at the scale appropriate to the new classification (para 4 page 47) and that 'sometimes... the distinctiveness of individual areas will suggest that the use of types is not helpful and that the assessment should focus only on individual areas' (para 2 page 45-46).* For the purposes of this study a conscious decision was made to define locally recognisable areas which express common characteristics and express a distinctive sense of place. The definition and description of character areas draws heavily upon existing assessments and presents a consistent picture of character throughout the District at a scale which can be readily grasped and understood.

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<sup>2</sup> An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England 2014.

## 1.4 Existing Landscape Classifications

Suffolk Coastal is covered (whole or in part) by five existing character assessments namely the East of England Regional Typology<sup>3</sup>, the Suffolk County typology<sup>4</sup>, the Waveney District landscape assessment<sup>5</sup>, the Touching the Tide Coastal Character Assessment<sup>6</sup> and the Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Assessment<sup>7</sup>. All five assessments have been referred to during this study. The character type boundaries in the County assessment have been used to help define the extent of character areas and the classification of character areas has been shaped by the existing Waveney assessment to ensure a good fit across administrative boundaries. Similarly the coastal character areas defined in the Touching the Tide Assessment have also been adopted where feasible with some minor changes to reflect the Waveney assessment and also reflect and tie in with the inland landscape. On this basis this assessment should be read in conjunction with these other assessments where they overlap.

Key sources of information used during the course of this study have included:

- GIS datasets supplied by Suffolk County Council;
- East of England Regional Typology;
- Suffolk County Typology;
- Waveney District landscape assessment;
- Touching the Tide Landscape Character Assessment;
- Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland Character Assessment;
- The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Landscape (1993) Countryside Commission;
- The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Management Plan, Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership;
- The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Management Guidelines Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Partnership;
- Mid Suffolk and Babergh Landscape Guidelines;
- Local Plans;
- Various literature on the Suffolk landscape;
- Conservation Area appraisals for Suffolk Coastal District.

<sup>3</sup> <http://landscape-east.org.uk/east-england-landscape-typology>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/landscape\\_map.aspx](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/landscape_map.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.waveney.gov.uk/site/scripts/download.php?fileID=742>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/assets/Projects--Partnerships/Touching-the-Tide/FinalReport.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.stourandorwellsociety.org.uk/mailshot/4583602109>



## 2.0 About the Landscape

Suffolk Coastal District is located in the east of England. The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) runs continuously along its coast. The principle settlements of the District include Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Framlingham, Saxmundham, Leiston and Aldeburgh. Immediately to the southwest of the District lies the major town of Ipswich.

### 2.1 Geology, Soils and Topography

The solid geology of Suffolk Coastal District has been modified by the effects of the Ice Age and the continuous process of natural erosion and deposition. It comprises an underlying geology of Crag and London Clay. These are rarely visible but they nonetheless are reflected in the character of the landscape. Crag deposits (formed from the accumulation of estuarine or marine shelly sands) cover the majority of the District and where they meet the coast they create low sandy cliffs such as at Southwold and Bawdsey. London Clay deposits occur in the southeastern parts of the District and can be seen along the Alde-Ore estuary at Orfordness, the Deben Estuary and lower reaches of the Orwell Estuary.

The bedrock is overlain with drift deposits of glacial sands and gravel, boulder clay, tills (boulder clays containing chalk flint and other rocks), alluvium, and areas of peat within the estuaries and river valleys.

Glacial episodes during the Pleistocene and especially the Anglian Glaciation resulting in the deposition of Boulder Clay over the Crag in the west of the District reflecting the extent of the ice sheet. When the Anglian Ice Sheet melted, water flowed out scoring deep channels in the drift and underlying Crag deposits. Following the retreat of the ice sheet, these channels subsequently filled with glacial drift material to form the broad, shallow river valleys such as the Frome and Deben seen today.

As a result of the geology and geological processes the highest land in the District can be found inland along the western boundary on the edge of a wider plateau often referred to as High Suffolk. This area has heavy clay soils and topography is around 50m AOD but then falls gradually in a southeasterly direction to the coast. The river valleys cut into this land to create distinct yet often subtle undulations. The divisions in the landscape leave large interfluvies between the valleys and this pattern of watercourses give the District its fundamental pattern and meaning. Closer to the coast the Crag deposits give rise to lighter sandy soils often known as Sandlings which support farmland, remnant heaths and conifer plantations.

Along the coast the estuaries (Blyth, Alde-Ore, Deben and Orwell) were formed through a combination of subsidence and climatic changes and sea level rise, following the Anglian Glaciation. These processes resulted in the 'drowning' of coastal river valleys and the formation of estuaries.

The distinctive character of the coastal landscape is also the product of marine erosion and deposition - natural processes which are extraordinarily complex. The sandy shelly crag geology is friable and easily eroded by the sea and wave action which has meant that the Suffolk Coast has seen considerable change over the centuries. Erosion, as a result of the cycle of rising and falling tides and the annual cycle of storm events, is paralleled by

deposition of shingle beaches which also characterise the coastline in the study area. The beaches are often steep and shelving and the formation of a shingle spit - Orford Ness is a dramatic example of the process of movement and deposition of eroded material southwards along the coast - a process known as long shore drift. The spit at Orford Ness gradually formed at the mouth of the River Alde, just to the south of Aldeburgh and over centuries has grown in length, forcing the river further south and parallel to the sea before eventually joining it at Shingle Street. In the north of the study area a similar process has resulted in the deposition of shingle bars across the mouths of rivers and estuaries creating freshwater broads.

## 2.2 The Cultural Landscape and Historic Evolution

Archaeological evidence suggests that prehistoric people settled first in the areas of light sandy soil and also along river valleys. The clearance of woodland during the Neolithic period began the process of heathland creation which continued into the Bronze and Iron Ages, remnants of which can be seen within the District.

In the Roman period there is evidence of the establishment of key settlements such as Hacheston (Wickham Market) and Felixstowe. Here excavation has revealed evidence of Roman walls along the seafront and a Roman fort. There is also evidence of a strategic road network which is often preserved in the modern landscape.

Much of the information on the Anglo Saxon period comes from cemeteries - one of the best known being Sutton Hoo although others did exist elsewhere such as at Snape. By the 7th century the advent of Christianity and the development of Ipswich as a town trading with the Rhineland, were reflected in the countryside by the abandonment of old settlements and the establishment of new with some of the new becoming the cores of late Saxon and medieval villages while others were merely outlying farms. It is considered that the existing framework of villages and towns in Suffolk was established in the four centuries before the Norman Conquest.

The clearance of the High Suffolk landscape of woodland is also likely to have led to its early enclosure firstly defined by ditch and bank to aid drainage and subsequently hedgerows. The pattern of enclosures in the boulder clay landscapes appears organised often arranged in a coaxial form i.e. enclosures are defined by parallel but slightly sinuous lines and boundaries and have few prominent continuous features running in a transverse direction. Such systems tend to be laid out with little regard to the subtleties of natural topography and drainage. Superficial irregularity in pattern tends to come from subsequent removal and alteration and where the pattern remains strong it is of considerable historic value. Within this pattern medieval moated sites would have existed, reflecting dispersed farms, a number of which survive.

By the late 7th century onwards, churches were constructed in almost all settlements, initially in timber but later in the 11th century in stone. Over 400 churches were recorded in 1086 in the Domesday Book. Domesday gives a picture of the settlement pattern, churches, watermills on rivers and salt pans on the estuaries with the heaths becoming a central part of medieval society and economy and the construction of Orford and Framlingham Castles and abbeys such as Dunwich. This was also a period of growing coastal ports and shipbuilding, fisheries and trade in coastal settlement such as Ipswich, Aldeburgh, Orford, Dunwich and Southwold. Market towns are known to have become established in the Medieval period

including settlements such as Woodbridge, Clopton, Kelsale, Framlingham and Bawdsey. Nevertheless the majority of settlement remained dispersed comprising farmsteads and houses and even today the pattern of settlement is a reflection of this dispersed pattern with village-based settlement only becoming more dominant over the last 150 years.

The middle ages also marked the start of enclosure where landowners sought to increase their acreage of pasture and arable and marked the beginning of the process which has gradually eroded the extent of heathland on the sandlings and the draining of marshes fringing the rivers and estuaries. In an area of poor sandy soils the draining of marshes represented an opportunity of working fertile alluvial sediment. Amongst the largest areas of marsh drainage took place along the Alde/Ore south of Aldeburgh on Sudborne and Gedgrave Marshes. Marshes around Orford are thought to have been first drained in the 12th century. Similarly John Norden's maps of 1601 show a complex pattern of irregular enclosures along the sides of the River Alde, particularly in Sudbourne and Town (Orford) Marshes, that are probably medieval in origin.

A number of parklands were established in the Medieval period some as parts of manors and others as deer parks and have had subsequent periods of development while new parklands were also created in the 17th and 18th centuries and where they have survived continue to exert a strong influence on landscape character today.

In the post medieval period the emergence of the wool trade and cloth making industries as well as development of significant numbers of rabbit warrens on the sandlings have left their mark. The enclosure period of the late 19th century affected the Suffolk Coastal landscape in terms of the enclosure of commons e.g. Levington Heath and Foxhall Heath as marked on Hodgskinson's map of Suffolk which together formed a band of heathland stretching all along the southern boundaries of the parishes of Bucklesham and Foxhall.

Some settlements grew in the 19th century particularly as Victorian seaside resorts including Southwold, Thorpeness, Aldeburgh and Felixstowe. Many sea defences were also constructed during the Victorian era not least to help protect the holiday resorts.

During the 20th century there has been considerable intensification of landuse including the further draining of saltmarsh and mudflat to form coastal levels or grazed marshes and removal of field boundaries particularly on the heavier clays. In places improved drainage has also led to the ploughing of marshes for arable production. The intensification of agriculture in this way has resulted in the loss of structural landscape features such as hedgerows, ditches, banks, ponds, copses and lines of trees.

The 20th century has also seen considerable change in the growth of settlements such as Ipswich, Woodbridge and Felixstowe as well as major road networks such as the A14 and A12.

## 2.3 Habitats and Current Land Uses

The ecological interest of Suffolk Coastal reflects the underlying geology and soils. River valleys contain an important mosaic of small scale pastures, wet heath, reedbeds and woodland which provide ecological connectivity into the heart of the claylands. On the valley floors remnant areas of unenclosed semi-wild valley fens support great diversity for wetland species. In contrast in the wider farmed, landscape habitats and species which were once

common on arable land have declined significantly namely tree sparrow, grey partridge, cornflower and brown hare. Nevertheless in this farmed landscape ponds have a particular ecological value along with remnant parkland landscapes and patches of ancient woodland.

Within the sandlings and along the coast there are fragments of internationally important lowland heathlands supporting nightjar, woodlark, adder and silver-studded blue butterfly. Ancient broadleaved woodland and parkland wood pasture occurs on the estuary slopes while fens, wooded fens, reedbeds and saltmarsh provide rich biodiversity along the coast and their importance for wildlife is recognised by RAMSAR, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Finally the coastal landscape is also valued for its geomorphological interest including soft cliffs and shingle spits and banks which are important for understanding the Pleistocene geology and coastal evolution.

## 2.4 Valued Landscapes

The coastal landscape of the district is recognised as a nationally important landscape for its natural beauty and forms part of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (refer to figure 1). The AONB has a unique character defined by semi-natural and cultural landscapes (notably sea, coast, estuaries, reedbeds, Sandlings heath, forest, farmland and villages) and built heritage features (such as Martello towers, pill boxes, river walls), creating a juxtaposition of elements in a relatively small area.

Scenic qualities include:

- Sea cliffs and shingle beaches contrasting to flat and gently rolling Sandlings heaths and farmland.
- Elevated vantage points provide impressive views over low lying coastal marshes while extensive shingle beaches and shallow bays provide opportunities for long distance and panoramic views including out to sea and along the Heritage Coast. Views to coastal landform are also possible from locations offshore.
- Landscape displays a 'rhythm' dictated by a series of east-west rivers and estuaries, and the interfluvies that lie between them.
- Coastal cliffs, shingle spits, estuaries and beaches are striking landform features.
- Varied habitats and land cover in intricate mosaic corresponding to natural geography (landform, geology, soils & climate) and displaying seasonal differences, either as a result of natural processes or past and current farming and land management regimes.
- Close-knit interrelationship of constituent features creates a juxtaposition of colours and textures (such as coniferous forests, reedbeds, intertidal mud flats and heathland, sand dunes and shingle beaches) that is further enhanced by seasonal changes.
- Strong aesthetic, spatial and emotional experiences - for example in the contrast between open and exposed areas on the coast, seaward or within estuaries with more traditional enclosed farmland areas.



- Landmarks include historic structures such as medieval churches, Martello towers and lighthouses, the House in the Clouds (Thorpeness) and Snape Maltings, the riverside at Woodbridge with iconic Tide Mill, along with more modern structures including Sizewell A and B and former military site at Orford Ness.
- Sensory stimuli enhanced by quality of light/space (the big 'Suffolk skies'), areas with dark skies and sound (e.g. bird calls, curlews on heath and geese on estuaries, the wind through reeds in estuaries, waves on shingle).

In addition to the AONB parts of the District have also been designated Special Landscape Areas (SLA). This is a local landscape designation reflecting attractive combinations of landscape elements. The former Suffolk Structure Plan 2001 sets out the specific characteristics the landscape needs to exhibit which include one or more of the following:

- River valleys which still possess traditional grazing meadows with their hedgerows, dykes, and associated flora and fauna;
- Areas of breckland including remaining heathland, and the characteristic lines of belts of Scots Pine;
- Historic parklands and gardens which still possess significant features of their former status such as boundary tree belts, tree clumps, grassland with veteran trees, pleasure grounds, hahas and garden buildings, many of which are included in the English Heritage register;
- Other areas of countryside where undulating topography and natural vegetation, particularly broadleaved woodland, combine to produce an area of special landscape quality and character.

Within Suffolk Coastal the SLA designation focuses on river valleys and parkland landscapes and includes parts of the following valleys and their associated parklands:

- Blyth Valley;
- Minsmere River/Yox Valley;
- Ore Valley;
- Alde Valley;
- Deben Valley;
- Fynn Valley;
- Lark Valley;
- Mill River Valley;
- Hundred River.

It also covers areas of parkland which extend onto higher land beyond the river valleys or are located completely outside of the river valley systems including:

- Glemham Park;
- Glevering North Park;

- Campsea Ashe Park;
- Benhall Lodge Park;
- Easton Park;
- Heveningham Park;
- Boulge Park;
- Gundisburgh Hall.

### 3.0 Landscape Character Areas

The physical and human influences described above combine to create the unique and distinctive character of Suffolk Coastal. The District has been divided into ten landscape character types based on the classification set out in the Waveney District character assessment.

Across the district thirty seven landscape character areas have been defined. These areas are geographically specific and recognisable and have a unique sense of place due to a combination of special landscape characteristics and features. The character areas have been defined based on how a landscape is perceived such that the individual river valleys and estuaries of the District are each defined and described.

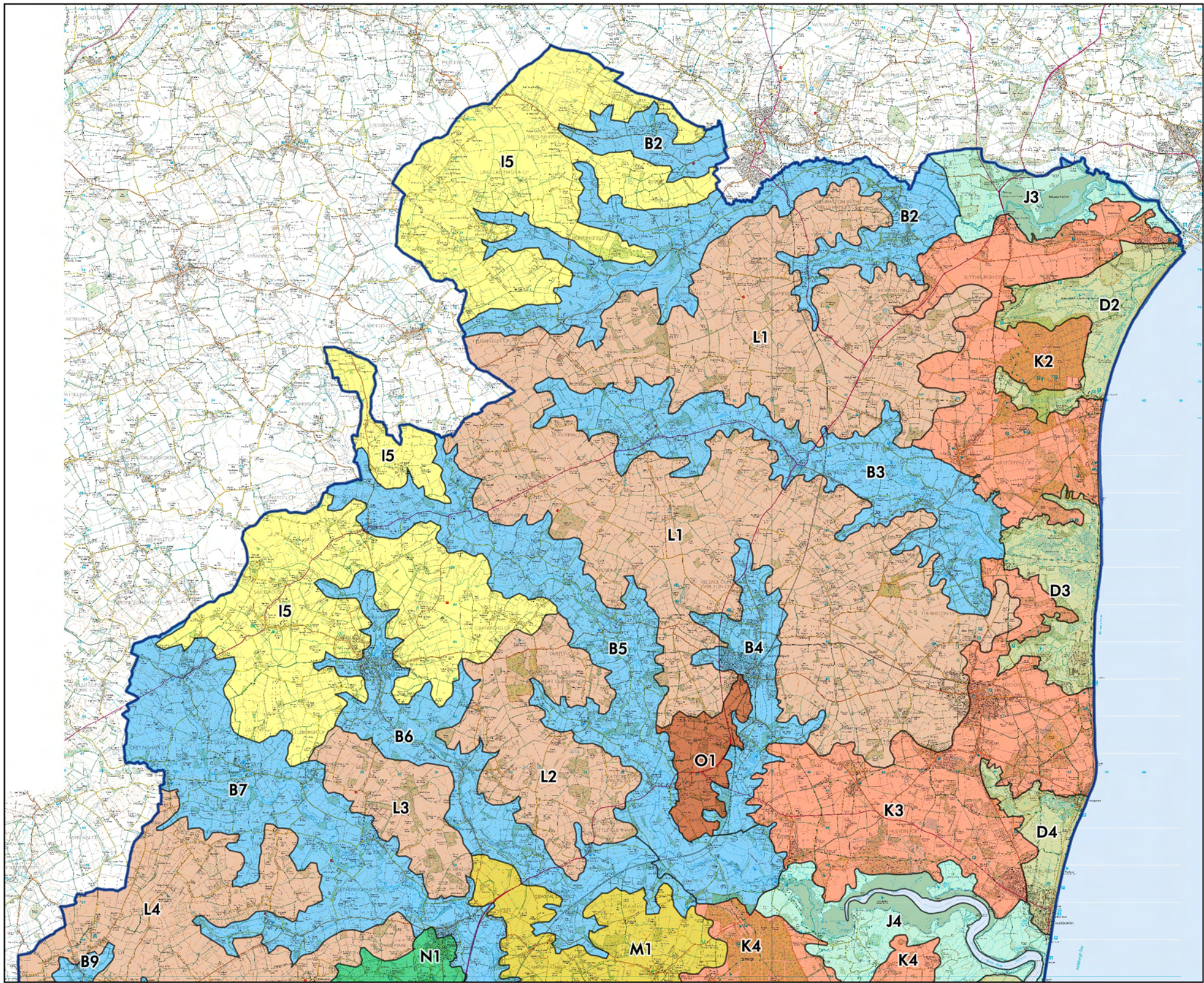
The character types and areas defined in this study are listed in the table below and illustrated on the drawings below. Those character areas which are in shaded boxes also overlap with character areas in the Waveney District, Touching the Tide and Shotley Peninsula and Hinterland assessments.

In the subsequent pages each character area is described in terms of its location, constituent landscape types (referring to the Suffolk County typology), overall character, special qualities and features and condition as well as strategy objectives. These descriptions aim to provide a context and improved evidence base to inform planning and management decisions.

Landscape Character Type		Landscape Character Area	
B	River Valleys	B2	Blyth Valley
		B3	Yox Valley
		B4	Fromus Valley
		B5	Alde Valley
		B6	Ore Valley
		B7	Deben Valley
		B8	Fynn Valley
		B9	Lark Valley
		B10	Mill River Valley
		B11	Butley Valley
D	Coastal Broad & Marshes	D2	Westwood and Dingle Marshes
		D3	Minsmere and Sizewell Coast
		D4	Thorpness to Aldeburgh
		D5	Orfordness and Marshes
E	Resorts	E3	Felixstowe
I	Plateau Claylands	15	Linstead and Framlingham Plateau
J	Estuaries	J3	Blyth Estuary
		J4	Alde Estuary
		J5	Deben Estuary
		J6	Orwell Estuary

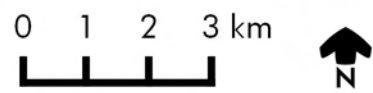
K	Estate Sandlands	K2	Dunwich and Westleton Sandlands
		K3	Aldringham and Friston Sandlands
		K4	Rendlesham and Tunstall Sandlands
		K5	Kesgrave Sandlands
L	Ancient Estate Claylands	L1	Heveningham and Knodishall Estate Claylands
		L2	Glenham Estate Claylands
		L3	Easton and Glevering Estate Claylands
		L4	Otley Hall and Debach Estate Claylands
M	Plateau Estate Farmland	M1	Rendlesham and Tunstall Estate Farmlands
		M2	Trimley and Foxhall Estate Farmland
N	Ancient Rolling Farmland	N1	Boulge Park and Bredfield Rolling Farmland
		N2	Culpho and Westerfield Rolling Farmland
O	Rolling Estate Sandlands	O1	Benhall Estate Sandlands





# Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment

North Sheet  
July 2018



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100019684

- Suffolk Coastal District

Landscape Character Area
- Landscape Character Type
- B. River Valleys

D. Coastal Broads and Marshes

I. Plateau Claylands

J. Estuaries

K. Estate Sandlands

L. Ancient Estate Claylands

M. Plateau Estate Farmland

N. Ancient Rolling Farmland

O. Rolling Estate Sandlands
- B2

Blyth Valley
- B3

Yox Valley
- B4

Fromus Valley
- B5

Alde Valley
- B6

Ore Valley
- B7

Deben Valley
- B9

Lark Valley
- D2

Westwood and Dingle Marshes
- D3

Minsmere and Sizewell Coast
- D4

Thorpness to Aldeburgh
- D5

Orfordness and Marshes
- I5

Linstead and Framingham Plateau
- J3

Blyth Estuary
- J4

Alde Estuary
- K2

Dunwich and Westelton Sandlands
- K3

Aldringham and Freston Sandlands
- K4

Rendlesham and Tunstall Sandlands
- L1

Heveningham and Knodishall Estate Claylands
- L2

Glemham Estate Claylands
- L3

Easton and Glevering Estate Claylands
- L4

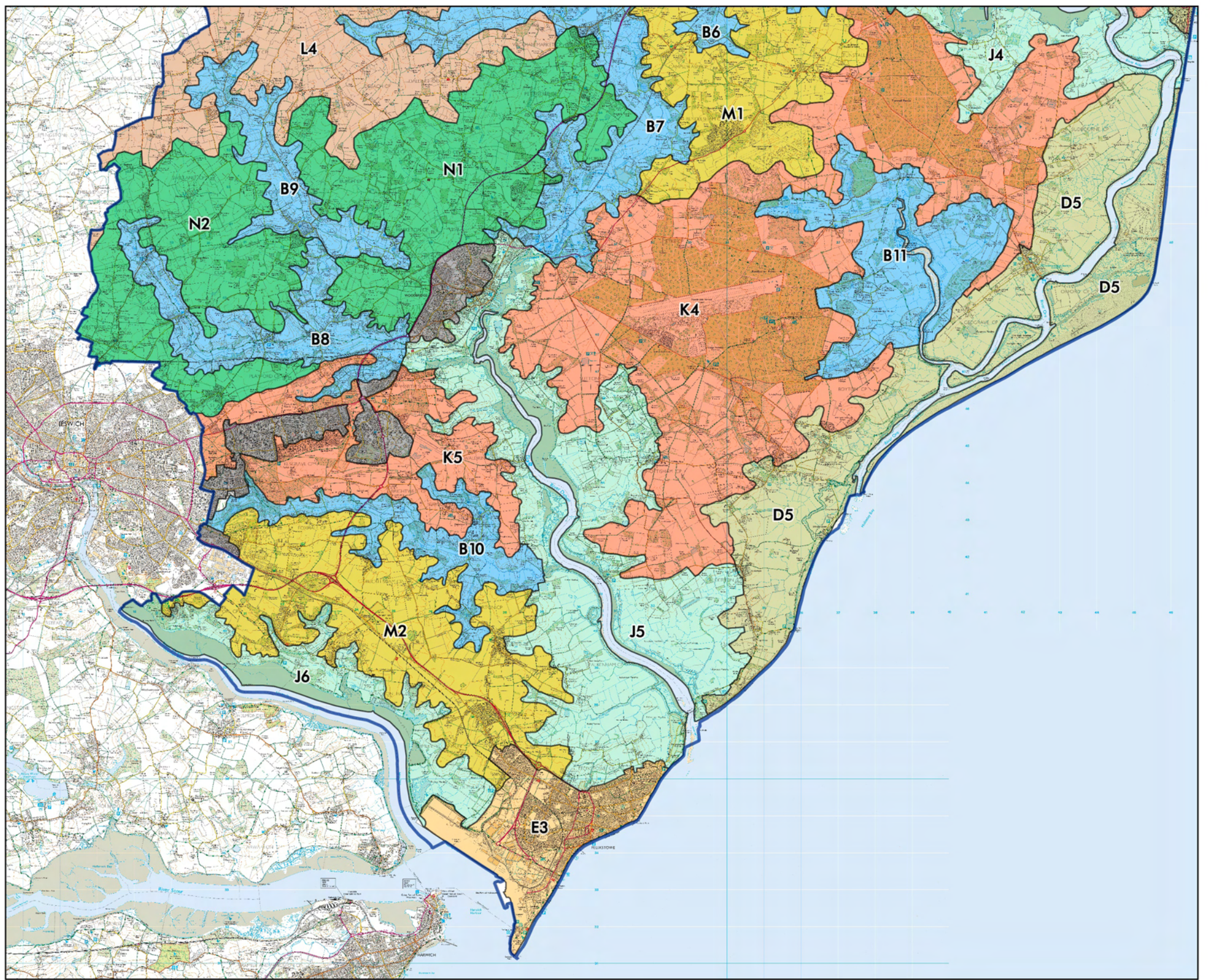
Otley Hall and Debach Estate Claylands
- M1

Rendlesham and Tunstall Estate Farmland
- N1

Boulge Park ad Bredfield Rolling Farmland
- O1

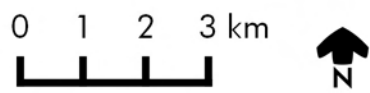
Benhall Estate Sandlands





# Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment

South Sheet  
July 2018



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- Suffolk Coastal District

Landscape Character Area
- Landscape Character Type
- B. River Valleys

D. Coastal Broads and Marshes

E. Resorts

J. Estuaries

K. Estate Sandlands

L. Ancient Estate Claylands

M. Plateau Estate Farmland

N. Ancient Rolling Farmland

Urban
- B5 Alde Valley

B6 Ore Valley

B7 Deben Valley

B8 Fynn Valley

B9 Lark Valley

B10 Mill River Valley

B11 Butley Valley

D4 Thorpness to Aldeburgh

D5 Orfordness and Marshes

E3 Felixstowe

J4 Alde Estuary

J5 Deben Estuary

J6 Orwell Estuary

K3 Aldringham and Freston Sandlands

K4 Rendlesham and Tunstall Sandlands

K5 Kesgrave Sandlands

L4 Otley Hall and Debach Estate Claylands

M1 Rendlesham and Tunstall Estate Farmland

M2 Trimley and Foxhall Estate Farmland

N1 Boulge Park and Bredfield Rolling Farmland

N2 Culpho and Westerfield Rolling Farmland



## B2 Blyth Valley

### Location

The character area is located on the northern edge of Suffolk Coastal District and extends into Waveney District.

It comprises the upper valley system of the River Blyth and its tributary west of Halesworth. The Blyth rises from a number of streams around Laxfield (in Mid-Suffolk district) and, unusually for an East Suffolk river, flows north-east, towards Halesworth before swinging south-east towards Blythburgh where it flows into the Blyth Estuary (LCA J3).

### Constituent Types

This is complex mix of four types - Rolling Valley Claylands, Rolling Estate Sandlands, Valley Meadows and Fen, and the Coastal Levels.



### Summary Description

The Blyth Valley comprises a complex branching structure of small tributaries some of which have steeply sloping valley sides ranging from 45m to 20m AOD in their upper reaches. In the lower reaches the valley is broader and shallower typically cresting at around 15-20m AOD. Draining into the river, are small water courses which bring water off the plateau, and have created a gently rolling profile.

The upper reaches of this character area have an intimate, inland narrow pastoral valley character on slowly permeable calcareous clayey soil, fringed by arable farmland on the upper slopes. Enclosure generally took place pre-18th century but the valley sides have experienced notable boundary removal resulting in an open simple pattern of fields. This is reinforced by relatively little woodland on the valley bottom and valley sides. Nevertheless woodland on the plateau above can have a strong visual presence on the skyline reflecting the inter-visibility between valley and the wider plateau.

In the upper reaches of the small tributary valleys there is a strong feeling of remoteness, and settlement is sparse comprising a dispersed pattern of hamlets (i.e. Huntingfield, Cookley, Walpole, and Chediston) and ancient farms including Old Hall, Wenhaston, Walpole Old Hall, Ubbeston Hall which often have an attractive complex of old barns and outbuildings in vernacular materials. Amongst this pattern are a notable number of associated yet sometimes isolated churches which stand out as local landmarks on the lower valley sides. Narrow, sinuous, hedged rural lanes traverse one side of the valley or the other and offer

glimpsed views across the valley, or into tributary valleys, which are highly scenic and deeply tranquil. Ubbeston Wood is an ancient woodland and contributes to the historic patterns of the landscape.

Overlaying this ancient pattern is the grand and imposing character of Heveningham Park which, in its layout, takes advantage of the topography of the valley form, stretching from one side of the valley to the other and onto the plateau beyond. On the valley floor the River Blyth has been manipulated to create a large lake and centrepiece to the designed landscape while on the valley sides and plateau there are blocks of woodland which create local enclosure and define attractive vistas. Passing through the estate railed parkland north of Heveningham there are long views across the pastoral landscape, dotted with mature trees, and grazed by cows and sheep. The Hall is seen on elevated land above the lake to the south, and the woodland fringed valley slope enclose the bucolic scene to the north. The parkland design is attributed to Capability Brown and is currently under restoration.

In the middle section of this character there are two principle influences firstly the presence of the town of Halesworth (which lies within Waveney District) and a marked change in geology giving rise to lighter and better drained soils of sands and loams, although the floor is less well drained with drift deposits of peat and river alluvium giving rise to marshes in the lower reaches.

Along the urban edge at Halesworth, the meadows are traditionally grazed by sheep and cows, however incongruous commercial/industrial development which partially sits in the floodplain has had a negative effect on the pastoral valley floor character. In addition garden curtilages, amenity land, (including golf course) and a gravel pit further east towards Wenhasston have all impinged on the valley character.

A particular feature of the middle reaches of the valley are the small remnant heaths such as around Wenhasston - Wenhasston Black Heath and Church Common. Here the lanes have a sandlands character with bracken on the banks and small triangular greens connecting the junctions. South-east of Holton there is an area with a particularly fine-grained system of longitudinal hedged meadows, with the long axis perpendicular to the river. Nevertheless this part of the valley has also been affected by development associated with Wenhasston. Here the historic linear pattern of settlement has undergone substantial infill with 20<sup>th</sup> century development altering settlement form and character. In contrast the village of Bramfield is a conservation area indicating the quality of traditional built form and includes the church, with its distinctive detached round flintwork tower, and pretty 19th century estate cottages. To the south west of the village on gently rising ground stands Bramfield Hall which is set within mature landscaped grounds, contributing to an overall green and spacious feel.

East of Byford, boundary vegetation becomes more scarce, the size of the meadows increase and the flood plain widens. Here fields are divided by boundary ditches and sinuous tributary watercourses. It becomes a landscape of wetland meadow, reed and grazed/rush pasture, the clues that the coast lies just to the east strengthens with the sense of increasing exposure. These reclaimed pastures are gradually being inundated through seasonal flooding of coastal waters. The result is that the lower reaches are developing an estuarine character the valley floor becoming richly textured and colourful with a high ecological value. Blythburgh church is a key landmark across this part of the valley.

Most of Suffolk's vernacular materials are found in this character area. The older houses are timber framed and rendered and the Victorian cottages are built of 'Suffolk Red' or 'Suffolk White' brick and flint is common. Roofs are slate, tile or thatch. Some of the timber-framed buildings have pargeetting applied to the rendering. Cottages at Huntingfield have a distinctive



black and white colour theme. In Bramfield some of the cottages here have an estate character influenced by the nearby Thorington Hall Estate – where white brick and flint are used together.

Overall the visual experience in this character area varies. The valley is shallow, but deep enough to provide a feeling of containment from the surrounding higher land. Where the sides are more rolling the views have scenic composition and more variety, and where breaks in hedges allow there are some long views possible. Where lanes are hedged, the feel can be more intimate. Views east towards Southwold and the marshes feel more open on the approach to Blythburgh. Traffic on the A12 adds the only disruptive feature in the landscape.

## Special Features

- Scenic qualities relate to the deeply tranquil and rural river valley character which often feels remote as well as the attractive compositions of steep slopes, parkland, woodland and historic settlement patterns including farmsteads and churches.
- Juxtaposition of valley floor wetlands and pasture with remnant heath habitats on the valley slopes gives this valley a unique character in context of the Suffolk Coastal river valleys.
- Bramfield is a conservation area and includes a number of notable listed buildings e.g. Bramfield Hall (16th century and Grade II\*) listed building and features a late eighteenth century serpentine or crinkle-crinkle wall and a Medieval ring ditch at Castle Farm (Scheduled Monument).
- Huntingfield constitutes the compact remnants of an early medieval enclave, which has thus far remained relatively free from inappropriate change, infill and suburbanisation and is a small group of church and cottages connects over the stream by a causeway. The cottages have a striking black and white colour theme.
- Heveningham Park is on the National register of Historic Parks and Gardens, and registered by SCDC as a Park or Garden of Historic Interest.

## Condition

The meadows are in mixed condition - some good management practices are taking place with traditional grazing, while other areas feel neglected. Similarly remnant heathland areas appear over grown with bracken. Development along its edges is intrusive. In places urban development impinges on the traditional valley floor character and in the upper reaches loss of hedgerows has resulted in a more open and fragmented ecological corridors.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the river valley setting south of Halesworth. Development should avoid physical and visual encroachment on the valley floor. Existing abrupt urban edges should be mitigated with appropriate planting reflecting and reinforcing valley floor character.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and support the restoration of parkland.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management to conserve and enhance areas of carr woodland and willow coppice as landscape features through appropriate management.</li> <li>• Manage the intricate network of small scale wetland mosaic landscape features such as rush pasture and reedbed, seeking opportunities to extend linkages between these features.</li> <li>• Manage areas of overgrown remnant heathland through removal of bracken and appropriate grazing.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the proliferation of further tourism related sites, eg golf courses, caravan parks, on vulnerable valley side locations where impacts can be profound.</li> <li>• Plan for the reinstatement of historic landscape features such as elm trees with modern disease resistant clones/cultivars.</li> <li>• Plan for the management of the wetland landscape. The valley floor is vulnerable to rising water levels and flooding.</li> <li>• Plan for the recreation of areas of heath habitat connecting into existing remnant heaths.</li> </ul>

## B3 Yox Valley

### Location

The Yox Valley is a narrow inland valley through which the River Yox flows stretching from Peasehall and Sibton in the east, down river to Yoxford and Theberton. It has a distinct east-west orientation, unusual for Suffolk Coastal rivers, and south of Yoxford becomes the Minsmere River connecting into the Coastal Levels and Marshes of Minsmere (area D3) at Dam Bridge. The valley floor widens at intervals to take in a number of short tributary streams and their small valleys.

### Constituent Types

This area comprises four landscape types - Rolling Estate Claylands, Rolling Valley Claylands, Estate Sandlands, and Valley Meadows and Fen.



### Summary Description

This is an inland valley which starts off as tributary streams flowing through clayland arable landscape northwest of Peasehall. By Sibton the valley begins to widen and lush meadows develop. The rest of the area comprises water meadows winding through arable valleysides and parkland, overlooked by unspoilt traditional villages, and ancient farms. The area is bisected by the A12 at Yoxford and the railway line just to the east where it cuts along the side of Rookery Park.

The valley is shallow and with rolling side, and provides a feeling of containment from the surrounding higher land, particularly in the upper reaches. This has a positive effect on the composition of the views. Intermittent longer views are possible, where tree cover allows, from the upper valley slopes and edges of the surrounding clay plateau. In the lower reaches, the valley is shallow and wider and feels more expansive, although regular woodland provides enclosure here. There are a number of parklands offering scenic views, and along with the small scale field patterns, traditional land uses, and high quality vernacular architecture the area imparts a strong historic rural feel.

Soils remain slowly permeable calcareous clays, laid over chalky till in the upper reaches in the claylands. The soils get more mixed and water logged further south, where deep layers of peat form the valley floor creating areas of fen. Much of this has been drained for agricultural use in the past, through a system of straight drainage dykes and used as grassland with some areas of woodland. The river channel has been separated here into a cannalised New

Cut, with the Old river flowing in a meandering fashion to the south. Here there are also pockets of undrained land, such as Darsham Marshes, where there is a small nature reserve.

Woodland is found all the way down the valley. Higher up, in the Claylands, it is found interspersed with farmland in small strips and narrow plantations. Larger blocks are found on the valleys sides around Sibton where the valley can feel particularly contained. Here, ancient woodland is present comprising Big Wood, Hencoop Wood and part of The Spring Wood which straddles the plateau edge to the south and may have links to estate hunting. Further south, woodland also moves into the flood plain in strips along the drainage channels, including belts of poplar plantation and areas of semi-natural carr woodland. In the flatter topography, even small amounts of woodland has a strong vertical presence and contains views.

Parkland estates are a particular feature of this river valley. Sibton dates back to the Norman period with the foundation of a Cistercian Abbey in 1150 whose atmospheric, but rather overgrown, ruins sit in the valley bottom to the west of Sibton Park. Sibton Park itself is focused around a large Grade II\* Listed country house, built in 1827. Views to the mansion across sweeping expanses of gently sloping meadow studded with fine mature trees, under which sheep graze, is an arresting sight. Black estate railings are a feature and contribute to the parkland character. The manor house survived the difficult interwar and post WWII period and has recently been renovated, with key views of the parkland opened up under renowned landscape architect Kim Wilkie, along with the de-silting and widening of the lake and restoration of pleasure grounds and woodland rides.

Yoxford is surrounded by an unusual amount of parkland on three sides, although much of it is not in such good condition as at Sibton, and includes Cockfield Hall, Rookery Park and Grove park which have varying degrees of influence on local landscape character.

Regular hedges along lanes are well managed in the farmlands, and wilder and taller along the meadowlands where a high proportion of elm, not always well managed, contributes a more informal and semi-natural feel. The sandland character begins to be felt around Darsham as the oak trees become short and craggy, and bracken appears on roadside banks.

Two types of enclosure pattern can be distinguished in this valley, firstly the ancient, sinuous and organic pattern of small fields that fit together along the valley floor where the nature of the soils made them unsuitable for tilling and secondly the larger arable fields of the better drained valley sides where large arable units sweep up the steeper valley sides creating open views with bare skylines.

Villages and ancient farms cluster on the sides enabling access to water and grazing and avoidance of the less well drained clay plateaux. This resulted in a simple road network with a valley bottom main road, joined at intervals by smaller routes mounting the valley sides serving farms to the north and south. The A1120 is a Roman road and forms the axis along which settlement developed over the centuries, and the B1122 continues the pattern east of Yoxford.

The villages have a strong unity of character being linear, generally one plot deep along a main street. Peasenhall, Sibton, Yoxford, Theberton and Darsham all have a dominantly linear layout. The quality of the built environment is high and the attractive street scenes are supplemented with regular green space and trees which are a key part of their character and

appeal. Shops/workshops often form part of the streetscape alongside the village streets. The trade route nature of the ancient road is seen in Peasenhall, for example, as the character of many of the buildings illustrates that they were once business premises as well as dwelling houses, and several shops endure. Middleton has a more looping mainstreet and has a Green at its heart, overlooked by the spire topped church tower and surrounded by brick and rendered cottages.

Churches are often large and in imposing locations in the villages while modern development has little impact comprising only small areas of 20<sup>th</sup> century development on village outskirts, although they are set back from the road in deeper plots, and are a departure from the prevailing patterns.

The built form demonstrates a range of traditional Suffolk architectural forms and styles. The villages have some late and post medieval timber framed buildings, sometimes brightly painted, as well as Victorian and Georgian architecture. The clay soils mean red brick dominates, but gault brick is also seen, particularly on higher status buildings. In the countryside there are 16th and 17th century timber framed farmhouses, rendered with tiled roofs. Roofs are generally tiled, with plain tile and pantiles, sometimes these have the distinctive black glazing seen in East Suffolk. Slate is also seen and the occasional thatched cottage. Knapped flint and cobbles are also found. Barns are clad in weatherboard under tiled roofs.

Perceptual experience varies. It can feel busy and populated near the A12 and the main roads which link its thriving villages and well maintained farms. But away from the main roads, in the quiet valley bottoms, enclosed in wild scrubby hedges, or over looking historic marshy meadows, the feel is tranquil, and outside the manicured parklands, can feel lush and semi-natural, if somewhat unmanaged in places.

## Special Qualities and Features

- High scenic quality as a result of significant concentration of parklands that impart a well managed estate character and bolster the pastoral valley characteristics.
- Distinctive pattern of intact historic villages located on the lower valley slopes many of which are Conservation Areas i.e. Peasenhall and Sibton, Yoxford and Darsham containing a wealth of traditional buildings and often arranged in rows along slightly curving main street imparting a prevailing medieval character.
- Valued valley floor habitats including alder carr woodland, wet meadows, ditches and ponds including Darsham Marshes Nature Reserve - a tranquil mosaic of marsh and fen.
- The River Yox and Minsmere river are valued for their water resources and feed the internationally important wetlands at Minsmere to the east.

## Condition

Some parts of this landscape are in fine condition and retain a rural feel as a result of traditional management through grazing. Nevertheless there are areas which show signs of neglect and poor management. The difficult access to small fields results in them often being peripheral to any form of active agriculture and so they are tending to be lost to scrub encroachment, tree planting and horse paddocks.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the river valley settings. Development should avoid physical and visual encroachment on the valley floor.</li> <li>• Protect small scale field enclosure patterns and seek to avoid sub division of fields by post and rail/wire fencing associated with keeping horses.</li> <li>• Protect the features which contribute to the significance of the estate and parkland character which is strong in this area. Support plans for the restoration of parkland within its historic boundaries and reversion of arable land to pasture.</li> <li>• Protect open views across the lower marshes.</li> <li>• Protect and enhance the setting of listed or other historic buildings, particularly those buildings that visual focal points.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the network of small scale wet meadows and associated landscape features such as rush pasture, reedbed, and drainage dykes, seeking opportunities to extend linkages between these features for ecological benefit.</li> <li>• Manage the condition of neglected meadows with traditional methods such as grazing. Manage hedgerows effectively with coppicing where elm die back an issue.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to resist the planting of poplar plantations in this landscape to avoid change to the character of its woodland.</li> </ul>

## B4 Fromus Valley

### Location

The Fromus Valley is a short and shallow river valley with a north-south orientation. Fed by streams west of the A12, the River Fromus flows south through Saxmundham, and Benhall, and connects into the larger valley of the Alde at Gromford.

### Constituent Types

This area comprises three landscape types - Rolling Estate Claylands, Rolling Estate Sandlands and Valley Meadowlands.



### Summary Description

This is a subtle shallow valley system containing the market town of Saxmundham and a more dispersed pattern of settlement to the north and south. This valley has a settled character and its outer edges have been influenced by road and rail infrastructure.

Although the upper reaches of this river valley comprise subtle shallow valleys containing willow-lined tributary streams, south of Saxmundham the valley floor becomes more defined supporting wet meadows while the well-drained valley sides support arable land use and some parkland. Nevertheless some of the flood plain meadows have been drained for agricultural use via straight drainage dykes and used as grassland and at Benhall Green past sand and gravel extraction has resulted in lakes used for recreational fishing.

The more fertile Claylands north of Saxmundham, where early enclosure took place. Have an organic feel although throughout the area, arable fields have been regularised. Here it feels well vegetated through a mix of hedgerows, tree belts and some woodland. Lonely Wood, is an ancient woodland on the edge of the area west of Carlton, and contributes to the historic pattern of the landscape.

Historically, there was parkland in this area, both north and south of Saxmundham, but only remnants and outlines remain today. Some parkland remains at Carlton Hall with evidence of the former extent of parkland reflected in perimeter woodland belts and veteran trees. Nevertheless the parkland character has become fragmented by recreational land use, arable, industrial estate and a caravan park. To the south of the town is former Hurtshall Park but this has now mostly been converted to arable land use, although the grounds of Hurts Hall continues to scenically enhance the southern approach to the town along with the church which is seen on higher land behind.



Saxmundham is a small market town in the centre of the area featuring a reasonably well-preserved linear, historic core, covered by a Conservation Area. The town was influenced by the construction of the railway which encouraged commercial and industrial sites, leading to the mixed character experienced today. Buildings in the historic core sit, sometimes awkwardly, alongside large scale commercial buildings. The town has also seen a substantial amount growth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, skewing its shape to the west out to the A12. The presence of modern housing brings a suburban feel to the west side of the town. More recently development at Church Hill has extended development up the eastern valley sides.

Many of Saxmundham's buildings are timber-framed, under steep plain tiles roofs, but present either a brick or rendered façade, having been re-fronted in the 18th or 19th centuries. The clay soils mean red brick dominates, but gault brick is also seen, particularly on higher status buildings, or only on frontages. Roofs are generally tiled, with plain tile and pantiles, sometimes these have the distinctive black glazing seen in East Suffolk. Slate is also seen and the occasional thatched cottage. Knapped flint and cobbles are also found. Barns are clad in weatherboard under tiled roofs.

The valley bottom feels particularly well-wooded in the centre of the area, around the villages of Sternfield and Benhall. Benhall features a dispersed parish, divided by the A12 and railway. Its Lodge and parkland are stranded on the west side (character area O1) with village clusters at Benhall, Benhall Green and Benhall Low Street to the east, which intermingle with common land, the woodland, small pastures, and leisure oriented land uses (including caravan or static home sites, and fishing lakes in peaty bottomed lakes). Giant geometrical stands of poplar at Sternfield and the 'avenue' of poplars along the river banks to the north have strong visual impact and distort the sense of scale in this small valley.

Settlement peters out further south, and the experience becomes more remote, experienced from narrow lanes, with views into small scale, peaty, wet meadows. These are divided by wet ditches or dykes that in places are lined by trees or scrubby hedges, or punctuated by pockets of wet Alder Carr. The hedges feature a high proportion of elm giving them a gappy and straggly appearance. This semi-wild, enclosed feel contrasts with the order and simple geometry of the sandy-soiled valleysides beyond.

The area has some parts with an historic off the beaten track feel, down narrow lanes enclosed by hedges in the lowlands which feel intimate and remote. But around the A12 corridor, Saxmundham and its busy valleyside route, the feel can be busy, only semi-rural and 20<sup>th</sup> century development is prominent.

## Special Qualities and Features

- A Conservation Area covers the attractive historic core of Saxmundham which has a wealth of traditional, listed buildings.
- Remnant parkland landscapes including veteran trees, perimeter planting, and mansion houses.

## Condition

Some parts of this landscape are still in fine condition and retain a rural feel. This is sometimes due to retention of the traditional management through grazing. However, there is also a lot of neglect and poor management. The difficult access to small fields results in them often being peripheral to any form of active agriculture and so they are susceptible to loss through scrub encroachment, tree planting and horse paddocks.



## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the small-scale areas of pasture and common land, especially where they form a key part of village character. Avoid conversion to horse pasture.</li> <li>• Protect the spaces separating the settlements of Saxmundham, Carlton and Kelsale.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage further expansion of poplar plantations as they can have a negative impact, especially where experienced close to the village edges.</li> <li>• Manage the marginal small scale pastures, and their hedges, with traditional methods such as grazing and coppicing.</li> <li>• Manage vegetation to retain and enhance views to church towers.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the removal of poplar plantations and restoration of grazed wet meadows or alder carr.</li> <li>• Plan for the restoration of parkland including conversion from arable to pasture and the planting of veteran trees.</li> </ul>

## B5 Alde Valley

### Location

The Alde Valley is a narrow valley containing the River Alde which, from its twin source streams at Brundish and Dennington, flows south-east between Rendham and Sweffling and feeds into the Alde Estuary at Snape.

### Constituent Types

This area comprises four landscape types - Rolling Valley Claylands, Rolling Estate Claylands, Rolling Estate Sandlands, and Valley Meadowlands.



### Summary Description

The Alde Valley is a relatively long valley system. The depth of the valley is about 20m in its upper reaches, from about 20m to 40m AOD, falling to almost sea level at Snape. The upper reaches of the Alde Valley comprise lush meadows winding through gently rolling, well-vegetated, arable valleysides, overlooked by ancient farms and small villages imparting an 'off the beaten track' feel, with little intrusion from the modern world. Here there are attractive compositions of landscape features and topography giving rise to varied and scenic views. Where these slopes are gentle, and vegetation is lightly scattered, long views can be possible, but sometimes, where the valleyside steepens, views out are contained by the rising slopes.

In the lower reaches the valley floor widens at the confluence with the River Ore. Here there are more expansive areas of fen-like meadows with reed filled ditches and scattered with willows and grazing.

Higher in the valley, the enclosure pattern is smaller grain than the sloping farmlands either side. Here the valley bottom is comprised of a small, often longitudinal meadows, with well vegetated edges, the seasonally wet nature of the soils making them unsuitable for tilling. These are often unfenced and used for forage rather than grazing, although some grazing is seen. Upslope the fields become larger with the transition from meadows to arable landuse. Field size also increases in the more open flat valley bottom in the lower reaches, where the large meadows are grazed rather than used for forage.

Field shapes are generally organic in character, with both straight and sinuous edges where they meet the tightly meandering river channel. There are substantial and long-established hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn, elm and dogwood. There is occasionally some localised estate influence from landscape parks, such as around Great Glemham.

Much of this area is particularly well vegetated, fed by fertile clay soils and well watered by the streams that feed into the river. Small woodlands are scattered along the valley. Little is Ancient in origin, only the fringes of Dodds Wood, Benhall, and Dennington Wood are located in this area. The other woods are a fragmented pattern of mixed broadleaf and conifer woods and plantations. In the confines of the valley a small amount of woodland can have a considerable visual impact.

Along the river and the lanes which flank it, there is good tree cover, a mix of species from the clayland trees of oak and ash, with lime and field maple. A different mix grows in the flood plain such as willow and alder while line the meandering course of the river. Rows of poplars can be seen at several places in the valley bottom. Parkland scale trees, with more ornamental character such as cedars, can be seen in Great Glemham. Hedges are similarly mixed - species include hawthorne, hazel, field maple, dogwood, elm, with rose and honeysuckles. These are usually well managed and often studded with trees.

In the centre of the area small linear villages and hamlets are perched to either side of the wet valley bottom and retain their historic character. The villages in this area, Rendham, Sweffling, and Bruisyard, retain a traditional feel, with only limited and well-integrated 20<sup>th</sup> infill or development, with soft, well vegetated interfaces with the countryside. There are some spaces alongside the river for recreation in the villages.

Great Glemham has a Conservation Area that includes its green spaces as setting to the church and listed cottages. The walled parkland nearby at Glemham House contributes to the estate character and makes for a pleasant historic feel.

There is a wealth of vernacular architecture in the area. There are some well kept farmsteads, with 16th and 17th century timber framed farmhouses, rendered with tiled roofs. In the villages building materials are dominated by red brick, but gault brick is also seen, particularly on higher status buildings. Roofs are generally tiled, with plain tile and pantile roofs, sometimes these have the distinctive black glazing seen in East Suffolk. There are flint cottages with red brick dressing for example in Great Glemham. White, sometimes decoratively edged bargeboards trim the roofs. Barns are clad in weatherboard, with red oxide tin roofs. Railings at bridging points are painted white.

These valleys have been long settled because water was in ready supply and the soils were better drained than the clay plateau to either side. Impressive grade II\* Bruisyard Hall, sits overlooking the river east of Bruisyard. Parts of the hall date from the 14th century, and are associated with the remains of a college and Franciscan nunnery, dating from the same period. Along with associated remains of gardens and ponds, the remains have Scheduled Monument status.

Away from the A12 the road are a network of small lanes that wind up the valley on either side of the river serving the farms and hamlets scattered there, linking across the river at intervals at small triangle greens. There is a good network of footpaths making a similar pattern.

The A12 crosses the valley at Stratford St. Andrew and is a familiar waypoint for those making the trip up the Suffolk Coast. It swings to cross Stratford Bridge, offering a brief glimpse of the river, before climbing up the valley side at Farnham. The adjacent caravan sales centre unfortunately has more of an impact. The village itself has a somewhat indistinctive feel and has many 20<sup>th</sup> century additions. Cows can be seen grazing the flat floodplain meadows here and the character changes downstream to a more open, less contained valley.

Detracting or disruptive features begin to be found, such as the railway line and the double row of tall pylons cross the valley. The railway line is on an embankment across the flood plain in places which disrupts the system of flood meadows. The double row of pylons that cross the valley bottom over Langham Bridge have a negative impact.

In the more remote northwest the sense is of well looked after, unspoilt, quiet countryside with a well vegetated feel, offering pleasant, varied views along the narrow valley. Some occasional long views down the valley are particularly attractive and unspoilt with no modern features to detract from the sense that this landscape has not changed much in centuries. Further south the flood plains widen, the sense of intimacy decreases and human influence becomes more apparent, especially near the A12 corridor.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Scenic qualities of this river valley relate to its high tranquillity and deeply rural unspoilt character. Much of the area has a traditional feel to both its landscape and its built forms, relatively untouched by 20<sup>th</sup> century development. Its valley bottoms have a quiet and empty character, and well vegetated lanes provide intimacy.
- Harmonious feel to the village of Great Glemham in the south of the area which is partly covered by a Conservation Area which focuses on the church and the cottages, associated with the estate of Glemham House, which lies to the east.
- Glemham House is a grade II\* listed early 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion set within parkland. The parkland is registered by SCDC under policy SSP37 'Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest'. The parkland has substantial woodlands on its east side and is partly enclosed by a long red brick roadside wall.
- Dennington straddles the shallow valley edge in the northern limits of the character area, which includes part of its Conservation Area. At its core is its towering church, overlooking the green which is a familiar landmark along the route of the busy A1120 which bends through the village.

## Condition

The condition of the landscape feels generally very good except for areas close to the A12 where the scale of the road and associated development overshadows the scattered historic dwellings that make up the villages of Stratford and Farnham. This area has a less cared for feel than other more remote villages in the area and is also affected by the visual intrusion of pylons.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the quiet rural character of the villages and maintain their historic feel and the 'back water' qualities of the rural area.</li> <li>• Protect the setting of key historic buildings, farmsteads or clusters of traditional built form especially where they enhance the scenic composition of the landscape.</li> <li>• Protect traditional farm buildings and avoid inappropriate siting of large-scale modern farm buildings may be visually intrusive in views across the valley.</li> <li>• Protect the form of the valleyside settlement clusters.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the condition of the meadows through traditional methods as far as possible and avoiding proliferation of equestrian fencing and structures.</li> <li>• Manage and maintain the existing areas of woodland.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to increase the overall area of native woodland in appropriate locations.</li> </ul>

## B6 Ore Valley

### Location

The Ore is a tributary of the River Alde. It rises from a number of streams north of Framlingham which converge and form a single channel south of the historic town. From here it flows south-east to Parham, Hacheston and Marlesford, before turning abruptly north-east to meet the Alde Valley at Beversham Bridge.

### Constituent Types

This character area comprises three landscape types - Rolling Valley Claylands, Rolling Estate Claylands and Valley Meadowlands.



### Summary Description

The defining characteristics of this river valley relate to the strong presence of Framlingham located at the convergence of tributary streams in a shallow bowl at the head of the valley. South of Framlingham the river valley is clearly defined often with steep valley slopes and a distinct valley floor containing the tightly meandering and treelined course of the River Ore. In the lower reaches the valley has become fragmented and visually influenced by road, rail and pylons. The elevation of land in the narrower head of the valley is between about 40m AOD and 20m AOD, falling to a range of between 5 and 20m AOD towards its confluence with the Alde.

The upper valley landscape is a gently rolling arable landscape of slowly permeable calcareous clays, laid over chalky till. This is an area of ancient pre 18th century enclosure giving rise to a sinuous small scale pattern of fields defined by hedgerows and trees. In places this pattern has been altered post 1950 with fields amalgamated such that the sides of the valleys can often feel quite open although the underlying organic relationship to the ancient routes, topography and watercourses is still evident. Along the river and the lanes which flank it, there is regular tree cover, a mix of species including the clayland trees of oak and ash, with lime and field maple.

The valley is dominated by the B1116 which traces the edge of the flood plain between Framlingham and the A12. Narrow lanes link across the river at intervals creating small triangle greens with a more intimate character. There is a good network of footpaths making a similar pattern. Given the complexity of the slopes, the network of small roads here is more

sinuous and windy than in much of East Suffolk where simple sandland landscapes resulted in unimpeded straighter road networks.

Framlingham is a gem of a market town with high quality built heritage. The 12<sup>th</sup> century castle, and medieval earthworks and man-made mere have great historic value and draw visitors to the area. Its mix of timber framed colourful houses, dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, focus on the Market Hill and also notable is the 19<sup>th</sup> century gothic Framlingham College. The castle and church occupy the highest points, and views to them are a key part of the experience of Framlingham.

The tight form of the settlement pattern means the edges of the town have been the focus of development in recent years. The historic character of the core remains largely unaffected by recent development, but the new edges on the approach to the town are sometime abrupt and feature new developments which are not always well integrated. Commercial land uses feature in the valley to the south of the town.

A mile or so south of Framlingham the valley widens to establish a narrow valley floor comprising small pastures, with wooded edges. These are usually unfenced and used for forage rather than grazing. The soils get more mixed and water-logged towards the south-east, where wet clays and peat line the valley floor. Arable lands flank to either side, and encroach down onto the flood plain only occasionally where drainage make it possible. The belt of pasture widens out markedly in the lower reaches and the valley feels much more shallow.

Here, small woodlands are scattered along the valley in a fragmented pattern of mixed broadleaf and conifer woods and plantations. Species such as willow and alder line the meadows. Rows of poplars can be seen in several places in the valley bottom. Little woodland is Ancient in origin (only the western part of Parham Wood falls within the area). In the confines of the valley a small amount of woodland can have a considerable visual impact and bring a feeling of containment.

There is a small park at Marlesford Hall. This contributes to the particularly distinctive feel of Marlesford with its attractive buildings spread alongside the river meadows. The scene of small scale dwellings overlooking the meadows, managed for grazing for centuries, feels timeless although horse paddock fencing and tapes detract from the traditional character.

Hedges are regularly present and species seen include hawthorne, hazel, field maple, dogwood, elm, with rose and honeysuckle. These are usually well managed and often studded with trees but hedges through the valley bottom meadows tend to be less regularly managed than those connected with arable systems on the valleysides.

South of Framlingham, settlement is found frequently along the main road in the form of roadside houses and small villages giving a regularly settled feel. The small settlements have traditional appearance, with only limited recent infill or development, with soft, well vegetated interfaces with the countryside. The villages (Parham, Hacheston, Marlsford and Little Glemham) tend to take a linear form with much variation in arrangement and materials. Houses are set either along the back edge of the footway, or set back deeper vegetated plots. Usually they face on to the road but sometimes they are oriented side-on so that the gable end faces the road. The low density pattern means that some 20<sup>th</sup> infill has occurred, but for the most part the villages have a particularly distinctive traditional quality.



There is a diverse wealth of vernacular architecture in the area. Framlingham has both late and post medieval timber framed buildings, brightly painted, as well as Victorian architecture. The clay soils here means red brick dominates, but gault brick is also seen, particularly on higher status buildings. In the countryside there are 16th and 17th century timber framed farmhouses, rendered with tiled roofs. Roofs are generally tiled, with plain tile and pantiles, sometimes these have the distinctive black glazing seen in East Suffolk. Slate is also seen and the occasional thatched cottage. Knapped flint and cobbles are also found. Barns are clad in weatherboard under tiled roofs.

Examples of impressive timber framed houses abound both in the villages and on farms, which sometimes have an estate feel to them. Farming is important here with large field sizes and large farm complexes sometimes straddling the lanes that pass through them.

The A12 crosses the area at Marlesford and Little Glemham where it brings noise and movement. The Ipswich-Lowestoft railway line also passes through the meadows as it sweeps north-east from Campsea Ashe station.

Landscape remnants of the dismantled Framlingham branch line are present along the valley, straight lines of tree planting, flat edged woods and wooded embankments indicate the former route of the tracks.

Visual experience varies. Views down the rolling valley are often very pleasant and moderately long in places, and the landscape can feel quite open adjacent to the large arable fields. But views are sometimes rapidly contained by rising valley sides, sometimes fringed by woodland, but they can also be featureless and with a bare skyline. The experience is more intimate in the hedged lanes or where a wooded edge provides definition and containment.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Outstanding, high quality, intact historic core including the castle and Framlingham College.
- Framlingham Mere is an ancient flooded man-made medieval lake that provides a iconic setting for the castle. Scheduled Monument status, and managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust.
- Iconic views of 12<sup>th</sup> century Framlingham Castle, sitting overlooking the mere, with its wooded setting.
- Historic interest at Marlesford includes the large Conservation Area focused on a wealth of vernacular houses and setting around the water meadows, Marlesford Hall (Grade II\* 18<sup>th</sup> century mansion) and associated parkland of Marlesford Hall Park which collectively are of exceptional quality.
- Interspersed villages and small settlements of vernacular houses and historic buildings set within high quality valley setting.
- High quality landscape derived from topography, traditional valley pastures, historic enclosure patterns, parkland and historic settlement and landmarks.



## Condition

The condition of the landscape is moderate. Many hedges have been lost to amalgamation but those that remain are well managed. Lack of management more noticeable in the flood plain where elm has a freer reign to grow and decline, leading to gappy or straggly hedges.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect small scale historic settlements from inappropriate infill development.</li> <li>• Protect the special qualities of Framlingham and its strong relationship to its high quality landscape setting.</li> <li>• Protect key views to built landmarks e.g. Framlingham castle and church towers.</li> <li>• Protect the special unspoilt character of the small villages along the valleyside and the dispersed settlement pattern. Avoid ad hoc change through increases in signage, boundary treatments, and lighting.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage floodplain land uses with traditional management practices and resist conversion to equestrianism, intake to domestic curtilage or further poplar plantation.</li> <li>• Manage areas of woodland to maintain native woodland cover. Coppice Elm hedges where management is lacking.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the appropriate new development which respects the historic character of settlements and their relationship to the surrounding landscape.</li> <li>• Plan for the special qualities of each village to be articulated so that new development can be integrated sensitively, e.g. through village design statements.</li> </ul>

## B7 Deben Valley

### Location

The Area comprises the Deben valley, and its tributary the Byng Brook, north of Wilford Bridge at Melton.

The Deben rises via streams from Debenham and Pettaugh (in Mid Suffolk) to flow south-east through Cretingham, Letheringham and east of Wickham Market. After this the valley turns to the south-west and the river flows through Ufford, where it is joined by the Potsford Brook, towards Melton and the Deben Estuary (J5).

### Constituent Types

A large and complex area comprised of a number landscape types: Coastal Levels, Valley Meadowlands, Plateau Claylands, Plateau Estate Farmlands, Rolling Valley Claylands Rolling Estate Claylands, and Rolling Estate Sandlands.



### Summary Description

The Deben Valley is the longest and most complex of all Suffolk Coastal river valleys. Its source lies in the High Suffolk claylands beyond the District boundary. The valley is sinuous and the course of the river on the valley floor is strongly meandering. To the west of Rendlesham, the channel suddenly veers and flows south-west to the edge of the estuary at Melton. Here, the channel becomes more complex and multi-stranded and is supplemented with straight-cut drainage channels.

The river channel is at elevation of around 25m AOD in the upper reaches, and the valley crests around 50m AOD. By the time the river enters the estuary at Melton the river channel has fallen to a height of less than 5m AOD, and the plateau edge is defined at approx. 25m AOD.

The area is comprised of valley floor and valley side landscapes, the character of which varies along the length of the valley in step with the transition in soils from the claylands to progressively lighter, loamier sandy soils left behind by the glaciers in the south-east.

In the upper half of the valley, the sides are drained by small streams adding a gentle complexity to the valley forms. The valley floors feel unified, and are accessible – flanked by ancient farmed landscapes and historic linear villages (eg Earl Soham, Brandeston, Hoo and

Letheringham) and farmsteads, served by a sinuous network of roads and narrow lanes that wind up the valley along the 'trade route' that serves the scattered settlement.

There is a moderately good network of footpaths making a similar pattern but the central section of the valley has notably little public access to the flood plain, possibly a result of estate control of land in the zone around Easton and Gleveringham.

The landscape is under both pastoral and arable landuse, arranged through a system of ancient enclosure. The floors have a fine grained network of small square or longitudinal meadows, with well vegetated edges and feel contained from the rows of trees, oaks, willows and alder) which mark edges and drainage ditches. Upslope the fields become larger with the transition from meadows to arable landuse and much amalgamation of fields has taken place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to create a large scale arable landscape, suited to modern agriculture.

Woodland is found in small and medium-sized woods and in both the valley sides and bottoms in the Claylands, in fragmented and organic shaped forms which provides intimacy and enclosure.

Medieval deer parks were found in this area, probably owing to the proximity to Framlingham Castle, whose nobility would venture into the surrounding countryside to hunt deer. There are several farm names with 'Park' or 'Lodge' in their names which indicates a connection to deer parks. Earl Soham Lodge is a moated site and probably served as a hunting lodge. The Grade II\* listed house stands on an island and dates from the 16th century. It also has surviving fishponds that would have served the household. Other moated sites include Old Hall, Letheringham, and there is evidence of deer park in Letheringham, mentioned on a map of 1576, and 400yr old hedges and ancient coppice stools are found in the area.

Settlement developed here in association with the ancient manors. The Romans had built a road through the valley at Earl Soham, which would have assisted with the settling of the landscape. There are several small linear villages along the higher reaches that link Earl Soham, to Wickham Market, including Brandeston and Kettleburgh. There are Greens, such as in Earl Soham. Barns and outbuildings form part of the street scape alongside the village houses. Greenspaces provide opportunities for mature trees, and form a key part of the character of these villages.

The countryside is scattered with ancient farms with '-Hall' and or '-Manor' (eg Kettleburgh New Hall, Naughton Hall, Cretingham Hall, and Hoo Hall). Brandeston Hall, now a school, dates in part to the late medieval period, but may also be an earlier manorial site due to its co-location with the Church of All Saints. The church at Letheringham Hall has an imposing position in the landscape and a distinctive visual relationship with the adjacent modernised farmyard

Away from the A1120, this is a fairly remote, sparsely settled and quiet part of the district, made scenic by the combination of old pastures, gently rolling farmland and historic settlement cluster

The lower half of the valley, south-east of Wickham Market feels less unified. It widens out considerably and now supports a more varied character with more meadowland, poplar and willow plantation, areas of wetland. The valley bottom here is less accessible and can feel expansive and empty. But it is also flanked by larger settlements (Wickham Market, Ufford) and interrupted. The railway line, and A12 cross the valley southeast of Wickham Market, bringing a good deal of noise, with a double row of pylons in between.

Here the enlarged meadow systems are divided by drainage ditches, that are sometimes populated by scrubby hedges and trees such as alder and willow. In the wettest areas, there

are small reedbeds flanking the channel. Some areas of the floodplain, particularly in the lower reaches where the soils are freer draining and supplemented with drainage ditches, arable land use is seen right up to the rivers edge. Vegetable growing is important in the lighter soils around Ufford and Rendlesham and there are also golf courses on both sides of the river.

To the west of Rendlesham, the channel suddenly veers and flows south-west to the edge of the estuary at Melton. Here, the channel becomes more complex and multi-stranded and is supplemented with straight-cut drainage channels as here the wider valley floor is made up of seasonally wet clays overlying alluvial deposits and peat. Man-made water bodies are found in the impermeable lower reaches, including an ancient dammed pond on the east side of the river at the site of Ashe Abbey. Further standing water is can be found in number of 20th century reservoirs on the edges of the river near Bromeswell, used for recreational fishing.

Woodland is more scarce here where it has a more regular-shaped, plantation character. Commercial stands of cricket bat willow and poplar have strong vertical impact eg east of Wickham Market, where there are large plantations in the flood plain. The tall, silver coloured stands have far reaching visual impacts in the confines of the valleys. Throughout the valley woods are rarely ancient - The Oaks in Campsea Ashe and Kiln Wood, Brandeston are the only remaining examples here.

There is a wealth of ancient settlement in the sandlands. There are scattered Neolithic tumuli and, in addition to the nearby internationally important site at Sutton Hoo, recent archaeological works have ascertained there was likely a royal settlement of very high status on the edge of the valley at Rendlesham. Some 4,000 items, including intricate metalwork, coins and weights, have been found, about a quarter of them are Anglo-Saxon.

Ufford features a number of clusters of built form. Within the character area is the historic part of the village, Lower Ufford, arranged with a similar low density and well vegetated feel. It is spread along a number of linking lanes, its church is surrounded by a cluster of pretty cottages and the White Lion pub overlooking the meadows in the valley bottom is particularly scenic. Areas of 20<sup>th</sup> century additions tend to be on village outskirts and have a different pattern whereby dwellings are set back from the road in deeper plots which is a departure from the prevailing patterns.

There is a diverse wealth of vernacular architecture in the area as settlements have grown over a considerable period. The villages have late and post medieval timber framed buildings, sometimes brightly painted, as well as Victorian and Georgian architecture. The clay soils means red brick dominates, but gault brick is also seen, particularly on higher status buildings. In the countryside there are 16th and 17th century timber framed farmhouses, rendered with tiled roofs. Roofs are generally tiled, with plain tile and pantiles, sometimes these have the distinctive black glazing seen in East Suffolk. Slate is also seen and the occasional thatched cottage. Knapped flint and cobbles are also found. Barns are clad in weatherboard under tiled roofs.

Landmarks from outside the area can have an impact such as the spire of Wickham Market church amongst the village roofs, seen sitting on the skyline in views from the east.

Visual experience varies but is overall very scenic with a strong sense of traditional rural heritage and settlement pattern. Upstream the feel is of farmed countryside with a historic feel, sometimes offering long scenic across the gently rolling landscape, the well vegetated river corridor a constant presence. Downstream, the wide flood plans water meadows have a less intimate feel, but nonetheless maintain a traditional and historic character. Here the views can be long and open, across marshy meadows contained by rising valley sides and

woodland on the skyline, or it can be very enclosed by plantation woodland such as at Easton.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The scenic, meandering course of the River Deben provides the focus all the way down the valley with its networks of tree edged pastures and scenic gently rolling landform providing strong traditional rural character. There are minimal detracting modern features, except for the interruption by major transport corridors which pass through the valley at Wickham Market.
- The unity and quality of the historic, linear villages, with a wealth of listed buildings, strung along the valley contributes positively to its character, as do the ancient farmsteads encountered in the countryside.
- The first few hundred metres of the river valley north of the Wilford Bridge is included with the Deben Estuary RAMSAR, SPA and SSSI sites.

## Condition

The meadowlands have generally changed little over the centuries and continue to be well managed under grazing and hay making, although equestrianism has a less positive effect, as do the poplar plantations. On village edges there is pressure for domestic or recreational land uses to creep into the flood plain but on the whole the condition is reasonably good.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the special unspoilt character of the small villages along the valleyside and the dispersed settlement pattern. Avoid ad hoc change through increases in signage, boundary treatments, and lighting.</li> <li>• Protect the fine grained enclosure patterns and drainage ditch networks and provide sympathetic management for ecological benefits.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage land use in the floodplain in favour of traditional management practices such as grazing by cattle or sheep, and resist conversion to equestrianism, intake to domestic curtilage.</li> <li>• Manage the reversion of arable land back to pasture in the lower reaches via agri-environment schemes.</li> <li>• Manage areas of woodland to maintain native woodland cover, and avoid proliferation of timber plantations. Coppice Elm hedges.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for any future expansion of Wickham Market or Ufford to be highly sympathetic to landscape character.</li> <li>• Plan for the special qualities of each village to be articulated so that new development can be integrated sensitively, e.g. through village design statements.</li> </ul>

## B8 Fynn Valley

### Location

The Area comprises the floor and sides of the Fynn Valley, and its minor tributaries, and the lower part of the River Lark valley, south of Grundisburgh. The valley winds from Witlesham in the west, through Playford to Bealings where the two rivers converge, to join the Deben Estuary at Martlesham Creek, just south of Woodbridge.

### Constituent Types

This area is almost entirely Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze, with a small area of Valley Meadowlands.



### Summary Description

The Fynn is a narrow inland valley landscape of undeveloped flood plain, its sides dotted with settlement. The often steep, well vegetated valley sides help define its character, along with the sandlands feel to the tree species. Initially more gentle in the upper reaches, where the river often feels no more than a broad stream, the valley sides get steeper closer to the mouth of the river at Martlesham Creek.

The small river has eroded a gently winding route through the surrounding clayland plateau. The geology is outwash deposits - principally silts, sands and gravels, from the great Anglian Glaciation. The valley sides have sandy acid soils, and are better drained than the undenuded claylands to either side. The valley bottoms are seasonally wet, peaty alluvial deposits.

The valley bottom lies between 40 and 30m AOD in the upper reaches of the valley in the west, falling to almost sea level in the east where it adjoins the Deben Estuary at the head of Martlesham Creek. Small tributaries with similarly steeply denuded valleysides, join the Fynn, adding complexity to the landform where they converge and giving a scenic, rolling character.

The valley bottom is grassland, in small-scale, organic-shaped longitudinal fields which, together with fragments of woodland, form a mosaic in the valley bottom. The pastoral land use and small scale enclosure patterns show considerable time-depth and create an intimate feel. Trees on the valley side and plateau edge play a regular and definitive part of its character.

Patches of heathland still remain in the east of the area around Martlesham, on the steeper valleysides, where modern agriculture has not proven feasible. The remnant heaths are dominated by poor dry grassland, with gorse (or furze) often in abundance, reflecting the underlying sandy soils. The Golf courses at Witlesham and Seckford Hall utilise the free-draining soils.

Such free draining valley sides were a focus for settlement where soils could be easily farmed, while providing close proximity to sources of water and woodland on the adjacent clay plateau edges. Bronze Age finds in Tuddenham, for example, indicate the long settled nature of this landscape.

The main roads, radiating out from the edge of Ipswich, cross the valleyside at intervals, with linear Medieval villages at the points they ford the river. The principal roads are linked by a network of narrow lanes along which are scattered houses and cottages in well vegetated plots. Piecemeal settlement from the 20<sup>th</sup> century is found loosely arranged along particularly narrow lanes that peter out into countryside. Farmsteads are scarce – these are instead located on the adjacent plateau edge above the valley.

The area has a highly rural character and away from the villages the river corridor feels isolated and tranquil, for example in parts of Playford which have a quiet ‘back water’ feel despite the frequency of settlement and the relative close proximity of Ipswich.

Views within the narrow valley are intimate. They are contained by the steep slopes and woodland that is scattered along the water course, and fragmented along the valley side. Woodlands are small, but their vertical impact makes them a prominent part of any view. There are some very statuesque individual oak trees, and distinctive lines of pines on the valley sides, highlighting the sandy soils beneath. Roadside hedgerows are of hawthorn, elder with oak, ash and field maple. Views become more open in the transition between the valley and the plateaux landscapes.

Vernacular building materials are dominated by red brick, which is sometimes painted. Timber boarding sometime provides infilling in gable ends and barge boards are common and often painted white and sometimes elaborately carved. Roofs are tiled, pantile dominating, with occasional slate. A few examples remain of the East Suffolk vernacular of black glazed pantile roofs. Weatherboarding is a prominent feature amongst the village’s eighteenth and early nineteenth century barns and outbuildings. White paint forms a unifying element in the street scene, such as in Tuddenham where the pub has white painted hand railings.

The Ipswich-Lowestoft railway line enters the Character Area south of Tuddenham, and runs along the southern boundary before turning north and entering Woodbridge from the south. It is not a prominent feature as it is located away from the main routes and villages and is frequently in cutting and or flanked by strips of woodland.

Particularly distinctive to the experience of the area is the sudden change to the character of the roads and lanes as they descend from the more open plateau landscape into the valley. The transition is marked by the descent through densely vegetated, ivy covered embankments which, together with trees overhead, form dramatic, tunnel-like entrances to the villages.

This is a vulnerable landscape under considerable development pressure because of the good connections and proximity to Ipswich and Woodbridge.



## Special Qualities and Features

- Much of the village of Tuddenham St. Martin has a Conservation Area which recognises the core of historic buildings that span the valley side. The slopes on either side providing a dramatic setting for the village and the openness of water meadows provides contrast.
- The Fynn Valley Long distance footpath follows the course of the river from Winesham to the centre of Woodbridge, approaching the town along the banks of the Deben from its confluence with the Fynn at Martlesham Creek. This is supported by a dense network of further footpaths that traverse the valley side, providing an important local recreational network.
- Scattering of impressive Elizabethan mansions such as Playford Hall, Seckford Hall and Winesham Hall in mature landscaped gardens.
- The countryside comes right through the villages along the floodplains, offering opportunities for long and attractive views of tree fringed meadows and providing an attractive setting for the villages.

## Condition

These meadowlands have generally changed little over the centuries and most continue being managed for grazing and hay making. Some are managed under traditional grazing, such as around Tuddenham, but in other areas, the meadows are not grazed or are divided up for paddocks and poached by horses. There is some inappropriate planting of conifer lines.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the settlement patterns of the villages along the valley side. Avoid ad hoc change through increases in signage, boundary treatments, and lighting.</li> <li>• Protect the RAMSAR wetlands and SPA habitats for wild birds at Martlesham Creek.</li> <li>• Protect the fine grained enclosure patterns and drainage ditch networks and provide sympathetic management for ecological benefits.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage land use in the floodplain in favour of traditional management practices such as grazing by cattle or sheep, and resist conversion to equestrianism, intake to domestic curtilage.</li> <li>• Manage areas of woodland to maintain native woodland cover, and avoid proliferation of timber plantations. Coppice Elm hedges.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for any future expansion of the larger villages such as Westerfield to be highly sympathetic to landscape character.</li> <li>• Plan for the special qualities of each village to be articulated so that new development can be integrated sensitively, e.g. through village design statements.</li> </ul>

## B9 Lark Valley

### Location

This is the upper valley system of the River Lark, from its rising in Otley, where it's known as The Gull, and then south-east to where it joins the River Fynn between Grundisburgh and Bealings. It includes parts of the parishes of Otley, Clopton, Grundisburgh, Burgh and the west part of Hasketon.

### Constituent Types

The area is simply defined by the Rolling Valley Claylands type.



### Summary Description

The Lark is a small character area, a shallow river valley of gentle rolling slopes and terraces, with small woodlands, hedgerows, meadows and streams, comprising the sides and bottom of the upper Lark Valley, and a tributary that flows westwards to converge with it outside Grundisburgh. The valley floor and sides are both defined as a clayland landscape type, with lighter soils than on the tops of the plateaux. These better drained soils were a focus for settlement because of the combination of fertile land and proximity to water. The area is therefore settled at regular intervals with the large village of Grundisburgh forming the focus and key settlement in the area.

The valleyside is defined between about 60m AOD and 35m AOD in the upper course, falling to a low point of about 15m AOD around Hasketon. The longitudinal fall of the valley is made more complex by the draining of small streams from the plateaux giving a rolling profile down the valley. This creates a distinctive visual experience for those on the valley's roads, framed and focused is towards the south-west across the river. The B1079 Grundisburgh Road, occupies a terrace on the north side of the river from Otley to Hasketon. Worn down into the valleyside over the centuries, traffic is sometimes squeezed between the vegetated embankment on one side, and tall hedges or the walls of houses and gardens on the other. In other places its elevated position allows scenic views across the river meadows to the rolling farmland beyond. However, this is a busy route and road noise has considerable negative impact on the tranquillity of the valley.

Historic houses, farmsteads and churches are dotted along the terrace on the north side, within mature vegetated surroundings – the landscape feels long established and prosperous. Here, two parish churches are seen in quick succession on higher land, St. Mary's Clopton and St. Botolphs, Burgh. Their churchyards are separated by just one field and their similar towers are waypoints, emerging from tree cover. More visually prominent here however are the double row of pylons which cross the valley carrying power from Sizewell. A further landmark is the top of Burgh mill peeping through the trees north-east of Grundisburgh.

The valley floor establishes south of Potash Farm, Clopton and land use is pastoral with a narrow meadow each side of the channel, fringed with shrubs and trees. The meadows are grazed by sheep or cattle, or used for hay and sometimes support equestrianism, which is less traditional. Some of the meadows, towards Hasketon, feel neglected in places and hedges are often under managed. Arable land flanks the valley bottom, in ancient organic arrangements, sometimes field size increasing into large, easily managed amalgamated units. These fields are hedged and their boundaries are dotted with scattered oaks, which link into a back drop of plateau woodlands, giving a wooded skyline to the south-west.

Trees and woodland are found scattered along the valley. Around Otley the courses of the rising streams are lined with trees which peter out as the valley floor develops, to be replaced with scrubby hedge lines or alder and hawthorn and plantations. Poplar plantations, in Clopton, distort the scale of the scrubby edged meadows beneath, and have strong vertical presence. Large domestic curtilages and churchyards also present space for large ornamental tree species, such as pines, horse chestnuts or coniferous hedging which contribute to the mix. On the valleyside the farmland hedges are a typical mix of clayland species, with ash and oak as the most prominent hedgerow trees.

Evidence of ancient settlement is found all along the valley. A Roman road passes through Otley and there are also ancient earthworks, a Motte and Bailey system known as 'The Mount' which overlooks the village of Otley to the north and the Grundisburgh Road to the east. At Burgh there are the remains of a major Late Iron Age and Roman enclosure - Castle Field is located on a slight promontory overlooking the river at Burgh and is a Scheduled Monument. As seen across Suffolk's claylands there is a repeated pattern of former manorial halls, indicated by farm names with Hall or Manor, such as Clopton Hall and Thorpe Hall. There is a Scheduled moat in Hasketon, its original manor house long gone.

Grundisburgh is the key focus in the valley and is a large bustling village arranged around its large central Green. Bounded by the church and school to the north, the Green is the main open space in the village and has a small river flowing through it, spanned by two fords and two bridges. Despite some extensive 20th century additions, the village retains a very attractive and traditional appearance and atmosphere, as reasonably good relationships to green space have been maintained next to new development in this area. The green spaces of the valley floor, and the spacious, treed grounds of large properties provide a distinctive approach to the village on its north and east sides.

Otley is somewhat less distinctive and has a more modern feel, with pockets of 20<sup>th</sup> century development providing much infill between the historic dwellings, and small estates behind the main road, have disrupted its historic linear pattern.

Most of Suffolk's vernacular materials are found in the area, a wealth of traditional forms are found in Grundisburgh. The older houses are timber framed and rendered and the Victorian cottages are built of 'Suffolk Red' or 'Suffolk White' brick, many of them now painted over. Roofs are slate, tile or thatch.

Overall, the perception is of a scenic small scale valley, slipping through rolling arable farmland. Its key function as a conduit for traffic between Mid-Suffolk and Woodbridge for many centuries. The visual experience is scenic and provides attractive variety and contrast, from enclosed tunnel-like sections, beneath arching roadside trees, to elevated places where longer scenic views are suddenly experienced.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Grundisburgh and Burgh, and the intervening water meadows form a Conservation Area. This covers the main street, the large green and stream that form the heart of Grundisburgh, and parts of Burgh parish, including Grundisburgh House. The greenspaces are key to the character of the village.
- This scenic small valley offers a variety of visual experiences focused around the narrow network of water meadows, and overlooked by traditional buildings which mark the distinctive rolling passage along the valley.

## Condition

Generally the valleysides have a prosperous, well-vegetated character and are in good condition. Sometimes in the flood plain hedges are not always well managed, and some of the meadows have an air of neglect. Equestrianism in some of the meadows erodes their traditional character.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the edges of Grundisburgh from development which undermines the historic relationship with valley bottom meadows - essential to character of the village.</li> <li>• Protect the pattern of scattered woodlands and rural holdings.</li> <li>• Protect Newbourne Springs intimate woodland character which has a distinctive 'tucked away' character and away from development at Ipswich and Martlesham.</li> <li>• Protect the fine grained enclosure patterns and drainage ditch networks and provide sympathetic management for ecological benefits.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage land use in the floodplain in favour of traditional management practices such as grazing by cattle or sheep, and resist conversion to equestrianism, intake to domestic curtilage.</li> <li>• Manage areas of woodland to maintain native woodland cover, and avoid proliferation of timber plantations. Coppice Elm hedges.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for any future expansion of the villages to be highly sympathetic to landscape character.</li> </ul>

## B10 Mill River Valley

### Location

This character area lies to the east of Ipswich and is a tributary to the Deben Estuary. The valley stretches from its source on the edge of Ipswich at Purdis Farm, east to Newbourne and Kirton to join the Deben Estuary north of Kirton Marshes.

### Constituent Types

The area is comprised of Rolling Estate Sandlands and Valley Meadowlands types



### Summary Description

The Mill River Valley is unusual amongst the valleys systems of East Suffolk in that its character has a sandlands feel along its length. Free draining soils have resulted in this short valley having a complex valley profile, made more convoluted by three small tributary streams to the north and south. The Mill, never much more than a broad stream, rises at an elevation of around 25m AOD on the edge of Ipswich and heads east towards the Deben Estuary. It takes a very gently winding course, through an initially shallow valley which deepens as it travels east; at Newbourne the water courses have eroded more complex and steeper slopes, from just above sea level to around 20m AOD at the top of the valley sides.

The flat valley floor is made up of seasonally wet clays, overlying alluvial deposits and peats. Soils on the valley sides are sandy Newport series soils overlying thin glacial deposits, on top of Crag sands. This makes for some water logged areas around Newbourne, while the valley sides are more free draining. A notable historic water body is the large Decoy pond in the far west of the character area, in what is now Ipswich Golf Club. The channel was modified here in the 17th century to create two ponds, the larger functioning as a decoy pond with its 'pipes' for trapping wildfowl for meat and feathers.

Enclosure patterns are small scale along the valley, comprising linear strip meadows, and organic shaped small fields, often bounded by woodland. The scale varies considerably from the contrasting large scale farming patterns found on the flanks of the valley, the visual experience can change rapidly in the transition between them.

In the far west, Ipswich Golf Course flanks the rising stream but land use in the valley bottom is traditional grazed pasture, but a lack of management is sometimes evident today. The field pattern is narrow strip meadows and small scale fields, reflecting the organic course of the river, although often sub-divided by geometric drainage channels and associated scrubby lines of trees or hedges. The meadows and downstream, reed beds along the water course, are often flanked by woodland which defines and contains views out of the river corridor and create a sense of intimacy.

Woodland is present in small and medium sized blocks and drifts, all the way down the valley, and its character varies. None is ancient in origin. There are larger blocks of mixed broadleaf and conifer woodland, strips of riparian species such as alder and willow clinging to the river banks long the flood plain, and wet woodland is found at Newbourne. There are willow and poplar plantations at several points which have vertical impact over long distances. Stubby looking oaks and other sandland species such as birch, underlain with bracken are seen on field boundaries or road sides, on the edges of the valley upper slopes. Where present woodland provides a strong sense of enclosure.

This narrow valley is lightly settled, with villages found only the periphery of the area, straddling the plateau edges. Farmstead are widely scattered and sometimes have a gentrified appearance with interventions that contrast with the informality of the flood plain and its semi-natural feel.

Newbourne, partly within the character area to the east, is a village with an unusual dispersed linear form, a result of its unique inter-war history. In the 1930s it was selected to receive unemployed miners and industrial workers, through the government's Land Settlement Association plan. Each relocated family was given one of 50 small holdings which were strung out long the lanes that radiated from the centre of the village, at that time no more than a hamlet clustered around the historic settlement –the church, Newbourne Hall and the Fox Inn, today three of the only Listed Buildings in the area. Each family was provided with a 5-acre small holding plot with a house, for running a market garden business. Today, the legacy of the scheme can be seen in the strung out form of the village with detached and semi-detached houses and cottages set in deep, well vegetated plots. A large number of horticultural greenhouses, nurseries, and roadside produce stalls still exist, the area remains important for fruit and vegetable production under glass. Domestic planting on plot boundaries sometimes brings a somewhat suburban character to the area.

Vernacular architecture in this area tends to be red brick 19th century houses, or rendered, with roofs sometimes of small plain tiles. White painted boards are seen on gable ends and over dormers. Outbuildings are often black weather boarded.

The road network is scarce. There are some narrow lanes that cross or traverse the river at intervals but there is no road along the valley itself. Through Newbourne they can feel mildly suburban, as noted above, but elsewhere they are often tree or hedge lined with much a more semi-natural feel. The hedges are sometime tall and scrubby – mixes of hawthorn, elder, hazel, field maple and suckering elm, not always well managed. There is often bracken underneath which also spreads along unhedged verges. They contribute to the often intimate scale of the landscape.

Some parts of the river are associated with intact natural habitats. Newbourne Springs is a nature reserve comprising wet carr woodland, marshy meadows and broadleaf woodland cloaking the steep slopes on the east side. It is a highly scenic combination with a strong



sense of time depth and naturalness. It features in the dense network of footpaths in the area with some well known walks, which bring visitors at the weekends to enjoy the relative peace and scenery and the local pubs.

The visual experience varies. Sometimes, where there is a lack of woodland, there is a strong relationship with the adjoining Estate Sandlands, such as south of Brightwell Hall, where a more open feel prevails. In other parts, such as Foxhall and Newbourne the topography and woodland combine to contain views, and the feel is very intimate. Overall the views are generally more confined, richer and more textured than those experienced on the plateau farmland to either side.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Newbourne's role under the Land Settlement Association Plan is unique to Suffolk and gives it an unusual settlement form and horticultural character.
- Newbourne Springs nature reserve and SSSI is an intimate wooded valley with a spring-fed stream which winds through a mosaic of alder carr, marsh, fen and meadow on the valley bottom. Woodland on the steep valley sides is dominated by oak, ash, alder, hazel and hawthorn, with heathland sitting above on the edge of the upland. It is well managed and provides recreation as well as important local habitat, it is known for its flowering plants and variety of birds.

## Condition

Many of these valley side landscapes are under considerable pressure from recreation and tourism uses. However, there are excellent areas of semi-natural landscapes and intact landscapes in many places such as Newbourne Springs.

The marginal valley bottom landscapes are managed less intensively than the farmland on either side, and this contributes to their more natural feel, to which people are drawn. But there is scope for improved management in some areas, perhaps by reinstating grazing, and by better management of suckering elm in the hedges to avoid the stages of decline.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the fine grained enclosure patterns and drainage ditch networks and provide sympathetic management for ecological benefits.</li> <li>• Protect the semi-natural habitat at Newbourne and seek opportunities to provide habitat links.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage land use in the floodplain in favour of traditional management practices such as grazing by cattle or sheep, and resist conversion to equestrianism, intake to domestic curtilage.</li> <li>• Manage areas of woodland to maintain native woodland cover, and avoid proliferation of timber plantations. Coppice Elm hedges where management is lacking.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manage the impact of visitors on within the AONB landscape.</li></ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan for any future expansion of the villages to be highly sympathetic to landscape character.</li><li>• Plan to interpret the story of Newbourne's evolution in the interwar period for the public.</li></ul>

## B11 Butley Valley

### Location

This river valley is located to the east of Rendlesham Forest and initially flows east from Butley to Chillesford, the valley takes a southerly turn and converges with the smaller tributary valley of the River Tang. The river then flows south to its confluence with the River Ore, between Gedgave and Boyton.

### Constituent Types

The valley is comprised of three landscape types - Rolling Estate Sandlands, Valley Meadowlands, and Coastal levels and Intertidal flats.



### Summary Description

The Butley Valley is a shallow and subtly defined valley system defined by gently sloping valley sides which rise to just 20m AOD. The valley has a transitional character - initially an inland system, flowing through farmland and lowland pasture in its upper reaches, but its defining character stems from tidal influences which gives rise to an expansive, estuarine feel in the lower valley. Here the scene is highly attractive composition of water, reed beds and marsh. At the confluence of the Butley and Tang rivers the watercourses are flanked by a wide area of Coastal Levels landscape type - an expansive flat tract of drained marshland under pastoral and arable use with a highly remote and tranquil character.

Soils in the valley bottom are loamy and clayey with a naturally high groundwater, with more freely draining slightly acid sandy soils on the valley sides. Clues are provided by the characteristic sandland pine rows that can be seen on the skyline.

The tidal flow enters and leaves the River Ore from the reach called the 'Lower Gull' on the north-west end of Havergate Island, between Gedgrave and Boyton. This is a particularly remote and hard to access part of the coastline which contributes to the strong feeling of tranquillity.

The Coastal Levels is a wide flat area through which the river meanders, forming creeks and revealing mudflats at low tide. Marshland sits above the high water level and lines the rivers edge, the water eroding ragged edges, with silty-bottomed pools and sub-channels. Beyond this is a wide belt of low lying drained marshes, divided by reed-lined drainage dykes and occasional scattered hawthorns. Tidal defence embankments line the lower half of the valley.

The valley sides and rise and roll in the background, and are regularly wooded. Stands of poplars have skyline impact. The belts and woods link on the skyline to form a continuous backdrop providing containment and seclusion.

The lower reaches have a strong sense of isolation. Settlement is absent and roads and even footpaths are confined to the upland beyond. Only a glimpse of Butley Mills at the head of the estuary or Gedgrave Hall in the south. Flocks of geese and wading birds are one of the only sources of movement as they sift through the mud at low tide and graze the stubbles at high tide. There are few moorings in the channel here. The visual experience here is one of wide open skies and extensive views across the estuary taking in the highly scenic arrangement of rolling valley side, saltmarsh, mud and reflective water.

Woodland is present in moderate quantities. Smaller woods are found on the valleysides, such as the mixed woodland enclosing the site of Butley Priory, which occupies a slight promontory on the west side of the valley. Here, Oak Wood and Water Wood are Ancient Woodlands and feature beech, oak, and sweet chestnut. Larger blocks on the plateau edges, just outside the area are also part of the scene and provide containment.

The underlying enclosure patterns are deeply organic and often relate to the drainage patterns and the meandering paths taken by water on its passage to the sea. But over this, the effect of estate farming is appreciable with much regularisation of field boundaries taken place to form rectilinear patterns in places, such as around Gedgrave Hall.

Settlement is scarce and confined to occasional farms on the valleysides, or linear hamlets at Butley and Chillesford, with cottages along the roads one plot deep. The villages have a low key, modest character. Older timber framed cottages are interspersed with 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development which does not always contribute positively to the character. Materials are predominantly red brick with tile and slate roofs. There are rough-coursed brick, cobble and rubble walled cottages in Butley, with old doorways bricked up – once two tiny workers cottages. The village edge at Butley is quite abrupt, the cottages front onto the road and overlook open farmland. They are easily visible from the approach from the west.

The area displays a rich medieval history. There is enduring evidence that the area formed medieval hunting grounds. Staverton Park close to where the Butley River rises, is remnant medieval deer parkland with its famous 'thicks' featuring thousands of veteran oak trees. Records show Butley Priory was a popular hunting resort for the nobility in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and was surrendered to Henry VIII in 1538. The C14th Gatehouse is all that remains of the Augustinian Abbey, originally founded here in 1171.

Later, much of the land in this area was under the control of the Sudbourne Hall estate, and historic features endure which show how the landscape was used. For example there is a decoy pond in woodland South of Chillesford, a pond or water course manipulated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to construct 'pipes' for trapping wildfowl to provide meat and feathers for the Hall, a mile to the east.

Many old crag pits still exist in this area, the red crag excavated sometimes for building material, and often for its phosphate-rich qualities. Neutral Farm crag pit is a geological SSSI. Today these often provide important habitat for nesting sand martins.

The estuary landscape is remote, away from the seasonally busy B1084, and roads and even footpaths are not present making this an inaccessible part of the District. This contributes to its tranquil and remote character, with a strong sense of the natural environment, its wildlife and its dynamic coastal processes.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The area is entirely within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.
- The estuary has a uniquely quiet and highly scenic setting, broadly unaffected by sailing boats, and little known to the tourists that flock to nearby Orford. It's isolated, empty and untouched by modern development. Its combination of water, reed, creek and valley side combine to give a rare sense of natural beauty.
- The area has rich medieval history as can be deduced from nearby Staverton Park, and the site of Butley Priory. Features of historic interest remain such as the Grade II listed Priory Gatehouse, which dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- The remnants of Butley Clumps stand either side of the road. These were 'quincunxes', originally groups of four beech trees around a Scots pine, and are thought to have been planted in 1790 to enhance the approach to Butley Priory. Carvings of sailing vessels in their bark preserve the area's maritime connections.
- The area is rich in estuarine habitats and includes Havergate Island and Boyton Marshes Nature Reserve.
- The long distance Suffolk Coast Path runs north-south through the area between Chillesford to Boyton Marshes

## Condition

The condition of the landscape is good with large areas of semi-natural habitat.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the natural character and the open and unspoilt views from development which is visually intrusive over long distances.</li> <li>• Protect the tranquil, remote character of the valley.</li> <li>• Protect the small villages from development that would threaten their distinctive character.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of effective flood defenses.</li> <li>• Manage remnant areas of reedbed through cutting and grazing marshes through appropriate water management and stocking levels.</li> <li>• Manage and restore features such as ditches, dykes, and hedgerows in arable areas.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for future changes in sea levels that will affect the level of inundation in the floodplain.</li> </ul>

## D2 Westwood and Dingle Marshes

### Location

This area comprises the coastal strip between Dunwich and Walberswick and the areas of Westwood and Dingle marshes that stretch inland to the edge of Dunwich Forest.

### Constituent Types

The landscape is comprised of Open Coastal Fen, Coastal Dunes and shingle ridges, and edged by the slopes of the Estate Sandlands type.



### Summary Description

This is an open and uninhabited wild landscape made up of extensive areas of reedbed and freshwater lagoons. The area is backed and defined by the gentle rising land of the wider estate sandlands landscape character type to the west. Cattle graze on low intensity grassland dissected by a network of dykes with scrub growing along them in places. In addition to the grassland, there is a complex mosaic of extensive reedbeds, mud-flats, lagoons, shingle, woodland and areas of lowland heath. It supports the largest continuous stand of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) in England and Wales and demonstrates the nationally rare transition in grazing marsh ditch plants.

Woodland forms the backdrop on the inland side, the large area of Dunwich Forest that covers the plateau and the valley sides, and provides a strong sense of enclosure on the landward side, isolating the marshes from the rest of the landscape and giving rise to a strong sense of wilderness. On the seaward side, the skies are wide and open and there is a sense of exposure, the coastal shingle bank providing only a degree of enclosure from the sea beyond.

Much of the character area is designated Special Protection Area because of the habitat it provides and as an important site for breeding and wintering birds including the bittern and the marsh harrier. Some of the northern edge of the area and the seaward edge of the character area are designated Special Area of Conservation for the lowland dry heath it supports, which is a relatively uncharacteristic habitat on the eastern coast, and for the annual vegetation of drift lines occurring on the mixed sand and shingle.

In the early Middle Ages the port of Dunwich lay on the south side of the mouth of the Dunwich River and close to the mouth of the (originally) south-flowing River Blyth. Storms in

1286-8 brought about the periodic blocking of the harbour mouth with sand and shingle. In 1328 the original river mouth was finally blocked by a storm and the Dunwich River was forced to flow northwards along the old course of the lower Blyth to a new mouth east of Walberswick. The original port of Walberswick had lain on the north side of the lower Blyth, but the changes led to its abandonment in favour of a new port, on the new river mouth. The Dunwich River still exists at the mouth of the Blyth, but coastal erosion has moved the course westward, leaving fragments of the old course in the coastal marshes and flats. The date of the enclosure of Oldtown Marshes, so-named because of its proximity to the old port of Walberswick, is unknown, but the sinuous nature of its dykes suggests a relatively early date. Corporation Marshes (formerly Kings Holm) to the east of the Dunwich River was already embanked along the river edge by 1587. To the west, Walberswick Marsh (formerly East Marsh and Pauls Fen) was reclaimed from salt marsh by the erection of a sea wall around 1590. Early, probably curving, drains seem to have been augmented by later straight ones, but mid-20th century reflooding has led to the loss of many of the drains. To the south, Dingle and Reedland Marshes were embanked from the river by 1587. The area has a mixture of sinuous and straight drains, suggesting drainage works over an extended period of time. Included in the area is a rectangular decoy pond that was in existence by the 1880s; other ponds have been added in the 20th century for wildlife interest.

The landscape feels remote due to the lack of vehicle access and settlement. It's open nature and proximity to the sea creates a very expansive perception, especially in contrast to the forest and farmed estate sandlands which exist inland. The sense of solitude and proximity to nature are important attributes that make the area special.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The area is important for nature conservation as demonstrated by the extensive designation (RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, two NNRs, SSSI) and supports important plant and bird species
- The open landscape provides opportunities for recreation including bird watching and walking and contrasts with the wooded landscape of Dunwich Forest
- Strong historical land use is evident through the different dykes and drainage ditches
- Strong sense of remoteness and solitude created by the expansive landscape and limited access and development.

## Condition

Much of the area is under the care of wildlife organisations so is being actively managed and its condition is very good. Traditional methods are employed, such as the introduction of Dartmoor ponies to graze the heathlands. The Dingle Marshes reserve is under the management of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, RSPB and Natural England.

The area is a dynamic landscape under constant threat of change, breaching of the shingle banks by the sea is expected to happen at some point, which will have a huge effect on the habitats and the species which depend upon them.

## Strategy Objectives

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the prevailing sense of wildness, isolation and remoteness from development which might erode these qualities.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage public access and activities in order to minimise surface disturbance, particularly along the coastal shingle beach/ridge.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the future changes that would result from breach and inundation by the sea.</li> </ul>



## D3 Minsmere and Sizewell Coast

### Location

This coastal area stretches from Docwra's Ditch in the north which marks the southerly point of Dunwich Heath, along Minsmere Haven to Sizewell power station in the south.

### Constituent Types

The landscape is comprised of Coastal Levels and Coastal dunes and shingle ridges.



### Summary Description

The landscape is made up of the valley of the Old Minsmere River - an area of coastal levels and open coastal fen, Sizewell Belts and the site of Sizewell power station.

The valley of the Minsmere Old River comprises drained grazing marsh and, north of the old river channel, the Minsmere RSPB reserve with extensive freshwater wetland and fen habitat. Minsmere reserve is designated as a RAMSAR site, SAC, SPA and SSSI because it represents part of a valuable habitat mosaic which extends northwards into area D2.

The Minsmere Levels, in the north of the area, were once the valley of the Minsmere Old River, but this has been extensively drained since 1810 and the river canalised to enter the sea at 'The Sluice'. Unlike other river valleys along the coast, this area is not estuarine and the control of water through the sluice is significant both in terms of coastal protection and the conservation of adjacent freshwater wetlands. In recent years the northern part of the levels has been managed by the RSPB as a nature reserve through the reduction in pumping and drainage and the creation of scrapes and areas of open water. Today it comprises a mosaic of lagoons, acid grassland, arable land reverted to grassland, and woodland. It has become a flagship reserve and a Mecca for bird watchers.

Surrounding the marshes is higher sandy farmland, and areas of mixed (including ancient oak woodland and hazel coppice) and plantation woodland. There are areas of heathland in this area which has reduced over the years, with some areas reverting to birch woodland due to lack of grazing or being lost to the sea due to coastal erosion.

Sizewell Belts, a nature reserve adjacent to the power station, is a grazing marsh comprising habitats of marsh, wet woodland and heath which extend to the coastal beach. The area is

intersected by dykes and provides a significant contrast in character and scale to the power station site.

Construction of Sizewell A power station started in 1961. Today the complex comprises two power stations and strongly influences this section of the coast. In close proximity to the power station the scale of the buildings and associated power lines dominate the landscape such that other landscape features and activities feel small and insignificant. However, the power station is a by now familiar sight and sits within the coastline as a landmark

Along this section of straight coast the beach consists of a steep and narrow shingle bank backed by low sandy cliffs. The sight of fishermen on the beach with their umbrellas and fishing lines, stretching off into the misty haze, is commonplace.

Other than the power station, in terms of human activity, the limited amount of settlement belies the previous extent of occupation, the former settlement of Sizewell has been lost to the sea. Nevertheless the remains of Leiston Old Abbey, built on a marsh island in 1182 illustrate that the area has been previously inhabited.

Distant container vessels in the offshore waters are visible out to sea and closer inshore boating activity associated with the fishing fleets create some sense of activity. On the coast itself it is the white dome of Sizewell B and the concrete hulk of Sizewell A power stations which are a key landmark.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Outstanding nature conservation importance, reflected in Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar (conservation of wetlands) and County Wildlife Site (CWS) designations Minsmere regarded as an 'ark' for rare species of birds.
- The power station provides a dramatic element and contrasts to the otherwise open and often desolate landscape
- Despite the limited human settlement the area contains important evidence of past settlement

## Condition

The condition of much of this landscape is exceptionally high reflected in its various nature conservation designations and is under active management. Nevertheless it is possible that there will be a breach of the shingle ridge resulting in the inundation of Minsmere and a change from freshwater habitats to salt water habitats, although recent works to the shingle ridge should protect all but North Marsh for many years to come.

There is also pressure for the development of a Sizewell C power station and the use of Sizewell as the landfall for energy generation for the Greater Gabbard offshore windfarm and potential location for other additional grid connections.

## Strategy Objectives

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the unspoilt character of much of this coastline from intrusive major infrastructure development which may penetrate areas currently devoid of such influences.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage public access and activities in order to minimise surface disturbance, particularly along the coastal shingle beach/ridge.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the further improvement of drained marshes and the restoration of areas to saltmarsh and freshwater habitats.</li> <li>• Plan for the regular removal of inorganic litter from the strandline through community action and involvement.</li> </ul>

## D4 Thorpeness to Aldeburgh

### Location

This area comprises the stretch of coastline between the settlements of Thorpeness and Aldeburgh, and the shallow valley of the Hundred River, which stretches inland.

### Constituent Types

The landscape is comprised of Estate Sandlands, Coastal Levels Sand dunes and shingle ridges along the coast.



### Summary Description

This is an expansive, open and windswept landscape. The sense of scale strongly contrasts with the small-scale, sheltered character of the settlements of Thorpeness and Aldeburgh which represent important cultural and historical tourism features.

The flat, open valley floor of Hundred River, which comprises mainly reclaimed drained marshes used for grazing, is divided by regular, reed filled ditches and wetland areas, and dissected by a disused railway embankment which used to connect Aldeburgh with Saxmundham. Within the drained marshes, along the railway and around the lake associated with Thorpeness (The Meare) are areas of scrub vegetation which provide visual structure. The open and unsettled area from the coast and landwards to the eastern side of the Fens is designated as part of the Leiston Aldeburgh SSSI as 'a rich mosaic of habitats including acid grassland, heath, scrub, woodland, fen, open water and vegetated shingle. This mix of habitats in close juxtaposition and the associated transition communities between habitats is unusual in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths.'

Inland, where the railway line bisects the landscape, The Fens comprise part of the Sandlings SPA which is an area dominated by heathland developed on glacial sandy soils, exploited and lost during the 20th century when large areas of heath were planted with blocks of commercial conifer forest and others were converted to arable agriculture. Remnant heath and those restored through conservation work support both acid grassland and heather-dominated plant communities with dependent invertebrate and bird communities of conservation value. Woodlark and Nightjar have also adapted to breeding in the large blocks of conifer forest, as well as areas managed as open ground. This area of estate sandlands

where firmer, sandy soil support gorse, heather, birch and oak and areas of heath (North Warren, Sandlings Heath and South Warren) marks a rising from the valley floor landscape.

The area is known for the historic coastal settlements of Thorpeness and Aldeburgh, connected by a straight, unenclosed coast road offering views inland and out to sea. The beach comprises a shingle ridge, and close to Thorpeness, supports rare vegetation. There is a strong focus on recreation and coastal holidays, evident in the caravan parks and the 1900s planned seaside village of Thorpeness. Fishing boats and fresh fish outlets are scattered along Aldeburgh beach and coupled with wooded groynes and Victorian villas give rise to a more settled and urbanised coastal character contrasting with the character further north. There are open views across the water with boating activity focused around the fishing fleets and occasional views to distant container vessels in the North Sea.

Landmarks attracting tourists include the 'House in the Clouds' at Thorpeness and its associated Windmill, Aldeburgh Church and Maggi Hambling's 'Scallop' sculpture on Aldeburgh beach, and the area is strongly associated with Benjamin Britten, the Aldeburgh music festival and artists including J.M.W. Turner.

Aldeburgh is a historical settlement with important cultural association. The word Aldeburgh means 'old fort', although the site of this has been lost to coastal erosion along with much of the original tudor town. In the 16th century, Aldeburgh was a leading port with a flourishing ship-building industry. Sir Francis Drake's ships Greyhound and Pelican (later renamed Golden Hind) were both built in Aldeburgh. The flagship of the Virginia Company, the Sea Venture, is believed to have been built here in 1608. When the River Alde silted up and was unable to accommodate larger ships, the settlement went into decline. It survived as a fishing village until the nineteenth century, when it became popular as a seaside resort, in part as a result of the construction of a new branch railway from Saxmundham in 1860. Much of its distinctive and whimsical architecture derives from this period and of particular note are the colourwashed buildings in soft pinks, yellows and blues, which face straight onto the shingle beach where boats are beached and small wooden huts sell freshly caught fish. Aldeburgh has connections with a large number of famous names, including Elizabeth Garrett-Anderson, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears; there is a strong 'arts' focus.

Thorpeness is a planned seaside resort village created in the early 20th century by Glencairn Stuart Ogilvie. In November 1910 the small boggy landlocked mere, which was fed by the Hundred River, flooded creating a large area of shallow standing water. This inspired Ogilvie to block the river permanently and construct sluices to contain a 64-acre lake, now known as the Meare. At the same time Ogilvie conceived the notion of building a holiday resort adjoining both the new lake and the sea, providing houses for self-catering family holidays controlled by leases usually of not less than one month's duration. Many of the buildings are half-timbered and today this village is valued for its unique genesis; the quality of its buildings; its distinctive form and layout and its relationship with the wider landscape. Westbar, the Windmill and the House in the Clouds all form eye-catching landmarks in the area.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Leiston to Aldeburgh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) covers much of the area, comprising a rich mosaic of acid grassland, heath, scrub, woodland, fen, open water and vegetated shingle, which is rare in the Study Area; the Sandlings Special Protection Area (SPA) also covers some of this landscape

- The coastal area is of valued for nature conservation; Thorpeness beach is a vegetated shingle beach and there is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) north of Aldeburgh
- The disused railway is a County Wildlife Site (CWS) for its species rich grassland
- Thorpeness and Aldeburgh are conservation areas and contain many landmark buildings and, Aldeburgh in particular, is associated with a rich history for such a small settlement

## Condition

The condition of this landscape is affected by the proximity of urban development and high numbers of visitors. Nevertheless it retains a strong and intact character. Changes which are related to tourism can be seen in linear housing development along the coast, pressure for recreational development including caravan parks and access to the coast, and urbanisation of the seafront and beach between settlements. As well as this, the increase in second homes is having an impact on local communities. Vegetated shingle habitats are also suffering due to recreational disturbance and beach litter can sometimes be an issue due to the large numbers of people who frequent this stretch of coast.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the sense of separation and openness between the settlements of Aldeburgh and Thorpeness and avoid <i>ad hoc</i> and incremental development which urbanises this coastal landscape, particularly along the open coast road.</li> <li>• Protect the natural character of the foreshore and its vegetated shingle.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage use of this area for recreation, protecting nature conservation value, facilitating appropriate access and channelling visitor pressure away from sensitive areas.</li> <li>• Manage areas of existing scrub and woodland, protecting the mosaic of habitats and variety of contrasting open and enclosed spaces found in this landscape.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the growth of settlement ensuring that the special qualities of Thorpeness and Aldeburgh are retained.</li> <li>• Plan for the removal inorganic litter from the strandline through community involvement and action.</li> </ul>



## D5 Orfordness and Marshes

### Location

This area is defined by the River Ore, which runs parallel to the coast separated from the sea by Orford Ness. It stretches from the Alde Estuary in the north to the Deben Estuary in the south.

### Constituent Types

The landscape comprises Sand dunes and shingle ridges, Coastal levels, Rolling estate sandlands, and small areas of Estate Sandlands.



### Summary Description

This is a coastal landscape which includes the River Ore and the large shingle spit of Orford Ness which separates it from the coast. It is also a landscape with a very linear feel, with the River Ore running parallel to the coast flanked by drained marshes and rising sandy farmland inland. The River Ore itself is often not visible, but there is a strong visual association with Orford Ness and the sea beyond. This is an open, exposed and expansive landscape, in parts often inaccessible. This landscape has many unique qualities - the River Ore runs for approximately 16km along Orford Ness while the ness itself is the longest pebble spit of its type in Europe. In addition Havering Island, to the south of the spit, is the only island in Suffolk.

This is a dynamic landscape shaped by the sea through the process of longshore drift with beach materials shaped into the long spit through wave action and prevailing winds and the eventual loss of the lighthouse on the ness will be a reflection of the evolving spit over time. The tidal nature of the River Ore is not evident due to the river flood defences and predominance of reclaimed grazing marsh.

The area is of geological significance with a large number of pits exposing the Coralline Crag formation; these are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The River Ore and the habitats on its seaward banks are of significant nature conservation value; designated as SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar; the coastal spit is also a National Nature Reserve. The area is valuable for its coastal habitat matrix and Orford Ness is the second largest and best preserved area of vegetated shingle in Britain. The combination of the



vegetated shingle spit with a cusped foreland found at Orford Ness and Shingle Street is unique within Britain making this a very significant landscape<sup>8</sup> capable of supporting nationally scarce plant species, endangered invertebrates and a range of wintering and breeding wetland birds.

The shingle beaches at Shingle Street/mouth of the Ore and East Lane, and in the very north extending into the area, provide open views out to sea. In the south of the area around Shingle Street the shipping lanes for container vessels converge and the associated shipping activity becomes more visually dominant in this landscape. North of Shingle Street this influence diminishes and boating activity is more focused around small fishing fleets which alters the sense of activity and industry across the character area.

Despite the coastal proximity and valuable habitats, this is, for the most part, a farmed landscape. This further emphasizes the open and expansive character, creating a sense of emptiness and solitude away from the settlements. The marshes associated with the river are drained supporting mixed farming of grazing and crop production. The dispersed pattern of farmsteads through the area and the repetitive pattern of farm reservoirs are a reflection of this land-use. Within the drained marshes and farmland there are both regular and irregular patterns of drainage ditches, reflecting different periods of reclamation. Close to where the land starts to rise inland there are frequent small copses of wet woodland which create a sense of enclosure. From the gently rising land there are open views to the Ness, where former military structures are visible on the skyline, notably the 'pagodas' and masts.

Settlement is located on higher land at Orford (a conservation area) Hollesley and Alderton. Shingle Street is a tiny windswept hamlet on the shingle close to the mouth of the Ore. There are many tales of smuggling in this landscape in the 18th and 19th centuries, aided no doubt by the strong sense of isolation. A prison is located to the north of Hollesley which dates back to the 1880s when it was a training camp for prisoners who were bound for transportation. A village has existed at Orford since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century but its significance and size grew when Henry II chose it as the site for a castle (Orford Castle). It was a busy port associated with wool and dairy exports and coal imports and boasted at least one Norman church, an Augustinian friary and two hospitals. The impacts of continental wars, piracy and a dwindling fishing industry were compounded by the shifting shingle spit affecting access to the quay meant that this economic success diminished. Today there is no such bustle and instead the quay supports yachting, fishing and the foot passenger ferry to Orford Ness.

Martello towers are inter-visible along the coast and from out at sea while Orford Castle and St Bartholomew's church are other key landmarks in this area. Martello towers were constructed in the Napoleonic era as a strategic defence and deterrent against a possible French invasion. WWII defence structures are dotted through the area in the area, notably at East Lane Battery in the south and numerous pill boxes along the river embankments. This area had a key role in world war two and beyond; Orford Ness used to be a military testing site the 'pagodas' were used to refine the firing mechanisms for A and H bombs and radars were developed here which were vital to winning WWII. These, the Cobra Mist building and radio masts are key landmarks for the area. These structures, the historical prison training camps and the tales of piracy and battles along this coastline create a dramatic sense of history for a relatively unsettled landscape.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11002.pdf>

## Special Qualities and Features

- This area is rich in nationally important cultural history with the Martello towers (Scheduled Monuments), remnants of WWII defences and Orford Castle (also a Scheduled Monument)
- The high nature conservation value of the area is demonstrated by the high number of designations from Ramsar to County Wildlife Sites
- Similarly, there are a number of geological SSSI sites associated with the exposed Coralline Crag, marine sands laid down between 2.6 and 5 million years ago
- Havergate Island is Suffolk's only island
- Wide and expansive views across a landscape with a strong sense of

## Condition

The condition and qualities of this landscape are reflected in its many designations. The area is under active management although is vulnerable to coastal erosion and inundation. Past sea defence structures have had a landscape and visual impact on the coastal landscape. Conservation work, including the creation of new freshwater wetlands and re-flooding of areas of drained grazing marshes, are bringing benefits to wildlife, however, the changing weather patterns are also causing the marshes to dry out in spring and summer, which affects breeding birds.

Physical damage to the vegetated shingle caused by visitors' footfall is a problem and erosion by the sea may result in the loss of landmark structures.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the natural character of the foreshore and remove inorganic litter from the strandline through community involvement and action.</li> <li>• Protect the open and unspoilt character of this part of the coast from development which is visually intrusive over long distances.</li> <li>• Protect views to key landmark features, including those beyond this character area.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage parkland trees at Bawdsey, especially skyline trees and Scots pines.</li> <li>• Manage human impact on vulnerable habitats through better communication and restricted access.</li> <li>• Manage water levels across the marshes and lagoons.</li> <li>• Manage recreational pressures where necessary in co-operation with the landowners.</li> <li>• Manage remnant areas of reedbed through cutting and grazing marshes through appropriate water management and stocking levels.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage and restore features such as ditches, dykes, and hedgerows in arable areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for increased access to and interpretation of Martello towers.</li> <li>• Plan the development of a military history trail connecting Felixstowe with Orford Ness and Orford and Alderton Coastal Character Areas, including evidence from the Roman period, WWII and the Cold War.</li> <li>• Plan for improved visitor information and interpretation of the shingle geomorphology and the extremely rare coastal vegetated shingle habitat.</li> <li>• Plan for the loss of key landmark features (e.g. Orford Ness Lighthouse) to coastal erosion including community involvement and recording.</li> </ul>

## E3 Felixstowe

### Location

Felixstowe is a coastal resort town, located between the Deben and Orwell estuaries.

### Constituent Types

The landscape is comprised of the urban area of Felixstowe as well as Coastal dunes and shingle ridges landscape types



### Summary Description

Felixstowe functions as both an Edwardian seaside resort and the UK's most important port - the largest container port in the country. It is a popular resort offering a sand and shingle beach, rows of colourful beach huts, and the usual range of sea side town amusements and attractions along its long promenade.

Walton was the site of the original Roman settlement of Felixstowe located on the higher land above the Deben Estuary. Walton is included in the Domesday book and for a long period was limited to a scattering of cliff top dwellings between Walton and Landguard Fort. Despite the enlargement of Felixstowe to the point that Walton is largely subsumed within the town, there is still a distinct character associated with Walton.

Felixstowe, mixes a busy urban character with the feel of the open sea. Its architecture reflects the town's heyday at the turn of the 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with street lighting, a promenade and a dilapidated pier. Between Cobbold's Point and Manor End the seafront has a traditional promenade character with formal gardens and the pier, Victorian Villas with a classic 'seaside' architecture and lines of painted beach huts.

The Dip and Brackenbury have a less urbanised character with a sandy beach banking to shingle. The concrete wall and groynes, built as sea defences, have a strong visual impact, breaking up the visual extent of the beach. Sea views are often associated with the freight from the Port of Felixstowe and the large scale of the ships provides contrast to the small scale of the inland views.

Landguard Fort, a scheduled monument and nature reserve, on the peninsula point jutting into Harwich Harbour, was constructed during the 1540s as earthworks but during the reign of James I it was further fortified as a square stone fort with bulwarks at each corner. It was essential in repelling a Dutch invasion at Felixstowe beach in 1667. The fort has been altered

and modified many times, most recently when it was used as an anti-aircraft defence during World War II. The fort is now owned by English Heritage and is open to the public during the summer months and offers extensive views out to sea and of the harbour, boats and ferries. A small shingle spit has developed at the tip of the peninsula and this is now managed as a local nature reserve and SSSI, valued for its pioneer shingle plants, vegetated shingle and breeding sites for shoreline birds.

The Port of Felixstowe carries just under 50% of the UK's containerised freight, making it one of the busiest ports in the world. It established as the UK's first container port in 1967. The continuous quay with 29 cranes along its length, huge container ships and many containers awaiting transport contrast greatly in both scale and character with the seaside town it lies adjacent to. The channels for the port are dredged and provide some of the deepest water close to the open sea of any port in Europe.

Views in this landscape are focused out to sea. In the near distance, sailing boats show white sunlit sails against the grey clouds on the horizon, while, in the distance, huge container ships and passenger ferries can be seen making their slow progress out to sea or into Felixstowe/Harwich harbour/port. Views of the large cranes associated with Felixstowe port are also visible from parts of this area.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Landguard Fort is a Scheduled Monument with a valuable role in national history; Landguard Common on the peninsula is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Felixstowe Conservation Area flanks much of the seafront and contributes to the sense of place and character as a seaside resort
- The Port of Felixstowe is the busiest container port in the country
- Archaeological evidence of early settlement of the area, with Beaker period finds at Chepstow Road and remains of Roman walls belonging to a Saxon Shore Fort, which are now eroded into the sea
- The point at Old Felixstowe has a distinctive and historic feel and provides a pleasant point for walks through the marshes,

## Condition

Sea defences on the urban beachfront have been restored and updated, combined with other improvements resulting from seafront regeneration projects. A dedicated ranger manages the Landguard Peninsula and signage for the area is improving, with more interpretation of cultural and wildlife subjects. However, pressures from recreational activity and dog walkers means there is some disturbance of fauna and flora.

Felixstowe port is undergoing expansion, resulting in increased shipping activity and also greater visual dominance in the landscape. There are also increasing offshore wind farm developments.

## Strategy Objectives

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the visual integrity of the promenade sea front and avoid inappropriate new development.</li> <li>• Protect the area on Landguard Peninsula from ad hoc urbanising influences such as unnecessary unplanned signage, so it has a more natural character.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas that are important for shoreline birds and vegetated shingle areas through controlled access.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to provide access to one of the Martello Towers along the seafront as part of the overall promenade restoration effort, and use it as a focus for interpreting the wider history of Felixstowe's development.</li> <li>• Plan for the regular removal of inorganic litter from the strandline through community action and involvement.</li> </ul>

## 15 Linstead and Framlingham Plateau

### Location

This area covers parts of the north-west fringes of the district. The southern plateaux are defined north of the Deben valley, from Kettleburgh to Saxtead and sweeping around the north of Framlingham to Cransford. There is also a small area between Dennington and Brundish, then further fingers of plateau in the far north of the district taking in Cratfield, the Linsteads and east almost to Halesworth.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely defined under the Plateau Claylands type



### Summary Description

This is a simple clayland farming landscape, that feels unified by the simple repeating pattern of large open arable fields, and smaller lush pastures, across a large and dispersed tract of very gently rolling plateau. Woodland can be scarce, but thick hedges, field boundary trees and occasional stands of poplars have regular enough presence to provide a wooded skyline through overall the landscape has a moderately open feel. The northern parts are somewhat remote and particularly lightly settled and strong historic patterns endure, only slightly weakened by 20<sup>th</sup> century development. Semi-natural areas, or areas designated for wildlife are generally absent, this is above all, long-managed, productive farming land.

The plateaux are formed of heavy clay soils, feeling very gently undulating or flat, underlain by the boulder clay deposited by the retreating ice-sheet of the Anglian Glaciation. The gently rolling form is a result of the action of regular small tributary streams that drain into the river valleys, providing relief and visual enrichment. The streams are supplied by a network of hedged drainage ditches around the heavy fields.

Land use today is dominated by cereal farming – particularly wheat, with break crops of oilseed rape and field beans. Sugar beet and vining peas are also grown. However, before land drains were invented, this used to be the dairying region of the county. Pasture is still regularly seen, eg around the Linsteads, where drainage of the land has not taken place, or on commons such as at Saxtead. Elsewhere, in the late 18th century, the spread of under-



field drainage techniques, enabled the conversion of many of these pastures into more lucrative arable units.

Pastures often cluster around settlement - villages, hamlets or individual farms – in fine-grained, ancient hedged pastures. Hedges were used to retain stock in the days before post and wire fencing and many endure today to provide visual containmen. The early intake of the fertile land here means enclosure was early, and so the underlying pattern displays a typical organic, sinuous pattern, often here with a strong relationship to the nearest water course.

Land in the far north-west, has a 'co-axial' pattern whereby pastures were arranged into long parallel units with their long axis perpendicular to the course of the streams. There are field patterns at Chediston Green and Linstead Parva where long narrow, richly hedged fields contrast strongly with the enlarged arable landscape within which they sit, and provide a strong sense of timedepth. In the tracts of drained farmland in between, the scale opens out and amalgamation has resulted in large field sizes, destroying and weakening the traditional patterns.

The area has a number of extant or former greens and commons, hamlets often have 'Green' in their name – Cookley Green, Owls Green, Maypole's Green. These tend to be found on patches of poorly drained land, which was historically of lesser value. These vary from small triangular greens at road junctions, to large village commons. Overlooked by an attractive windmill, the green at Saxtead is a well known point on the A1120, which takes a straight 'surveyor's' route through the green.

In the northern and central part of the area from Linstead Parva to Dennington woodland is notably scarce, although the southern area does have a number of small woodland blocks. There are two remaining Ancient Woodlands on the edge of the plateau – Kilderbees Grove, south of Cransford, and Parsonage Wood at Saxtead. A larger area of woodland is found on the interfluvium between two tributaries of the Blyth at Huntingfield. Although not registered as Ancient Woodland, there is a veteran tree known as Queen's Oak reportedly dating back to Elizabethan times, a picture of which appears on the village sign.

There is considerable local variation in the extent and condition of boundary hedges and trees. Sometimes hedges are straggly and gappy dominated by suckering elm. In others, they are dense and continuous and provide a strong sense of enclosure along narrow-verged lanes. Boundary oaks are regular features across the countryside. These all link together to form wooded skylines.

Settlement is relatively sparse. Apart from the NW extension of Framingham which is in this area, there are no large villages. Instead the pattern is for ancient small villages and hamlets with multiple small clusters, usually with a linear feel, arranged along a road or at a crossroads, or arranged around a Green. Villages tend to retain their traditional form and appearance, despite a moderate level of 20<sup>th</sup> century additions. Although the overall pattern remain linear and traditional, where more suburban curtilage planting has taken place it has a negative effect on the rural character. Cratfield is one such village, one plot deep, with an even mix of traditional properties and 20<sup>th</sup> century infill. The modern additions have responded well to the pattern, in terms of plot depth, and sit within well vegetated curtilages.

Farmsteads can be very isolated, and are lightly dispersed across the countryside. They generally feature Listed timber-framed buildings of at least post-medieval origin. Some are

on the sites of historic manors, such as the moated sites at Grange Farm, Chediston, Linstead Hall and Dennington Hall. Dennington Hall, is a Scheduled moated site, one of a number of moats that survive in and immediately around the parish of Dennington. There is also evidence of medieval deer park at Dennington in the 11th century, probably hosting the nobility who would ride out from nearby Framlingham Castle. Today, the Hall continues to be the basis of a large, well managed, mixed estate farm with generally unaltered enclosure patterns.

The road network is an organic shaped network that grew from the Roman roads that criss-cross the plateau. Rights of Way are seldom found in the far northern extents of the area, around Chediston, but more regularly encountered in the southern area, especially closer to the larger settlements in the adjoining valleyside landscapes.

The Suffolk vernacular is present is strongly represented in the wealth of timber framed farmhouses, and thatched cottages. Roofs tend to be tiled and traditional decorative finishes such as pargetting can be seen. Red brick and slate or pan-tiled roofs were commonly used for 19th century and later buildings. A few examples of clay lump buildings remain, whereby local clay was widely used in the 19th century for the construction of houses or barns, sometimes coated in tar to weatherproof them.

The overriding dominance of large scale, arable farming results in a homogenous and fairly open feel, where long views over the lightly wooded landscape are experienced. Away from the main roads, this can feel remote, quiet and still. Views can be long, across the gently rolling plateau and linear belts of trees, the eye occasionally resting on a church tower or a farmstead – often a red tile roof showing up in amongst the tree cover. Just a gentle increase in slope can have a profound effect on the length and composition of the view. Visual experience is often more intimate around settlement, owing to the adherence of the well vegetated, finer-grained field patterns. Often, a scene reveals a glimpse into history where a small meadow or common provides a pastoral setting to a traditional building, such as a windmill or a pargetted cottage.

## Special Qualities and Features

- This landscape forms an important rural context and setting to the scenic river valleys that penetrate its margins.
- A wealth of vernacular Suffolk architecture is seen in the timber-framed farmhouses across the plateaux, which tend to be Grade II listed but are generally less impressive than those in south Suffolk. There are a high number of moated sites, part of ancient medieval Manors, in a particular density around Dennington.
- Many small and medium-sized greens across the landscape are distinctive to this area of High Suffolk and together as setting to traditional buildings, provide a sense of time-depth. Landmark buildings such as Saxtead Windmill help provide a sense of place where associated with prominent areas of common land.
- Some particularly intact field systems, with evidence of rare 'coaxial' patterns seen in the far north-west of the district.

## Condition

There are pockets of well-preserved field systems and some large greens left which feel intact and looked after. But the systems of meadows sometimes suffer neglect through a lack of grazing, and elm dominated hedges can look scrappy where not regularly managed. Enhanced agri-environment schemes sometimes provide ecological enhancement, better with field margins and hedges managed for wildlife benefit.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the historic small-scale field patterns of the pastures and their hedge networks. Protect and increase the stock of hedgerow trees.</li> <li>• Protect, maintain and restore greens and commons.</li> <li>• Protect the settlement form and curtilage patterns in the villages from inappropriate development and disruption.</li> <li>• Protect the character of traditional farmsteads and ensure conversion or development proposals are carefully considered and pay considerable attention to the detail of form and styling. Ensure the siting of large new agricultural buildings or structures is sensitively undertaken and accompanied by effective mitigation proposals to provide integration.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the pastures through traditional grazing by cows and sheep.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for ecological enhancements in the arable land through agri-environment schemes including an increase in woodland.</li> </ul>

## J3 Blyth Estuary

### Location

The Blyth Estuary located between Blythburgh in the west to Southwold on the coast.

### Constituent Types

This character area comprises Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats, Coastal Levels and Estate Sandland types.



### Summary Description

A particularly scenic landscape where the tree-filled parkland of Henham meets the open skies of the estuary and the coast at Southwold. The reed beds, rivers, grazing marsh, mud flats and reed-filled dykes create a strong sense of place with a feeling of emptiness and tranquillity. Tourism is an important part of the local economy with visitors attracted to Southwold and Walberswick for the beaches, wildlife sites and gentile sea-side attractions.

The elevation of the area is from no more than about 15m AOD right down to sea level. Its northern limits are the A1095 along the north side of the valley, and the Walberswick Road, and the southern edge of the village, to the south. The area includes the northward branch of the estuary along the course of Buss Creek. This creek provides natural separation between the elevated positions occupied by Reydon and Southwold. The mouth of the river is heavily cannalised and flows into the sea between Southwold and Walberswick.

The sandy shallow valley sides are used for arable farming and grazing while conifer and birch woodland partially clothe the upper slopes, with remnant areas of common/heath also present. The river drained saltmarshes provide fresh water grazing areas for cattle and sheep. The ebb and flow of the tides adds a dynamic quality to the scene, along with the movement of flocks of wading birds, or the murmurations of starlings over the evening marshes. The overall effect is an atmospheric and visually pleasing juxtaposition of textures, colours and variation. Outdoor pigs are a common sight on the upper valley side to the south which have a less positive impact.

On the north side, woodland is found on the valley side in coverts or plantation strips and then along the ridgeline flanking the Wang estuary to the north of the area. In the south, there is a large area of woodland on Walberswick Common, where open areas of gorse studded

heathland are interspersed with oak and birch woodland. Recreation is important in this area and many footpaths cross the common including the long distance Sandlings Walk.

Settlement historically developed on the elevated sandy uplands along the coast, as well as at the head of the estuary. Southwold and Reydon are a similar size and sit either side of Buss Creek. The much smaller Walberswick village sits on the mouth of the River Blyth.

Southwold has significant Victorian architecture including a promenade, villas and pier, reflecting its growth as a seaside resort. It is known for its sandy beach (a rarity for Suffolk's coastal resorts) attractive greens, colourful beach huts, and promenade which sees high visitor numbers in summer. It is also famously home of the Sole Bay brewery – home of Adnams plc. Second homes/holiday rental homes, which make up an estimated 50% of dwellings, stand empty much of the year are an issue for sustaining local communities.

Walberswick retains a more low key, village character with an attractive green and a more natural beach, although large car parks bring congestion and make it a crowded spot in summer. Its black-clad harbour buildings are particularly distinctive. It is well known destination for families partaking in the local pastime of crabbing in the creek with line and bucket. The old foot-ferry row boat is a familiar sight in summer months, battling across the fast tidal flow to carry people to Southwold Harbour, today an attractively ramshackle collection of fishing huts, but once a thriving harbour.

The area has notable historical significance, linked with its strategic coastal position. Blythburgh was probably an Anglo-Saxon royal residence and reputed to have been the burial place of King Anna of the East Angles in AD 654. There is also evidence of Roman salterns (salt-making areas) along the northern edge of the estuary.

Lookouts and elevated positions across this landscape have been important throughout the centuries; in prehistory tumuli were located on the ridge overlooking the Blyth estuary. More recent history includes military activity; there is evidence from pill boxes along the coast and particularly at The Denes south of Southwold, where gun emplacements and lookouts were established during WWII.

The Blyth estuary itself has seen much alteration over the centuries, some naturally occurring processes of shifting sand and shingle, and some by man to improve navigation, prevent flooding and drain the saltmarshes for grazing. West of the A12 the Blyth retains its historical meandering course, the tidal flow restricted by the Blythburgh bridge. Then, east of the A12, the estuary is very wide, with a meandering low water channel, only partly restrained by the old, now abandoned flood defences. Further east, the channel flows through a series of curves, with erosive action on each side of the estuary and its flood banks. By the time it reaches Tinkers and Reydon marshes it flows through a relatively straight narrow channel, past Southwold Harbour to the little headland where it meets the sea. Flooding is a growing concern with rising sea levels and the A12 a vulnerable point in the transport network.

The visual experience is highly scenic and extensive from the elevated sandy farmland fringes and the lower lying wetlands there are extensive scenic views of the estuary and marshes, interspersed with areas of greater enclosure formed by mixed woodland and forestry. Here the changing view of open water at high tide and mudflats at low tide, with snaking remnant flood defences criss-crossing the area, is memorable. From these elevated locations there is a real sense of place and openness as well as a remote and isolated character; the extensive areas of inaccessible saltmarsh and water help to reinforce this feeling.

## Special Qualities and Features

- High scenic quality to the undeveloped valleysides and extensive wetland landscapes gives the estuary a strong sense of timelessness and naturalness.
- Memorable and distinctive mix of historic settlement, grazing marsh and areas of heath, common and woodland. Opportunities for elevated views over the natural habitats.
- Historically significant remnant sea defences and drainage ditches create visual layers of activity across the estuary reflecting different periods of reclamation and inundation
- Significant nature conservation importance: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserve (NNR), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar (conservation of wetlands) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designations;
- Blythburgh Priory is a Scheduled Monument
- Landmarks include Blythburgh Church, Southwold lighthouse and the water towers and churches at Southwold and Walberswick.
- The northernmost limits of the Sandlings long distance footpath passes from Walberswick Common to the banks of the Blyth, and back south along the beach.

## Condition

The condition of this landscape is significantly influenced by the effects of the sea and inundation. Future breaches are likely and will mean the loss of productive farmland on drained marshes as well as loss of grazing marshes. Management of existing sea defences along the Blyth River helps to delay such losses.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the variety of views across the estuary.</li> <li>• Protect the historic character of the villages and coastal settlement from inappropriate development which is visually intrusive on the estuary.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage marshes and consider inundation and restoration of natural processes where opportunities arise.</li> <li>• Manage, where appropriate, existing old clay sea defence walls to ensure longevity.</li> <li>• Manage former common and heathland habitat which occurs on upper slopes.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan further research and excavation of the river waterfront, telling the story of the changing coastline here.</li> <li>• Plan interpretation, telling the story of the changing face of the estuary through visible evidence in the landscape, e.g. pattern of old sea walls, salterns and harbour, churches and ports and the use of pillboxes as interpretation points and lookouts.</li> </ul>

## J4 Alde Estuary

### Location

This inland estuary landscape comprises the eastward flowing river valley of the Alde from Snape Maltings in the west to Slaughden on the coast. South of Slaughden the area is described under character area D5 'Orfordness and Marshes'.

### Constituent Types

The area is complex and includes five landscape types - Valley Meadowlands, Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats, Coastal levels, Estate Sandlands and Rolling Estate Sandlands type.



### Summary Description

The Alde Estuary is a distinctive landscape with a strong sense of place focused on the broadly meandering river as it flows east towards the sea, with tidal waters bringing constant flux to the landscape. Unusually the estuary does not connect directly into the sea here, as it once did, but is forced to turn 90 degrees and flow parallel to the coast, past Orford Ness where it becomes the River Ore. The area is defined by the broad and gentle, shallow valley sides which sometimes feature notable promontories on the inside bends of the river, that extend down into the mudflats. The valley sides are rolling arable farmland, with areas of remnant heath and woodland.

The soils on the valley sides are free-draining sandy soils, overlying crag sands. On the valley floor, underlying the marshes, there are alluvial deposits of marine origin.

Along the estuary, land use is a mix of semi-natural habitat and farmland, arable on the upper slopes and some arable and meadow on the drained salt marsh. Saltmarsh is extensive within the estuary, particularly east of Iken where the estuary broadens out, supporting both pasture and arable uses. On the northern banks, there is heathland, the southern fringe of Snape Warren, and a large block of broadleaf woodland fills the valleyside at Black Heath Woods. A large red brick mansion occupies a river side position in the middle of the wood. A wild marshy creek is found at Ham Creek on the northern side of the estuary, just east of Blah Heath Wood.

Apart from the Black Heath Woods, smaller woodlands are found at intervals along the valleyside. There are poplar stands near Snape, which have substantial skyline impact, scattered woodland along the edges of heathland, and small strips and coverts elsewhere. Ancient woodland is generally absent apart from a small pocket - Iken Wood in the far SW corner of the area. It is a biological SSSI, the listing for which declares it 'the most interesting example of lowland coppice oakwood in Suffolk' and has a distinctive flora typical of woods on light soils including holly and rowan amongst its huge oak standards.



There is a mixed enclosure pattern along the estuary. The sandland valleysides in the west were typically enclosed late – post 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the drained coastal levels were useful for grazing and enclosure earlier. Where there is the straight edged geometry of late enclosure patterns there is a marked contrast with the irregular, semi-wild feel of the river edge and the tree scattered heathland. In the levels, there is a more sinuous pattern to the field boundaries on the marshes where natural drainage patterns define irregular field shapes.

Settlement in the area is limited to dispersed farmsteads on the valleysides and the former port at Snape Maltings, which is now the venue for Aldeburgh music festival and has a concentration of upmarket shops and is key visitor destination in the area. Closer to Aldeburgh the north side of the estuary becomes more ordered and domestic in character with houses in extensive grounds set overlooking the river.

Snape was the port at the head of the river, historically important for receiving coal and manure to distribute via inland waterways. With its distinctive malting buildings, it now has a well known cultural focus and is the Site of the annual Aldeburgh Music Festival and Aldeburgh Food Festival has a concentration of quirky and upmarket shops.

The history of the landscape can be read in the remnant sea defences and drainage ditches that reflect different periods of inundation and retreat. A former line of river sea walls snake across the expanse of water and mudflats and older historic evidence in the form of Roman salterns (salt-making sites) can be found along the river edge.

The views can be open and wide, and there is often a profound sense of exposure, enhanced when the sea is close at hand. On the inland side the rising land, and the trees on it, tend to confine the views. A key feature in this broad landscape is the church tower of Iken, which sits as a lonely landmark on a shallow promontory in the estuary, surrounded by trees. On the shallow valley sides above sits the woodland copse of Yarn Hill, distinctive on the skyline, while from upper slopes of the southern shores of the river there are views northwards across the estuary to a line of pylons that signals the proximity of Sizewell power station.

The quietness of the Alde is interrupted only by the sound of reeds in the breeze, or birdsong. The broad expanse of the estuary, lack of settlement, limited accessibility across the estuary except at Snape and expansive views from the valley sides give this landscape a strong sense of remoteness and isolation.

## Special Qualities and Features

- This is a particularly quiet and tranquil part of the district. Notable perceptions include the sound of reeds in the breeze, or birdsong. The broad expanse of the estuary, lack of settlement, limited accessibility across the estuary except at Snape and expansive views from the valley sides give this landscape a strong sense of remoteness and isolation.
- This character area is entirely within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.
- The Alde Estuary is covered by a number of national and European designations and has a number of nature reserves focusing on breeding and wintering wetland birds– it is a biological and geological Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation, a Ramsar internationally important wetland site, and a Special Protection Area.
- Hazelwood Marshes is one of Suffolk's last undrained grazing marshlands
- Snape Maltings is a well known and important cultural centre and visitor attraction

## Condition

The key habitats are currently well managed by wildlife organisations and represent high quality natural and semi-natural environments. But this is an area of dynamism and significant future change is anticipated with coastal breaching and inundation. Productive grazing marshes may be lost due to inundation, and creation of new mudflat and saltmarsh habitat could also result. At the same time, mud flats and saltings are eroding, in part due to the rise in sea level.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect open views across the estuary from inappropriate development.</li> <li>• Protect views to key landmarks such as Iken Church.</li> <li>• Protect the quiet, rural character of lanes, avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, widening, lighting or the introduction of roundabouts, all of which undermine the essential 'back-water' qualities of the area.</li> <li>• Protect the estuary landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area e.g. from new tall vertical features such as masts or turbines or new urban development.</li> <li>• Protect important habitats and bird populations from disturbance through careful management of recreation and access.</li> <li>• Protect sensitive valleyside landscape from potentially intrusive tourism related uses.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of effective sea defenses, including the possibility of 'landscaping' at Slaughden.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to explore and interpret the history of the estuary as an example of an area where the tidal envelope has changed significantly over time, helping to inform planning for the future.</li> <li>• Plan for 'managed retreat' of estuarine habitats (saltmarsh and mudflat) onto suitable areas of reclaimed land behind the current sea wall where the landowner is in agreement.</li> </ul>

## J5 Deben Estuary

### Location

This area covers the lower half of the Deben downriver from Wilford Bridge. South-east from Woodlbridge, the estuary takes in Waldringfield and Ramsholt, Shottisham and Alderton and terminates at the mouth of the river at Bawdsey/Old Felixstowe.

### Constituent Types

The area includes several landscape types of the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment - Coastal levels, Saltmarsh and intertidal flats, Valley meadowlands, Rolling valley Meadowland and furze, Rolling Estate Sandlands, and Coastal dunes and shingle ridges.



### Summary Description

The character area comprises a complex mix of landscape types across the valley sides and bottom of the Deben Estuary, parts of which have a particularly empty, unspoilt and tranquil feel. The range and strength of the tide makes for a dynamic tidal landscape in constant flux between the expanse of reflective water seen at high tide and the contrast at low water when large tracts of mudflats, snaking channels and islands are revealed.

The Estuary's meandering river channel is lined with saltmarsh and intertidal mud flats, the intertidal mudflats and marshes are a result of the tidal flow which pours in and out of the narrow estuary mouth at a considerable rate. The estuary contains some 40% of Suffolk's saltmarsh.

The intertidal zone is flanked by an expansive area of Coastal Levels in its lower reaches. The levels are remote, flat, drained marshlands predominately under arable cultivation, with some pasture, such as on the inlets at Shottisham Creek and Ramsholt. The levels are an important part of the mosaic of habitats important to breeding and visiting estuarine bird species and are included in the SPA and RAMSAR designation that covers the estuary. They are divided by networks of sinuous drainage channels or straight man-made ditches. Together with the open fields which sweep down from the valley slopes they create an open and expansive landscape across Bawdsey Marshes to the north and Felixstowe Marshes to the south giving rise to a real sense of remoteness.

The narrower, upper reaches around Woodbridge are lined on the east side by relatively natural areas of salt marsh, which form a backdrop to the mud flats at low tide and its host of wading birds.

The lower reaches of the channel are constrained by embankment flood defences which often constrain views to the channel. Further inland, where the river defences are less constraining and have failed in places, there is evidence of inundation, with areas of saltmarsh and mudflat habitat recreated. The area south of Waldringfield is a good example of this. Here, dead oak trees along the estuarine shore illustrate the sudden change in salinity.

Away from the silty river channel, which consists of marine alluvium and some outcrops of clay forming mud flats and creeks, the landscape type on the valley sides is rolling estate sandlands. These are formed over crag deposits of sand and gravel laid down during the Pliocene period. The soils are light and sandy, often remaining as remnant heathland on the upper margins, where not under arable use. Arable use focuses on cereals and oil seed rape, and vegetable and potato crops.

The underlying enclosure patterns are deeply organic where they relate to the drainage patterns and the meandering paths taken by water on its passage to the sea. But over this, the effect of estate farming is appreciable with much regularisation of field boundaries taken place to form large rectilinear fields in places. This is an estate feel landscape, with large estates such as the nearby Broxstead Estate maintaining woodlands and managing farmland in large regular units. Fields are divided by hedges of hawthorn with hedgerow oaks or pine shelterbelts.

Woodland is present in moderate quantities on the valleyside and topping the plateau edge, particularly on the east side of the estuary where a repeating pattern of arable fields and woodland is seen between Sutton Hoo and Ramsholt. Larger blocks beyond the valleysides, just outside the area are also part of the scene and form the skyline. Trees also feature in lines, set within the geometric Sandlands field pattern. Lines of Scots pine are also seen on promontories and areas of shallow cliffs, where the river has undercut the banks. The skyline is generally wooded.

The area has a long history of settlement, evident not least from the important Anglo-Saxon finds at nearby Rendlesham and Sutton Hoo. The pretty market town of Woodbridge sits at the head of the estuary across the steep valleyside on the bend of the river and is the largest town in Suffolk Coastal. The historic quay, with its white clapperboard malting buildings and Tide Mill, set against a backdrop of sailing vessels and house boats moored there, is iconic, making a significant contribution to the character and focus of this part of the estuary, despite concrete flood defences along the channel edge. The church tower of St. Mary's and the spire of St. Johns emerge from the well wooded roofscape that ascends the valleyside to form landmarks. Views out from Woodbridge are focused on the rural, wooded valleyside opposite, which forms an attractive backdrop to the estuary itself and are a key component of the town's character.

Away from Woodbridge, settlement is found in occasional dispersed, linear villages on the valley sides. Otherwise roads and settlement are usually absent. The villages are not prominent in views of the estuary, as they are set back from the river - Waldringfield, Martlesham Creek, Ramsholt and others are largely hidden from view, but may be picked out by the clusters of boats anchored midstream in the estuary. The foreshore at Waldringfield, dominated by The Maybush Inn, and the isolated Ramsholt Arms at Ramsholt contribute positively and provide points of interest with a historic feel along the river's bends.

Farmsteads dot the valleyside at intervals, often accessed by private tracks as a road network here is largely absent. This tranquil and scenic setting gives rise to high property values and gentrification and pressure on farm buildings for conversion.

Villages usually have a nucleus but also take a linear form, and the open countryside is never much further away than the rear boundary of most properties. This narrow grain to the villages is a key characteristic.

Vernacular buildings include a few 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed buildings such as the Sorrel Horse Inn and nearby Shottisham Hall, finished in coloured render. Other vernacular features includes red brick cottages, and black weatherboard found on barns and out buildings, with pan tiles above. White weatherboarding is also seen around Woodbridge and Melton and white bargeboards are found on the ends of tiled or slate roofs. Distinctive detailing can be found such as 'crow-stepped' gable profiles and hoodmold window adornments.

Buildings can sometimes have quite an impact as part of the scene, for example the row of cottages at Felixstowe Ferry seen in views towards the mouth of the river, or Ramsholt Church seen from the river sitting in a scattering of pine trees on the skyline. In views around the central reaches of the estuary, the top of the BT tower at Martlesham Heath can be seen on the skyline to the west which don't make such a positive contribution.

Settlements are a focus for recreational marine activity. Melton and Woodbridge have boat yards and a marina, a row of houseboats and moorings. All the way to the river's mouth at Felixstowe Ferry moorings are scattered along the channel and sounds of wind blown rigging on masts can be heard. Movement of boats along the channel is a common sight.

The visual experience is highly scenic – distinctive and dynamic vistas of water, mud and sky fringed by unspoilt wooded and farmed valleysides. Perceptions of tranquillity and remoteness, as well as timedepth, are strong.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Very distinctive scenic estuary landscape with a strong sense of place, highly valued for recreation on and alongside the river. Its walks, heritage, pubs, and views are well known to Suffolk residents and visitors from further afield. The area plays a key role in tourism in this part of Suffolk.
- Fynn Valley long distance footpath enter the character area at Martlesham Creek and heads north along the quayside at Woodbridge.
- The Deben Estuary is covered by a number of national and European designations and has a number of nature reserves focusing on breeding and wintering wetland birds– it is a biological and geological Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation, a Ramsar internationally important wetland site, and a Special Protection Area.
- The estuary is valued for boating and recreation, and boats moored in the channel are a common feature of the river views.
- Sutton Hoo is a royal burial site dating from the 6th and early 7th century which sits atop the valleyside opposite Woodbridge, on the head of the estuary. The site is thought to be the cemetery for the royal dynasty of East Anglia, who were buried with a wealth of beautiful Anglo-Saxon artefacts, first discovered in 1939. The site was of huge importance for furthering understand of the Anglo-Saxon period and much of the treasures found have pride of place in the British Museum. The site is run by the



National Trust and provides a network of scenic walks from its car park as well as its popular visitor centre and café. The barrow system has partially restored and the area is designated a Scheduled Monument.

- Conservation Areas at Woodbridge and Melton and Shottisham, indicate the wealth of historic buildings in local settlements.

## Condition

Habitats have been altered through inundation of seawater, largely due to unmanaged historical breaches. Footpaths along the estuary and flood defence banks are also being lost due to breaches and inundation.

The low-lying marshes are very vulnerable to rising water levels and there is some loss of saltmarsh habitat due to coastal 'squeeze'. The drainage of coastal marshes to create productive agricultural land has also put further pressure on saltmarsh habitats.

The development of tall structures outside of this character area may have an adverse visual and landscape impact on this estuary, as views are so far-reaching.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the unique and distinctive landscape, natural habitats and heritage of the Deben Estuary.</li> <li>• Protect the strong sense of tranquility and avoid inappropriate recreational development or development beyond the estuary which may have a significant visual impact affecting perceptions of the area.</li> <li>• Protect the pattern of hedgerow oaks on the valley sides through appropriate management of trees and encourage the planting of new hedgerow trees.</li> <li>• Protect the pattern of woodland on estuary valley sides, including wooded horizons and groups of Scots pine on headland promontories.</li> <li>• Protect the estuary from new development where effects cannot be mitigated, and from inappropriate conversion or modernization of farmsteads where it might cause loss of character and have adverse impact on the riverscape.</li> <li>• Protect the estuary from the development of tall structures on the adjacent plateaus which may have an adverse visual and landscape impact on this estuary, as views are so far-reaching.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of arable farmland where reversion to grazing marsh is not desirable; restore features such as ditches, dykes, and hedgerows and ensure their continued value as important feeding and roosting areas for waterfowl species.</li> <li>• Manage small wet grassland areas adjacent to the estuary, which are an important supporting habitat to the SPA, although not designated.</li> <li>• Manage and maintain river walls and other estuarine flood defences.</li> <li>• Manage responsible access to the estuary – enhancing the quality of people's enjoyment of the area while averting harm to, and mitigating against degradation of, the estuary environment.</li> </ul>

**Plan**

- Plan for the future maintenance and / or improvement of estuary defenses through the development of a co-ordinated strategy via the Deben Estuary Partnership.
- Plan to restore saltmarsh especially where scour from historical damage to sea walls has damaged the vegetation.

## J6 Orwell Estuary

### Location

This character area comprises the northern shore of the Orwell Estuary from the Orwell Bridge in the west, to the western edge of Felixstowe in the east, and includes the village of Levington and the southern fringes of Nacton.

### Constituent Types

This comprises four landscape types - Rolling estate sandlands, Plateau estate farmlands, Valley Meadowlands, Coastal levels.



### Summary Description

This area is a rich and scenic landscape made up of the mosaic of habitat and land uses from the muddy flats below the shoreline, to the farmed landscapes on the plateau edge. The character of the valleysides also transitions from the urban edge of Ipswich, here dominated by the Orwell Bridge overhead, through farmland and parkland to marshland that fringes Felixstowe docks. The visual experience usually includes the well wooded opposite shore and associated points of interest such as the boats moored at Woolverstone and Pin Mill, or landmark features such as Freston Tower.

The shores of the Orwell lie almost entirely within the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB. The estuary adjacent is ecologically highly sensitive and protected under European habitat designations. The predominate geology is London Clay, sands and gravels and alluvium giving rise to deep permeable coarse loamy soils which are slowly permeable in places.

The estuary is long and narrow, generally orientated west-east for much of its length, but taking an abrupt southwards turn between Levington and Trimley. The containment provided by the enclosing valleysides provides a well defined, strong sense of place and local identity. Banks start off steep in the upper part of the estuary at Bridge Wood and become shallower downstream. Here, the banks are more engineered with flood defence embankments enclosing Trimley Marshes and Levington Creek.

The shoreline is a more or less continuous narrow beach, sometimes under eroding mud cliffs with undermined tree roots exposed. The tidal character gives this landscape a dynamic quality as views change from the mudflats exposed at low tides, to the wide expanse of open water at high tide.

Landuses are mixed and reflect the proximity of Ipswich and Felixstowe at either end, giving this estuary a less tranquil feel than any of the smaller estuaries to the north-east. The substantial Orwell Bridge is one of Suffolk's most identifiable landmarks. It crosses the estuary in a very dominating, but reasonably elegant, way and noise from its busy carriageways carries down river and is a constant in the west part of this area. To the east, the vast scale of cranes at the port of Felixstowe, immediately adjacent to this landscape, have a visual impact and create interesting views.

Land use on the valleysides in between comprise a patchwork of arable land interspersed by areas of woodland, wood pasture and parkland associated with country houses which occur along the valley sides e.g. Orwell Park, Broke Hall, and Stratton Hall. There are recreational land uses closer to Ipswich – Orwell Country Park, a caravan park, a golf course. To the east there is Suffolk Yacht Harbour and fringes/pockets of saltmarsh. There is a large artificially created block at Trimley Marsh, created during the 1990s from former farmland, to compensate natural habitat lost during construction of the docks.

Patterns on the lower slopes are sometimes small and fragmentary, and organic in shape, especially where the slopes are complex. Where the form is more simple larger fields are found. This trend for higher up towards the plateau edge. Well drained areas on the upper slopes are important for barley, potatoes, vegetables, and vining peas where irrigation is use.

Woodland is found in several forms. There are ancient woodlands at Stratton Hall and a large block at Bridge Wood which contains a famous veteran oak tree. Such woodland often reaches right down to overhang the shoreline. Along the shore, the mudbanks erode from beneath slowly claiming shoreline trees, dramatically revealing overhanging root systems.

There is a record of medieval deer park in the area but the appearance of the parkland at Orwell Park, and Broke Hall is 18<sup>th</sup> century in original, at the time of the trend for the wealthy to create 'natural' wood pastures around their grand country houses.

Settlement in this area is dispersed along the valleyside in the form of two denucleated villages, both with a well vegetated character. Nacton, which is mainly on the adjacent plateau, Levington, and the hamlet of Stratton Hall, along with a few farms, such as Stratton Hall farm itself. These villages have a strung out linear form, with infilling and village extensions adding to the historic settlement pattern of scattered houses. The 20<sup>th</sup> century additions do not always contribute positively and make for an indistinct character.

Local vernacular building materials include red brick, pantiles, slate and colour washed plaster. Distinctive in Nacton are the collection of estate houses and cottages within the village that are built of red brick, with gault brick banding, and each marked out by its green barge boards on gable ends and over the dormers, and cream painted sash windows. These are associated with the Home Farm estate. New housing on the village edge has sought to replicate this character and used green bargeboards, perhaps with not quite the same degree of success. There are also gault brick houses with slate roofs.

The visual and noise intrusion of the Orwell Bridge/traffic, river craft, and the cranes at Felixstowe docks undermine the tranquillity in places but much of the estuary remains a very scenic, peaceful and distinctive place for quiet recreation, wildlife watching, walking, or boating.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The majority of the area falls within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB designation and is valued for its natural beauty, recreation opportunities and sailing culture.
- Rare and internationally important coastal habitats with many layers of designation -

SSSI designation for natural shoreline and rich intertidal flats and saltings rich in invertebrates, and SPA and Ramsar site designations for wetland habitat and wildfowl/wading birds

- Two 18th century parks overlook the Orwell Estuary: Orwell Park and Broke Hall, the latter having a landscape designed by Humphry Repton (Red Book of c.1792). These are designated 'Parks or Gardens of Historic or Landscape Interest' by SDC and covered by woodland TPOs. Some exceptional veteran trees in ancient woodland.
- Area important for recreation, particularly linking Ipswich through Orwell Country Park and along the shoreline under Bridge Wood and eastwards at Nacton and Levington – collectively forming the Stour and Orwell long distance path. There is good parking and footpath access is provided at Brooke Hall, Bridge Wood and Trimley Marshes.
- Trimley Marshes reserve, created from farmland in 1990s, is now an important wetland site for birds and offers walks from its car park.

## Condition

The condition is generally good with intact semi-natural landscapes in many places, well managed parklands and well looked after estate farmland. There is some pressure from recreation.

Views are far-reaching such that the area is impacted by tall vertical structures beyond i.e. cranes at port of Felixstowe.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the quiet, rural character of lanes, avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, widening, lighting or the introduction of roundabouts, all of which undermine the essential 'back-water' qualities of the area.</li> <li>• Protect the landscape features and elements which contribute to the significance of the estate and parkland landscapes and avoid cumulative adverse impacts through ad hoc changes.</li> <li>• Protect the estuary landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area e.g. from new tall vertical features such as masts or turbines or new urban development on the Shotley Peninsula Plateau.</li> <li>• Protect important habitats and bird populations from disturbance through careful management of recreation and access.</li> <li>• Protect sensitive valleyside landscape from potentially intrusive leisure uses - golf courses, holiday complexes, and caravan sites.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and coppicing through appropriate woodland management regimes.</li> <li>• Manage the erosion of the mud banks south of Bridge Wood.</li> <li>• Record and survey veteran trees seeking management which prolongs life and monitor gradual loss and potential replacement by maturing trees in future.</li> </ul>



**Plan**

- Plan for the replanting of veteran trees and careful management of maturing trees in order to retain their contribution to landscape character.
- Plan for the long term realignment of the coast along Shotley/Trimley Marshes with some re-creation of mudflats and saltmarsh in areas previously reclaimed in accordance with the Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan2 (October 2010).
- Plan for the re-creation of former areas of heathland and extension of areas of existing heathland where appropriate.
- Work with the Stour and Orwell Management Group to address coastal change.

## K2 Dunwich and Westleton sandlands

### Location

A series of coastal plateaux north of Minsmere, inland as far as Westleton, then north almost to Walberswick.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Estate Sandlands type



### Summary Description

The distinguishing features of this area are its large tracts of forest and the important remnant areas of heathland and wooded heath, all with a very strong Sandlands character. These are interspersed with farmland, often outdoor pigs.

The area occupies a belt of gentle coastal slopes between the clayland plateau to the west and the coastline to the east, its form indented on the east side by low-lying coastal levels of the Walberswick Nature Reserve and the Dingle Marshes (Area D2) which, in association with the important adjoining coastal wetlands, are covered by multiple designations for wildlife.

Its free draining soils overlie drift deposits. The character of the soils is mixed and varies from finer grained loamy sands to courser sands. Sands are constantly encountered, lying along the lanes in drifts, where it has eroded from the verges, or seen in profiles of disused sand pits, e.g. east of Hinton Hall.

Topography can be more varied where occasional small rivers have denuded through the easily eroded mineral deposit. The upper reaches of the Dunwich River create a fold in the plateau, as does the small stream of a tributary of the Blyth in the north at Thorington. Owing to the free draining nature of the soil, water courses are otherwise scarce. After rainfall, standing water can be seen in pools in farmland where pigs are being kept, resulting from the effects of poaching.

Much of this landscape was previously managed as lowland heath, over many centuries, as it was too marginal to be of use to farming. It was used as common sheep grazing and for rabbit warrening. The landscape then underwent rapid change with the advancement of agricultural practices such as irrigation in the 20th century and large areas were converted to farmland. Today the area is important for barley, vegetables and, prominently, outdoor pigs.

Several areas of remnant heathlands are still found here. The larger heaths are found at Dunwich, Westleton and Walberswick, as well as some smaller areas - 'Commons' and 'Walks' between Bythburgh and Westleton. Altogether, these have great importance owing to their rarity and comprise the largest surviving tracts of heathland in east Suffolk.

The vegetation associated with the sandlands can be seen throughout - acid-grasses and heathers on the heaths, now often invaded with bracken and birch. Roadsides with wide verges support oaks, often with a repressed, craggy look, and scots pine and hawthorn. Hedgerows are mostly hawthorn and blackthorn, and bramble, but there is much elm, which is not managed very frequently. In the south, there is a large area of woodland on Walberswick Common, where open areas of gorse-studded heathland are interspersed with oak and birch woodland. The landscape feels reactively wooded.

Dunwich Forest is approximately 270ha and was planted over former heathland in the 1920s and is now a mixed conifer and broadleaf forest. Much of Dunwich Forest is being transformed from a conifer plantation into a mix of woodpasture, wet woodland and lowland heathland in the southern area, in a partnership between the Forestry Commission, the RSPB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust. It features traditional management techniques such as grazing by Dartmoor ponies. The forest has a presence in views towards the north-west as a long dark line on the horizon.

Settlement is limited in the area, confined to a couple of villages, and only a scant number of hamlets and farms. The villages comprise Westleton inland and Dunwich on the coast – both pretty and traditional villages. Dunwich has an isolated position on a peninsula of slightly higher ground between the coast to the south-east and Dunwich River to the north. It features two clusters of development, the southern cluster is in this character area, (the northern is in D3).

Westleton village and Westleton Common, overlap one another on gently undulating land. The village retains a strong traditional character dominated by vernacular buildings. Its traditional form was a linear arrangement one plot deep around a web of roads that meet at a small green at its centre, disrupted only by the addition of a small suburban estate of late 20<sup>th</sup> century houses and bungalows to the south-west at Grange View. The centre of the village, overlooked by cottages and the garage, with the church and pub close by, has a very attractive appearance. It has undergone a certain amount of 20th century infill and extension but retains its historic feel. Greenspaces create setting for the built form, and structures such as brick and flint walls, workshops, storage and ancillary buildings add to its distinctive the overall character of the village. Its centre focuses on a village green which has an attractive pond at the southern end.

The area has been long settled given local archaeological evidence which Bronze Age finds, tumuli and ring ditches and some Roman and Saxon pottery finds. Dunwich was probably the site of a Roman coastal fort. It grew to become, by 1086 one of the ten largest settlements in England. A series of storms took place in the middle ages which gradually washed away the town and caused its harbour to silt up. Its church was the last building to be lost, disappearing over the cliff edge in 1919. This strong sense of history helps draw visitors the area. Fables of church bells heard ringing under the sea at Dunwich are well known. There are also atmospheric ruins of a Franciscan Monastery adjoining Monastery Hill one of three Scheduled Monuments in the village, although this too may soon be lost to the sea.

Traditional buildings in Westleton and Dunwich provide examples of vernacular architecture. Red Brick, sometimes infilled with flint or pebble panels, and rendered cottages are dominant, and other materials with a coastal feel are seen such as flint pebbles. Houses with distinctive Dutch gables are seen and decorative white bargeboards are common. Roofs are either

pantile or plain and occasionally thatched. The schoolhouse in Westleton has an attractive combination of small flint pebble walls and white brick dressings.

Common to the sandlands, roads tend to be straight. Here, a surveyor-derived grid-like geometry, with a more or less north-south/east-west orientation, overlies the landscape. The roads often have deep verges, filled with shrubby mixes of gorse, bracken, small trees hawthorn and elm. As well as the road network, the forestry compartments, and farmland boundaries echo the grid-like pattern. Straight edges also tend to define the heathlands, even though along the boundaries and internally they have a soft, textured semi-wildness that contrasts with the uniformity and geometry.

Recreation is important in this area and Dunwich Forest and Westleton Heath have a number of car-parks and picnic areas. The long distance Suffolk Coast Path passes along the eastern side of Dunwich Forest, and the Sandlings Walk passes through close to the western edge. There is a good network of other public rights of way near the villages, as well as access to the heaths.

A range of perceptual experiences are possible from open expansive views across large featureless arable fields, to very enclosed views around the forests or wooded heaths which can have a rather wild feel. Everywhere the feel is somewhat semi-natural, with shrubby hedges, and deep verges lining the lanes. The feel is very different to the more controlled and managed order of the clayland farmlands. Much seasonal change and colour transitions take place, from the flush of purple and yellow from heather and gorse in flower, white birch trunks revealed in winter, and swathes of bracken changing from acid green in spring to reddish-brown in the winter.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Much of the eastern half the area, east of the B1125, is in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.
- The area is important as it accommodates the largest surviving tracts of Heathland in east Suffolk. Much of the eastern half of the area is designated within the Minsmere-Walberwick RAMSAR, SAC, SPA and SSSI demonstrating its international importance in terms of habitat and wildlife.
- The area is important contributor to the economy and culture of Suffolk's coastal zone, providing active recreation in its commons, woods and quiet lanes. Visitors flock through the area into Dunwich in the summer months.
- Westleton and Dunwich (see also D3) are covered by Conservation Areas that recognise the quality of their traditional buildings, and their relationship with open greens and open spaces, in wider heathland landscape settings.
- Dunwich displays military heritage from defensive military interventions during WWII including the placement of extensive minefields and barbed wire. Some relics remain, such as the pill boxes and ant-tank cubes.
- Grade II\* remains of the Greyfriars Monastery adjoining Monastery Hill, Dunwich. Mainly walling with a couple of gateways, this is also a Scheduled Monument.

## Condition

Although the heathland character is strong, the heaths are often not in good condition and are often overrun with invasive species such as bracken. A marginal feel persists in areas where there is a lot of unmanaged elm in the verges and hedges. Where hedges are lacking in

tracts of farmland the landscape can feel featureless. Outdoor pigs can be visually detracting and a departure from the traditional appearance of the landscape.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the remaining heathlands from further loss or reduction in area.</li> <li>• Protect sensitive valleyside landscape from potentially intrusive leisure uses - golf courses, holiday complexes, and caravan sites.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the heathlands to ensure retention and conservation of the remnants that remain. Manage bracken encroachment. Consider how to prevent indirect effects resulting from adjacent land use changes such as increase in recreational pressure.</li> <li>• Manage proliferation of further leisure and tourist related land uses (eg golf courses, caravan parks) especially in the quieter areas of the character area to avoid the profound direct and indirect impacts can result.</li> <li>• Manage populations of woodlark and nightjar in the forests through a combination of clearfell forestry management and heathland reversion.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the recreation of heathland or extension of existing heathlands.</li> <li>• Plan for diversification of forest tree species to develop resilience against tree disease.</li> </ul>

## K3 Aldringham and Friston sandlands

### Location

The area is a coastal strip forming south of Minsmere to Thorpeness and Aldeburgh, then fans out to wrap under the south side of Leiston and spreads westwards to Knodishall, Friston and Snape. The edge of the Ore valley defines the area to the south and west.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Estate Sandlands landscape type



### Summary Description

This area is distinguished by its 'Sandlings' character and its relationship with the coast and its popular resorts. For the most part, this is flat and gently rolling farmland, regularly interspersed with small woodlands, and strips, and oak studded field boundaries. About half of the area lies within the Suffolk Coast and heaths AONB and this part of the coast is familiar and highly valued by visitors. Pockets of heathland and woodlands exist alongside large-scale intensive agriculture, with leisure and tourism featuring heavily near the coast.

It comprises the flat and gently rolling southern facing slopes that form the transition between the plateau of clay to the north and west, and the low lying Coastal Levels and Valley Meadowlands of the Ore valley to the south. Land rises from just above sea level to the plateau edge at 15-20m AOD. The soils are the freely-draining sandy acidic soils found along the Suffolk Coast, overlying red crag which is formed of shelly-sand and silt deposits.

Much of this landscape was previously managed as lowland heath, over many centuries, as it was too marginal to be of use to farming. It was used as common sheep grazing and for rabbit warrening. The landscape then underwent rapid change with the advancement of agricultural practices, such as irrigation, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is heathland at North Warren, Aldringham Common, The Walks, and Thorpeness Common, Names such as The Walks in Aldringham, references the old practice of walking sheep through the grasslands. These are varied in their composition. There are patches of sand sedge and heather, dispersed within acid grassland and associated flora, with gorse and bracken invading in



some areas. The heaths are important for rare birds such as wood lark and night jar, and the woodlands support nightingale, bull finch, and tree pipits.

Tourism is contained at Aldeburgh and Thorpeness. Some related land uses spill into the countryside, such as car parks and the two golf courses. Along the Aldringham Road to the north-west low density plots spread out along the B1122, continuously linking Aldringham to Aldeburgh. This road has a distinctive character whereby the ribbon development is set within the structure of the pine-heavy, wooded heath and has a strong vegetated character. The houses are well absorbed, yet feel somewhat intrusive within this distinctive, semi-natural Sandlings environment.

Sizewell nuclear power station occupies a beachside location near the small village of Sizewell. It is isolated from the landscape to the west, behind a series of marshes (in the Coastal Levels type), whose wooded edges provide screening from the nearby town of Leiston. The huge white hemisphere of Sizewell B is a recurring landmark in views along the beaches on this part of the coast and very much an accepted part of the landscape and views in the area. The next phase of development, to build Sizewell C, has long been in the planning stage and remains controversial.

Arable farming dominates the landscape. This is an area of late enclosure and farms were put together from the heathland in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Enclosure patterns are usually rectilinear and field sizes fairly uniformly medium to large contributing to a fairly open feel. The estate feel is weaker than in other parts of the estate sandlands and it's likely arable land is managed by individual farms. Farmland is usually hedged and dotted with boundary oaks.

Woodland is present in a number of forms. There are large blocks – Dunwich Forest, Black Heath Wood as well as a number of smaller woods, coverts and strips. There is one ancient woodland in the centre of the area - Great Wood, Friston. Around it are many woods named 'coverts' which indicated their purpose may have been for game keeping or hunting. Scots pines are a common sight, breaking the skyline above somewhat stunted broadleaf woodland, or along broad shrubby verges.

The absence of water courses in the sandlands means settlement here was historically not very viable, but there are scattering of tumuli indicating the presence of ancient settlement here incusing Bronze age barrows in the vicinity of Aldringham Common. There was an Abbey at Leiston from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. However, now this area has settlements larger than anywhere else on the sandlands.

The towns saw much expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was due both to industry and tourism and was assisted by the railway branch line that came through in the late 1850s (closed 1966). Leiston was a manufacturing town making steam engines and tractors, and also munitions during the wars, at 'Leiston Works' which operated until 1981 (the site is just outside the area, on the west of Leiston). Employment continued to be available at Sizewell, the plant first started construction in 1961. The growth of the seaside resort in Victorian times saw the expansion of Aldeburgh and it continues to draw many visitors through the area.

Thorpeness is an unusual settlement in that it was developed from 1910 onwards as the country's first purpose built 'holiday village' designed by Glencairn Stuart Ogilvie. Most of it is now protected by Conservation Area status. The House in the clouds at Thorpeness is a quirky landmark familiar to many.

There are a number of wide roads here, connecting Leiston and Adeburch with the A12 to the east. These take fairly straight routes, sometimes undulating. Smaller roads and lanes interconnect, these tend to be wider than in the Claylands. The route through to Aldeburgh from the A12, very busy in summer, is familiar to many people.

Vernacular architecture is more easily appreciated in the nearby resorts. In the villages, the traditional buildings tend to be subsumed within 20<sup>th</sup> built form, and hard to pick out. In the countryside only occasional cottages or farmsteads that predate this period are seen. These are a scattering of 17<sup>th</sup> century timber farm houses, or roadside red brick cottages with plain tiles or pan tiles. There are thatched cottages in Aldringham and houses and walls with flint or cobble panels.

Detracting features include the double row of giant pylons that cross the area, carrying power away from Sizewell, passing north of Aldringham. They have a substantial negative impact in the more open areas, and they distort the sense of scale within the landscape. The white dome of Sizewell B has a similar effect on scale although is perhaps more an accepted and familiar sight, up and down the coastal zone.

Visual experience and perceptions vary. The more semi-natural areas can feel scenic, feel rich in naturalness and provide enclosure in the woodland and wooded heaths. The farmland, where the structure of hedges and field boundary trees is sound, it can feel pleasant and looked after although expansive and windswept at times. In the south, expansive and distinctive views are possible over the estuary on the edge of the valley side, which is highly scenic and tranquil. In contrast, to the north, views to the 20<sup>th</sup> century development on the edges of Leiston are less attractive, especially if oversailed by the pylons beyond.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Much of the southern and eastern part of the Area is within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. This area features more of the remaining semi-natural habitats and less arable land but also features much more settlement.
- Aldringham Common is SPA and SSSI, part of a large tract of wildlife habitat that forms the Leiston-Aldeburgh SSSI which contains a rich mosaic of habitats
- The settlements of Aldeburgh and Thorpeness are key components of this landscape. They have very different appearance and histories, exerting a significant influence on the overall character of the area and shaping people's experience and recreational focus.
- Two long distance footpaths pass through the area, The Sandlings Walk follows a route along the south of the and the Suffolk Coast path. The latter follows the route known as the Sailors' Path which connects Snape to Aldeburgh.
- 14<sup>th</sup> century Leiston Abbey lies north-west of the town and is a Scheduled Monument. The atmospheric ruins of a small chapel can still be seen on the site of the original building.

## Condition

The landscape is in varying condition, its hedges needing more regular management where dominated by suckering elm. The land is under pressure from recreation and settlement expansion owing to its proximity to some of Suffolk's popular coastal resorts.

## Strategy

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect remnant heathlands from any development that would result in their loss or reduction in area.</li> <li>• Protect the sense of separation and openness between the settlements of Aldeburgh and Thorpeness and avoid ad hoc and incremental development which urbanises this coastal landscape, particularly along the open coast road.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage AONB landscape to ensure its qualities are not harmed.</li> <li>• Manage the heathlands to ensure retention and conservation of the remnants that remain. Manage bracken encroachment. Consider how to prevent indirect effects resulting from adjacent land use changes such as increase in recreational pressure.</li> <li>• Manage proliferation of further leisure and tourist related land uses (eg golf courses, caravan parks) especially in the quieter areas of the character area to avoid the profound direct and indirect impacts can result.</li> <li>• Restore, maintain and enhance the network of pine lines, tree belts and pattern of small plantations found across much of this landscape type.</li> <li>• Manage areas of existing scrub and woodland, protecting the mosaic of habitats and variety of contrasting open and enclosed spaces found in this landscape.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the growth of settlement ensuring that the special qualities of Thorpeness Aldringham and Aldeburgh are retained.</li> </ul>

## K4 Tunstall and Rendlesham Sandlands

### Location

A large tract of sandy upland bordering the coastal zone, between the Deben and the Alde Estuaries and to either side of the Butley river valley in the centre of the area. It covers the parishes of Sutton and Shottisham in the south, through Chillesford and Tunstall, to Iken and Sudbourne in the north.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Estate Sandlands landscape type.



### Summary Description

This flat area has strong heathy, 'Sandlings' character and is dominated by forestry, with military land use within it. It is a 'young' landscape, a result of huge change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century on what was previously a historically marginal area. Devised on surveyor's maps, the area displays a strongly geometric feel, with roads, field boundaries, and forest edges across the landscape forming straight edges and lines. It is isolated by the Deben Valley on one side and the coast on the other, accessible mainly via the pinch point of the Wilford Bridge. Its hinterland relationship to Woodbridge/Melton is therefore strong and its forests offer a focus for local recreation, en route to the coast.

It is a flat plateau area of freely-draining sandy acidic soils, overlying drift deposits of either glacial or fluvial origin. In some areas there are also surface layers of variable thickness of fine-grained loess deposits, derived from windblown material from glacial sources. There is a general absence of watercourses in these free draining soil profiles.

The free draining marginal soils, lack of settlement, flat topography and consequent low economic value made the area ideal for planting commercial forestry. This took place under the authority of the Forestry Commission, set up after WWI to replenish the country's timber stocks. Very large tracts of commercial forest were planted at Tunstall and Rendlesham which have had a strong and lasting impact on character and perceptions. In their locality, the forests dominate the landscape and contain the visual experience. Forestry is also very effective at containing visual impacts of land uses or development within them, such as the military land use at Sutton Heath which are not appreciable from the wider landscape. These are sites of ecological interest for birds and designated SSSI.

Broadleaf species have been planted in recent decades, particularly on the perimeters of the forests, as part of the Forestry Commission's remit for protecting and improving biodiversity in Britain's forests, and addressing criticism of the uniform appearance of conifer forests. This has benefitted wildlife and given people a more positive experience of the forests. Intermittent picnic places, car-parks and views down rides break up the otherwise somewhat monotonous appearance.

Elsewhere woodlands are smaller but with a frequent presence in the landscape. They commonly take the form of rectangular plantations and coverts, usually coniferous, at regular intervals within the farmed landscape. But there are also a number of ancient woodland remnants such as Sudbourne Great Wood and adjoining Captains Wood, and notably the magnificent Staverton Thicks which is considered one of the biggest collections of ancient trees in Europe. This woodland park is just west of Butley and contains a large number of ancient pollarded oaks and holly trees and has a uniquely magical historic atmosphere.

Around the forests, the remainder of the plateau is lightly settled estate farmlands. The widespread introduction of irrigation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century changed the agricultural potential of this land and irrigated vegetable crops are now an important part of the local economy. Turf is grown around Sutton Heath. Farms therefore frequently have reservoirs which are dotted across the area.

Historically this area was part of the swathe of heathland that once stretched from the edge of Ipswich as far as Lowestoft. After widespread clearance of woodland between the Neolithic and Bronze age, crop based agriculture never established on these light soils, and they became useful for grazing sheep and warrening – rabbit meat and pelts were economically very important. Remains of a large raised 'pillow mound' warren were found at Sutton Heath, designated an Ancient Monument. Grazing by sheep prevented the re-growth of trees and allowed heather and gorse to spread which allowed the Sandlings heath commons to establish. This situation endured until large estates began to develop on the more fertile soils, and in association with improvements in agriculture.

Owing to the sparseness of settlement and the flat, easily worked and free draining nature of the land it was ideal for military use. In 1943 an airbase was opened at Sutton Heath to support aircraft returning from bombing raids in Europe. This is absorbed with the forest and not perceived from the wide landscape.

The area has a history of only very light settlement. Small villages are found only on the edge of the plateau, closer to the sources of water and transport offered by the river valleys adjacent – Sudbourne, Hollesley and the edge of Orford are found in the area. Farmsteads are similarly sparsely distributed. The other type of settlement that is found is the military housing at the Sutton Heath Estate on the perimeters of the airfield – the largest concentration of population in this area.

There are occasional large Halls, often the focus of farm estates. Sudbourne Hall in the west of the area, centred around a fine 18th palladian mansion which purportedly sat in 20 sq. miles of parkland. This was demolished in the 1950s leaving only the East and West Halls, stabling and a coach house today. Sales particulars from the sale of the estate in 1918 lists some 75 separate farms and properties around Orford, Chillesford and Sudbourne, which shows the range of influence of such estates. Vernacular architecture is scarce but, as at Sudbourne Hall, is often 19th century estate red brick with roofs of slate or pantile.

The area has a wealth of important archaeology and particular evidence of Saxon Settlement. Sutton Hoo sits on the very edge of the plateau. It is a royal burial site dating from the 6th and early 7th century which sits atop the valley side at the head of the Deben estuary. The site is thought to be the cemetery for the royal dynasty of East Anglia - the Wuffingas, who were

buried with a wealth of beautiful Anglo-Saxon artefacts, first discovered in 1939. The site was of huge importance for furthering understanding of the Anglo-Saxon period and much of the treasures found have pride of place in the British Museum. The site is run by the National Trust and provides a network of scenic walks from its car park as well as its popular visitor centre and café. The barrow system has partially restored and the area is designated a Scheduled Monument.

A dense network of public rights of way around Sutton, linking Rendlesham Forest, the Deben Valley and the coast, provides a key recreational resource.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The area is entirely within the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB and has a strong Sandlings character with a mix of remnant heath and farmland, punctuated by distinctive pine lines, but often dominated by forest.
- The forests are important recreation resources that draw people from long distances – for walking, mountain biking, and horseriding. The Forestry Commission's Centre at Rendlesham Forest, with its camp site, adventure playground and cycle trails draws visitors from across the county. This area also features the two long distance footpaths, the 'Sandlings Walk' and the 'Suffolk Coast Path' which briefly converge at Snape.
- Staverton Park is thought to be a remnant of a medieval deer park and its famous 'thicks' reportedly have 4000 veteran oak trees. Ancient hollies grow in rings round the bases of living or dead oaks. The park is designated a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- Rendlesham Forest is designated a SSSI, the main conservation interest arising from areas of rotational clearance, which creates open areas suitable for breeding woodlark and nightjar. It also functions as a popular visitor attraction with campsite, cycle paths and adventure playground.

## Condition

The forest landscape is under ongoing management by the Forestry Commission, the general national trend is for diversification of forest tree stock, and this diversification of species will continue to be beneficial in terms of its function as a landscape resource.

The surrounding valuable farmland is intensively farmed and managed but its woodlands and tree lines appear to be well managed. There will continue to be pressure for tourism related development in this area, although forestry is very effective at absorbing visual impacts.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect remnant heathlands from any development that would result in their loss or reduction in area.</li> </ul>



Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the heathlands to ensure retention and conservation of the remnants that remain. Manage bracken encroachment.</li> <li>• Manage indirect effects resulting from changes such as increase in recreational pressure.</li> <li>• Restore, maintain and enhance the network of tree belts and pattern of small plantations found across much of this landscape area.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan future land use changes ensuring change associated with Military sites seeks to enhance landscape character and biodiversity interest.</li> <li>• Plan to reinforce the historic pattern of regular boundaries through appropriate planting including the maintenance and enhancement of locally distinctive pine lines.</li> </ul>

## K5 Kesgrave Sandlands

### Location

This area forms land to the east of Ipswich, from the Playford Road in the north round to the outskirts of Purdis Heath, then east to the sinuous edge of the Deben estuary valley side. It flanks the urban areas west of the A12 at Kesgrave and Martlesham Heath, and includes Waldringfield, Newbourne, and Brightwell.

### Constituent Types

The whole of the character area is within the Estate Sandlands type of the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment.



### Summary Description

This is an area strongly influenced by the urban edge of Kesgrave and Martlesham. Land use is a mix of residential and commercial land use, arable land and woodland. Much of this landscape is degraded and highly influenced by human activity. It is subject to the noise and activity from the A12 corridor, the traffic and visual impacts from a large area of commercial land use. The distinctive BT Orion building and Pegasus Tower are local landmarks which can be seen for miles around. Scattered across the landscape there are enterprises benefitting from the local population and the innovative/commercial focus, as well as those that seek to benefit from proximity to the natural beauty of the AONB landscape to the east: smaller business parks, satellite dishes, a radio communications station, wind turbines, a solar farm, a holiday park, campsites, fishing lakes, a number of golf courses, and a motor sports stadium.

It has a Sandlings character in that it is a generally flat plateau of free-draining acidic sandy and loamy soils with characteristic vegetation such as lines of pines and bracken filled verges. These light soils gave rise to a swathe of heathland, now highly fragmented, that once stretched along as far as Lowestoft across the area known as the Sandlings. After widespread clearance of woodland between the Neolithic and Bronze age, crop-based agriculture never established on these light soils, and they became useful for grazing sheep and warrening. Grazing by sheep prevented the re-growth of trees and allowed heather and gorse to spread which allowed the Sandlings heaths to establish. This situation endured until large estates began to develop on the more fertile soils alongside improvements to

agriculture. Now the farmlands here are highly productive and important for vegetables and potatoes.

Water courses are generally absent as the profile is so free draining, but there are flooded sand workings at Playford Heath and adjacent to Adastral Park, now used for recreational fishing. Agricultural reservoirs are also present.

The geology means there are a frequent mineral workings, at Foxhall an area has been converted to landfill and waste management, while at Adastral Park the workings will disappear under the 2000 new houses planned east of the A12, the construction phase of which will bring a new set of disruptive influences to the landscape in the coming years.

The belts of arable land, between settlement and woodland, are laid out in large scale rectilinear field patterns, often separated by strips of pine shelterbelts which are distinctive and have strong skyline impact. The patterns are a little more organic towards the estuary where the light lands are suitable for outdoor pigs and vegetables and irrigation rigs are seen. Here, a more tranquil countryside character can be encountered, but human activity is never far away.

The west of the character area is only semi-rural, heavily influenced by the expanding edges of Ipswich where the expansion of modern housing continues into the former heath. The flat topography and easy draining land making it ideal for planned expansion, and Kesgrave and Martlesham Heath were a focus for substantial growth in the second half of the 20th century. Urban areas here have a planned, suburban feel. More recent development is well absorbed with an informal layout and softened with woodland both within the developments and on the boundaries, but some stark edges remain. Further large scale expansion is planned for land south of Adastral Park, Martlesham with permission granted in 2018 for 2200 houses, and further expansions are being promoted at Kesgrave.

The early OS maps show much more heathland than remains today. Fragments of the heathlands survive today at Martlesham, Brightwell, and Playford, often with SSSI status. They are under substantial pressure from the adjoining urban area. Remnant heathland commons of acid grassland, with gorse and bracken, are seen e.g. Martlesham Common. The commons suffer from isolation and pressure from recreation but are under management. Elsewhere, the heathland character is experienced through bracken growing along the roadsides, pockets of gorse, and the coniferous woodland and characteristic small gnarly oaks seen along field boundaries. Heathland names are prevalent.

Historically the scarcity of water in these landscapes meant that they were not favoured for settlement but were managed as marginal areas to settlements, such as Newbourne, Brightwell and part of Little Bealings in the north. There are a small number of scattered farms, some with a strong Estate feel to them. Vernacular architecture is scarce but is often 19th century estate style with red brick and slate or pan tile roofs – such as at Brightwell Hall Farm. A grand house and designed gardens were once laid out above the river here, the farmstead is all that remains.

Large blocks of plantation woodland are seen along the edge of adjoining urban areas of Kesgrave and Martlesham. The woodland is comprised of typical sandland species including birch, oak and coniferous plantation. These are a focus for recreation along the urban edge. The woodland network is more fragmented further west, and where present it takes the form of coverts and strip plantations associated with the conversion to farmland in the 18th and 19th centuries. Ancient woodland is absent.

The airfield at Martlesham Heath was set up in the First World War and in the interwar period continued to be used for aircraft testing bombs over Orford Ness. It was then used again

during WWII for fighter aircraft. A section of runway is still present. The hangars were used after the war for industrial purposes in the 1960s which spawned the proliferation of innovation and industry in the area, ultimately resulting in the arrival of the GPO (the forerunner to BT) and development of the science park at Adastral Park.

There remains a scattering of tumuli many of which likely date to the Anglo-Saxon period, and they are often an indication of the presence of a metalled road in Roman times. Numerous prehistoric earthworks survived into the twentieth century on the previously extensive heathland around Martlesham.

There is a good network of rights of way that serve the population on the west of Ipswich, but routes through to the scenic landscapes of the Deben estuary in the east are not easily achieved owing to the A12 corridor forming a barrier.

The A12 and the busy road network also limits the tranquillity of the area, although a few points in the east can feel quiet and more isolated. The night time landscape is also affected by the glow from Adastral Park and the BT building, the commercial land uses to the north, and lighting and traffic along the A12 corridor.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The eastern fringes of the plateau edge fall within the Suffolk Coast and Heath AONB.
- Branches of the long distance 'Sandlings Walk' footpaths leave Ipswich from Rushmere Heath and Purdis Farm link and head east through the character area, along the southern edge of Kesgrave, before cutting north to Woodbridge and into the AONB beyond. Together with the wider network of footpaths, which is often dense, the area is important for informal recreation.
- The remnant heaths and mixed deciduous woodland that adjoin and interlace with the urban edges of Ipswich are rare and demonstrate notable ecological heritage. Features such as Oak pollard are of historic interest.
- The woodland, heathland and golf courses offer an accessible recreational resource to residents on the fringes of the urban areas.
- Former heathland now planted with conifers has economic value as well as recreational importance. Woodland strips provide visual containment and contribute positively to the visual experience, limiting effects of urban expansion,
- Its modern land cover, geometric patterns and extensive and regular pattern of tree cover give this landscape a degree of capacity to absorb development. The plantations, shelterbelts, and tree lines found throughout this landscape provide opportunities to design locally appropriate planting schemes to reduce visual impacts.

## Condition

Much of the landscape in the centre and west of the character area is under pressure for development and very little semi-natural habitat remains. The heathland remnants are subject to variable management.

## Strategy Objectives

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the remaining semi-natural features and habitats from loss or harm due to development.</li> <li>• Protect heathlands from any reduction in area. Consider how to prevent indirect effects resulting from adjacent land use changes such as increase in recreational pressure.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage change in areas adjacent to the AONB to ensure its landscape and perceptual qualities are not harmed.</li> <li>• Manage the heathlands to ensure retention and conservation of the remnants that remain. Manage bracken encroachment.</li> <li>• Manage proliferation of further leisure and tourist related land uses (eg golf courses, caravan parks) especially in the quieter areas of the character area to avoid the profound direct and indirect impacts that can result.</li> <li>• Reinforce the historic pattern of regular boundaries through appropriate management and replanting.</li> <li>• Restore, maintain and enhance the pattern of locally distinctive pine lines.</li> <li>• Restore, maintain and enhance the network of tree belts and pattern of small plantations found across much of this landscape.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan to integrate new development ensuring it is shaped by the prevailing character of the area and ensuring avoidance of blanket suburban development.</li> <li>• Plan green infrastructure approach to network of wildlife sites.</li> <li>• Plan to improve pedestrian/cycle path access across the A12 to provide access to the AONB to help promote healthy lifestyles.</li> </ul>

## L1 Heveningham and Knodishall Estate Claylands

### Location

A broad area of linked interfluvial plateaux of the Alde, the Fromus, Yox and the Byth. It takes a broadly V-shaped form; the southern part covers an area from Leiston north-west to Peasenhall and Ubbeston, the northern part then covers a wedge of land north-east almost to Wenhaston, Thorington and Darsham.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Ancient Estate Claylands type



### Summary Description

This is the largest character area in the district and is a landscape of quiet farmland with a simple, unified and deeply rural character. There are no large villages, only an irregular network of quiet lanes with only scattered farms and hamlets to provide any sense of settlement. The estate feel is weaker than in some parts of East Suffolk but there is a strong sense of the importance of large-scale agri-businesses which dominates land use. Some farms feature large scale indoor livestock farming. There is also a large area of parkland on the north edge of the plateau at Heveningham.

The gently rolling dissected plateau forms a transition zone between the coastal belts of light sandy soils, and the more elevated heavy plateaux of High Suffolk to the west. It comprises land between about 20m AOD in the east and 45m in the west. It is composed of glacial till or boulder clay left behind by the ice-sheet of the great Anglian Glaciation. The flatter parts have heavy, poorly-drained clay soils such as the Beccles series, but on the more undulating edges there are some better drained soils.

The experience is mile after mile of lightly settled farmland, mainly arable but with some pastures. Its deeply rural and attractive although orientation is not always easy along its narrow straight lanes without distinctive topographical features or landmarks to provide orientation. As well as the straight Roman roads that cross the area, lanes and farm drives tend to be fairly straight and roads tend to cross and link at perpendicular junctions, the lack of topography allowing direct routes between places. A network of historic green lanes and footpath routes make more organic shaped trajectories through the field systems. There are



ponds scattered across the plateau which can be delightful to encounter, such as at Knodishall, or areas of commons on village edges which provide texture and interest. In contrast, encounters with large industrial agricultural buildings have a negative impact, especially where there is inadequate screening.

The enclosure pattern is generally ancient and the underlying feel is organic, but field boundaries tend to be straight and regularised. There are some areas of post 1950s farmland where the ancient patterns have been lost more comprehensively, eg to the SW of Yoxford. Field size is generally medium to large, but there are pockets where there are distinctive small field patterns, such as east of the A12 at Darsham and at East Green and North Green. This provides a variety in visual experience from more open with long views, to intimacy in the narrow hedged lanes and away from the busy road corridors (A12 and A1120) but away from this corridor the lightly settled landscape can feel remote and isolated.

It's less unified in the eastern parts where the soils become more mixed and transition into sandlands character types. The landscape here is somewhat more fine grained, there is more pasture and less emphasis on large scale agricultural organisation which gives rise to a more textured and rich visual experience.

Woodland is scattered in parcels fairly evenly across the area, some of them ancient in original. In addition to the woodland, roadside trees and hedges, and field boundary vegetation, are often present and form a significant component of the tree cover. Hedges are usually a mix of species dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn. The form of the hedges varies from large, and tree dominated, to single-species hedges that are more regularly managed. Roadside verges are often dotted with ash and oak, and mature oaks trees stud field boundaries in varying densities across the area.

The parkland at Heveningham straddles the edges of this character area, and the Blyth Valley area (B2), and is one of Suffolk's better known parks. There was a manor here from the 13th century and records of parkland date back to 1575. However, the appearance of today's parkland dates from the 18th century when it was expanded and designed, notably in the late 18th century by Capability Brown who was commissioned to draw up plans, although much of his design was never implemented. The current Hall was built around 1870, and is a Grade I listed Palladian mansion. The registered parkland site covers around 200ha and is bounded to the north by woodland, to the east and west by open agricultural land and to the south by a mix of plantation and farmland. Following a period of decline in the first half of the 20th century, followed by a spell under the guardianship of the National Trust, it was taken back into private hands in the 1990s. Much restoration has taken place and is ongoing, including the completion of many of Brown's original proposals.

This area has long been settled. There is evidence of Romano-British farms in the area and records of Norman churches, at Bramfield for example. However, it is notable that despite this being the largest character area in the district, there are no villages of any size on the plateaux; the western edge of Leiston is within the area but otherwise only the fringes of valley-side settlements, such as Darsham, Thorington, Saxmundham are present. Instead, only hamlets and farmsteads are found, sometimes with associated cottages. Villages are located in the adjacent valley side landscapes, where access to water was more reliable.

There are many ancient farms with 'Hall' and "Manor" in their names, distributed across the area, often located down long drives and not easily seen as part of the landscape. Some farmsteads are more recent and feature a motley collection of buildings. There are a number

of large-scale modern agricultural buildings, including a number of intensive livestock units, which can sometimes cause moderate adverse visual impacts.

Vernacular architecture is seen in the scattered cottages and farms. Timber framed farmhouses and cottages are finished in coloured render. Some cottages are thatched but otherwise roofs are predominantly red pantiles, although there are examples of distinctive black pantiles. Outbuildings have a typical east Suffolk character - red brick weather boarding, sometimes natural coloured, sometimes black, and in addition there is some flint work in barns and walls. On houses and outbuildings gables can be edged with white bargeboards, sometimes ornately finished.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Its special qualities are its particularly unified character - a peaceful, deeply rural 'backwater', focused on farming.
- There is little intrusion from modern development, especially in the more remote western part. Whilst some conversion has taken place of agricultural buildings, the remoteness of the area has helped protect it from development pressure, and it has likely changed little in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.
- Heveningham Hall and park is valued for its historic interest, links with Capability Brown and scenic setting for events such as Country Fairs in the area.
- Special Areas of Conservation and SSSI designation across a series of ponds at Dews Farm, Bramfield, noted for its population of Great Crested Newts.

## Condition

Generally this is a landscape with its structure in good condition. Amalgamation and hedge loss has occurred in some parts although there is evidence of restoration in other parts with young hedges seen. Tourism along the Heritage Coast has led to some modern buildings and proliferation of signage along the A12 corridor, and ongoing developmental pressure.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the unspoilt, quiet, and essentially undeveloped rural character of the area.</li> <li>• Protect the plateau landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area e.g. from new tall vertical features such as masts or turbines or new urban development.</li> <li>• Protect the landscape from development of a scale that harms the prevailing light, scattered nature of the existing settlement.</li> <li>• Plan for the ongoing maintenance and careful management of the highly characteristic oak trees along hedges, verges and field boundaries.</li> <li>• Protect the parkland at Heveningham and its wider setting, including development in the wider area that would impact on views.</li> </ul>

<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of semi-natural woodland through appropriate woodland management schemes.</li> <li>• Manage hedgerows to retain and restore the pattern of network of field boundaries, especially where suckering elm is present – introduce coppicing is needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for enhancements to biodiversity in this highly agricultural landscape, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.</li> </ul>

## L2 Glemham Estate Claylands

### Location

A small area of plateau between the River Ore to the west and the Alde to the east. It covers an area from Little Glemham in the south, north-west to Parham, and then skirting the edge of the indent formed by the Alde valley round to the east towards Great Glemham.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Ancient Estate Claylands type of the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment.



### Summary Description

This small but varied character area is dominated by intensively managed arable farmland, but the parkland at Little Glemham has a strong influence. Its impressive Hall is a familiar landmark along the A12 which slices through the park. The rolling estate features huge specimen trees and its enclosing woodland belts provide containment and concentrate the parkland feel within. Beyond its bounds there is a former WWII airfield, as well as fragments of semi-natural habitats, greens, common land and ancient woodlands which add to the variation.

It is a flat and gently rolling landscape of incised clayland plateau with slowly permeable clay and loam soils, overlying sedimentary crag geology. It comprises land above c.20m AOD in the south and upwards of 40m AOD in the more elevated northern part of the area towards Cransford.

The enclosure pattern is generally ancient and has an organic feel to its forms, but there are also areas of post 1950s farmland where the ancient patterns have been lost to rationalisation of land parcels. On the old WWII airfield at Parham, there was substantial hedge removal and reorganisation of the landscape in the 1940s. Some finer grained fragments endure, however, with smaller field patterns and more enclosed and intimate feel such as between Great Glemham and Sweffling where woodland is frequent.

The Glemham Estate covers 3000 acres in the south of the area and is focused on Glemham Hall which sits in parkland east of the A12 in Little Glemham. Previously featuring only a moated manor house, the hall was built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century but was given a substantial

overhaul between 1722-1727 when considerable changes were made, giving it a Georgian appearance. The park dates from at least c.1560, when records were made of Suffolk's deer parks, and redesigned during the 18th century period when parklands were fashionable for the landed gentry. Humphry Repton was commissioned and many of his suggestions were implemented which saw the removal of the old manor house and the filling in of its moats, new additions such as a Ha-Ha and the extension of the park to the north.

Today the parkland covers 132ha and is set within the wider gently rolling farmland and woodland that makes up the estate today. The land to the south of the A12 is laid to pasture, and to the north it's under arable cropping. The pasture has good scatter of fine mature trees, especially oak trees, some pollarded, as well as Horse Chestnut and Lime, with distinctive flat canopy bottoms, from grazing deer. A notable avenue of trees frames views to the front of the Hall. Tree belts surround much of the park and most of these, particularly along the south and east boundaries, date from the early C19 and stand in positions proposed by Repton. People can enjoy very attractive views into the park easily from the A12 but the road brings a great deal of noise to the area and erodes its historic feel.

The area that was previously Parham airfield, known as Framlingham Station during WWII, is now an open area with only remnant features indicating its former use, including the control tower, now a military museum. The runways and most of the buildings have gone, and the land has returned to agriculture. It is notably open in its vicinity. Commercial land uses now take place on the hardstandings and in the remaining buildings. Owing to the openness these are visible from distances and have a negative effect on the rural character. There is a further pocket of commercial land use at Silverlace Green, which includes a green waste facility, but the building is well screened and has limited impact.

Woodland is found frequently in small plantations or irregular shaped small woods. The larger woods are ancient in origin, for example, Great Glemham Wood. Around the parkland the character of the woodland is more mixed with conifers pushing up through the canopy line in staccato bursts.

In addition to the woodland, roadside trees and hedges, and field boundary vegetation, are often present and form a significant component of the tree cover. Hedges are usually a mix of species dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn. The form of the hedges varies from large, and tree dominated, to single-species hedges that are more regularly managed. Roadside verges are often dotted with ash and oak, and oak studded field boundaries in varying densities across the area. A few standing dead oaks make dramatic sculptural features on field boundaries.

Settlement is light and consists of dispersed farmsteads and hamlets. Many of the farmsteads are medieval in origin and some are surrounded by moats such as the Moat Hall Farm, Parham. There are unspoilt intact greens here with a historic atmosphere. North Green is a large green in the north-west of the area, its surveyors road passing straight through the centre, with timber framed cottages overlooking from all sides.

As well as the commonly found red brick seen on the Glemham Estate, the scattered farms are timber framed and rendered with pan tiled roofs, usually red but also examples of locally distinctive black pantiles used. Cottages are sometimes faced with white gault bricks. Barns and outbuildings are weather boarded with pan tiled or slate roofs, with some flint walling.

The visual experience is varied. Field sizes tend to be medium to large and views can feel quite open where hedges have been lost. But within the hedged lanes or when woodland belts edge finer grained field patterns, it can feel quite enclosed. Views are more scenic on the edges of the valleys where it becomes possible to overlook the wooded rolling valleysides, which provide more variation and texture than the simple plateau top views. Views with the parkland have a unique and high quality feel of their own.

Overall it is a unspoilt rural landscape with a peaceful feel, focused on agricultural production. Only where commercial land use intrudes on the rural landscape the visual perceptions are impaired. Away from the parkland with its high proportion of tree cover, the landscape is fairly open, across the amalgamated arable lands but woodland is frequent and usually aggregates around the skyline. A strong perception of time depth is possible around atmospheric old village greens and around the parkland, at Glemham perceptions are marred by the constant noise of traffic.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Scenic views to the grade II Listed Glemham Hall, sitting in its deer grazed parkland, are a memorable waypoint feature along the route of the A12 as it sweeps around the parkland. Garden features and its pretty red-brick gatehouse are also listed.
- The parkland is on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens maintained by English Heritage and registered as an asset by SCDC under policy SSP37 as a Park and Garden of Historic Landscape Interest.
- There areas medieval history is rich. Medieval moated Scheduled Monument at Moat Hall Farm comprising the moated site of the Hall, a second, contiguous moat which encloses the remains of a formal garden and an ornamental pond with associated earthworks.
- There are two large blocks of Ancient Woodland at Great Glemham Wood.
- Cransford Meadow in the north of the area is species-rich lowland meadow designated SSSI.

## Condition

The landscape underwent drastic change in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some 23 miles of hedgerow was reported to have been removed to create Parham airfield and the landscape remains open and featureless in this area. Elsewhere, hedges and woodlands tend to be generally well managed. Noise from the A12 corridor is dominant in the south of the area around Glemham Park.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the unspoilt, quiet, and essentially undeveloped rural character of the area.</li> <li>• Protect the plateau landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area e.g. from new tall vertical features such as masts or turbines or new urban development.</li> <li>• Protect the landscape from development of a scale that harms the prevailing light,</li> </ul>



<p>scattered nature of the existing settlement pattern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the ongoing maintenance and careful management of the highly characteristic oak trees along hedges, verges and field boundaries.</li> <li>• Protect the parkland at Little Glemham and its wider setting, including development in the wider area that would impact on views.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of semi-natural woodland through appropriate woodland management schemes.</li> <li>• Manage and restore the significant parkland, plan for the replanting of important avenue or specimen trees.</li> <li>• Manage hedgerows to retain and restore the pattern of network of field boundaries, especially where suckering elm is present – introduce coppicing is needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for enhancements to biodiversity, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.</li> <li>• Plan for the replanting of hedges around Parham airfield to restore the historic network.</li> </ul>

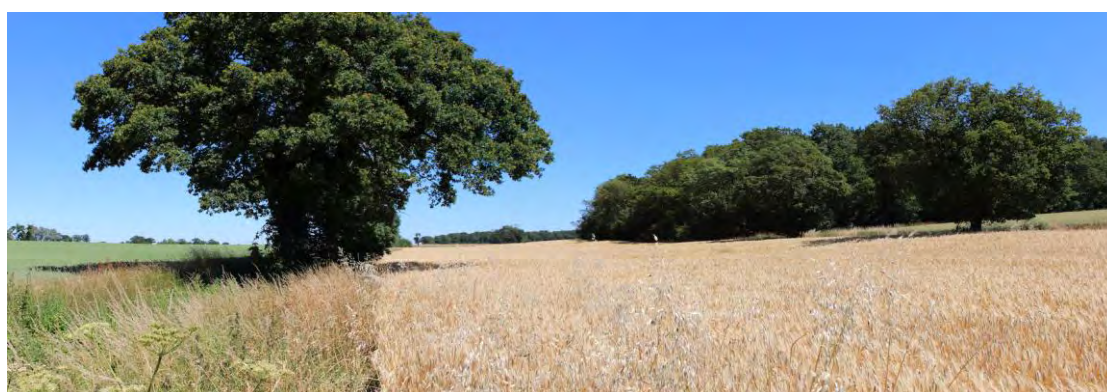
## L3 Easton and Glevering Estate Claylands

### Location

A small parcel of plateau sandwiched between the upper reaches of the Deben Valley on the south-west side and the Ore valley to the north-east. It covers an area north from Hacheston towards Parham, and west into the parish of Kettleburgh.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Ancient Estate Claylands type



### Summary Description

This is a small and entirely rural area with only a few scattered farms, with a regular, wooded estate farmland character heavily influenced by the two historic estates here – Easton and Glevering. The overall impression is of scenic, well-managed farmland, and the associated vernacular estate architecture makes a very positive contribution. It is distinct from the gently rolling valleysides that adjoin it as it is more vegetated and has a unified feel. Countryside estates tend to bring a consistency to the vernacular of the built form and a regularity to the appearance and layout of the farmed landscape. The estates had parkland and grand houses, elements of which survive today.

The plateau forms a narrow interfluvium between the river valleys of the Ore and Deben. It comprises flat and gently rolling land above c.30m AOD in the south and upwards of 40m AOD in the more elevated northern part of the area. It is one of a series of plateau 'fingers', a result of the rivers incising the edge of the great slab of clay that overlies high Suffolk. It is composed of glacial till or boulder clay left behind by the ice-sheet of the great Anglian Glaciation. The flatter parts have heavy, poorly-drained clay soils, but on the more undulating edges there are some better drained soils.

Land use is predominantly arable farmland, interspersed with woodland, although there is a large block of (horse) pasture within and to the west of Easton Park. Field sizes here are medium to large and were created from amalgamation of the smaller straight-sided fields that characterised early enclosure of the agricultural landscape. The softer, organic forms of the ancient landscape underlie today's field patterns, but the regular estate farmland, which now overwrites it, has a more overt influence 'on the ground'. When estates were created in the 18th

and 19th centuries, larger fields with more geometric, rectangular forms were favoured as they were more easily managed. There was a further substantial amount of field amalgamation in the last century where many small straight-sided fields, seen on the early OS maps, were merged to create the large-scale arable landscape seen today.

Streams drain the plateau to either side and small ponds are dotted across the farmland – sometimes stranded in the middle of large fields. Ditches often sub divide the arable landscape. Boundary oak trees are dotted along the lanes and field boundaries. Hedges are either mixed or single species such as elm, this is generally well managed and regularly cut back so elm hedges here in better condition than other landscapes where the influence of estate farming is not present.

There are no villages in this character area, these are instead found on the adjoining valleysides, but farms are scattered across the landscape, some of ancient origin such as Bentries Farm at Easton. The current 18<sup>th</sup> century house was built on an island within an ancient moat that dates from the medieval period. The area displays examples of the late 1800s trend for ornate 'Model Farms' such as Easton Farm Park – today a farm museum and visitor centre. This has attractive brick and weather boarded buildings with ornate white painted timber edgings. Such farmsteads tend to enhance the landscape, collections of high quality attractive buildings, tucked into a well-vegetated settings.

The model farms and other estate farms have rendered timber framed houses and associated attractive 19th century red brick cottages with dormer windows and white boarded gables and white painted wood work. Roofs are of soft red pan tiles, and sometimes plain tiles, with embellished brickwork on chimney stacks. Barns and outbuildings are often black weather board with contrasting white barge boarding.

The road network is a dissipated network of usually straight, small roads with a general north-south arrangement, often hedged providing intimacy. The footpath network is also rather sparse, and echos the road network with its predominantly north-south orientation, linking with the main roads along the more frequently settled valley sides to the north and south.

The Parklands, associated with the two great houses and their estates, are found on the edges of the plateau on its transition into the valleyside of the Deben. The northern half of Easton Park, and most of Glevering Park is within the character area. These were originally designed landscapes dating from the 18th century.

Glevering Hall is a Grade II\* listed building, that continues to sit within parkland important originally designed by Humphry Repton. The Easton estate was disbanded in a sale in 1919 and the parkland was transferred to the adjacent moated Martley Hall on its northern boundary in 1922. Easton Hall, left without its parklands, was demolished soon after. Today the parkland endures, within its wooded boundaries, retaining its openness but divided up into horse pastures.

As well as farming being important to the estates' income, other functions such as shooting and hunting were important. Easton continues to have its own active pack of Harriers today and woodlands, coverts, headlands, and hedges likely continue to be managed for the purposes of hunting, albeit drag hunting these days. The link between the appearance of the countryside and these country sports is a direct one whose legacy continues. Woodland has a strong visual impact and a positive effect on biodiversity, as does good hedge management and game cover sowings.

Horse breeding is locally important. The 'Easton' bloodlines, based at Easton Farm Stud, are very important to the rare Suffolk Punch heavy horse breed horse in Suffolk. There are extensive paddocks there, and subdividing the parkland adjacent to Martley Hall, although these are enclosed by woodland belts and not generally part of the visual experience.

One important and distinctive feature is the extensive 'crinkle-crankle' serpentine red-brick wall around Easton Park, thought to be the longest in England and is Grade II Listed. In this character area, it is seen running along the Framlingham Road south from Martley Hall towards the village edge and conveys an instant sense of place.

The dominant visual experience is openness, over the large fields, with skyline containment from the regular large blocks of woodland. Where breaks in the woodland allow on the plateau edges, views can be far reaching, over the low lying adjacent river valleys, to the opposite wooded valley side beyond. Views from the lanes are often more intimate, constrained by roadside hedges.

The row of pylons that crosses the area are dominant where they sail overhead, but away from their corridor they are often not seen owing to the effect of so many parcels of woodland.

Designated nature conservation sites are lacking in the area, but the well managed woodlands and hedges are likely more diverse than much of Suffolk's farmland. Access to the public within them is also limited, which likely has a positive effect on wildlife.

## Special Qualities and Features

- It is quiet and tranquil area, sufficiently removed from busy main roads and settlement to feel somewhat remote.
- Strongly wooded character is robust and this characteristic provides some capacity for development or land uses to be absorbed within it. However, the character of the area is very consistent so anything that departs from the settlement pattern or architectural forms would be noticeable.
- Easton Park and Glevering Park are scheduled by Suffolk Coastal District Council as being Heritage assets under policy 'SSP37: Historic Parks and Gardens'. Glevering Hall is a Grade II\* listed building, in a parkland originally designed by Humphry Repton.
- There are Medieval moats - eg Bentries farm, Easton is a Scheduled Monument.
- Within the blocks of woodland that are dispersed along the centre of the plateau, are four Ancient woodlands – Catts Wood in Glevering North Park, Great Wood, Briockley's Wood and Maids Wood.
- Many of the cottages and farmsteads scattered across the countryside are listed.

## Condition

This is a well-managed piece of countryside in terms of its function as estate farmland with good management of elm that dominates hedges, and woodlands under coppice rotations. Apart from the woodland, semi-natural habitats are otherwise absent as this fertile farmland is valuable and productive.

## Strategy Objectives

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the landscape features and elements which contribute to the distinctive estate and parkland landscape, and cumulative adverse impacts through ad hoc changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of semi-natural woodland through appropriate woodland management regimes, including traditional methods such as coppicing.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for enhancements to biodiversity, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.</li> </ul>

## L4 Otley Hall and Debach Estate Claylands

### Location

Three 'fingers' of plateau between the valleys of the Deben, the Potsford Brook, and the Lark covering an area from Monewden in the north to Debach, and Swilland in the south. A finger stretches as far east as Wickham Market and to the west the boundary is defined by the Suffolk Coastal District limits along a line from Ashbocking to Cretingham. The area continues west into Mid Suffolk District.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Ancient Estate Claylands landscape type.



### Summary Description

It is a particularly unified area of flat or gently rolling, clayland farming with scattered farmsteads the prevailing form of settlement. Distinctive characteristics include the straightness of the roads, and the geometry of boundary oaks and hedges, which gives rise to feel of linearity. Although there are some seasonally wet pastures and some occasional small ancient woodlands, the area is valuable for cereal growing, and its land use is dominated and organised around arable farming. There are also pockets of pastoral use (mostly for forage, rather than grazing) in the smaller finer grained fields in the centre of the area. It does not have the strong estate feel or the model farmsteads as seen in other areas of Estate Clayland nearby, such as around Easton and Gleveringham.

It is formed of the heavily indented edge of the High Suffolk clayland plateau, comprising flat and gently rolling land, elevated above the edges of the river valleys. It is defined by land over c.50 to 60m AOD in the south of the area, and above 40m AOD in the less elevated northern fingers. The soils that overlie this part of Suffolk are seasonally wet chalky boulder clays and loams over chalky bedrock. There are some better drained soils on the more undulating edges.

In the 20th century flat areas were cleared for use as airfields at Monewden and Debach. The former was not a military site but set up to support a crop-spraying enterprise in the 1960s, and is now a small recreational airfield. Debach airfield was created in 1944 by the USAF military which has left a legacy of partial runway remains and buildings, including the control tower. Some of the buildings were converted for agricultural use and part of the base



was initially converted into a mushroom factory but subsequently redeveloped into a row of industrial and warehouse units, now called Clopton Park.

Field sizes vary considerably. Enclosure took place pre-1700, so the underlying pattern is ancient. There are places where large, geometric amalgamated fields have been created and here the landscape can feel open and longer views are experienced. Perhaps here there is more of a sense of 'ordinariness' to the visual qualities of the countryside, lacking relief or scenic interest from sinuous forms, topography or woodland, although historic farmsteads provide points of interest in the landscape. But much of the landscape has a finer grain and was historically organised into smaller and medium sized systems, with a more organic feel. Some areas have an intact system of small fields arranged in distinctive longitudinal patterns, for example a tract between Otley and Monewden. They are enclosed by tall hedges and the feeling can become quite intimate and with a good sense of time-depth, especially if associated with pastoral land use.

Woodland is relatively sparsely distributed, although where it is present, it is often ancient in origin. In a triangle from Wickham Market, to Hoo to Dallinghoo there are a number of Ancient Woodland fragments remaining – Potsford Wood, Dallinghoo Wood, Home Covert and Cutler's Grove.

Yet the landscape feels relatively well wooded and contained as the ancient verges and field boundaries are richly vegetated. Well managed roadside trees are common, often studded with trees especially oak and ash. Hedges tend to be mixed, dominated by hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, and plenty of elm. Field boundaries are often dotted with fine mature oaks. These all link across the flat topography, creating a well vegetated feel, albeit usually not due to woodland. Views to the north-west can feel wooded as the skyline is filled with the large woods found around Easton and Glevering.

This is a long settled landscape although settlement is sparse. A Roman road crosses the area east-west and the area is known for its Iceni coin hoard found at Dallinghoo. It takes the form of occasional small villages or hamlets, and scattered farms, the majority of which are listed, timber framed Suffolk farmhouses. There are a scattering of medieval moated farmsteads sites often listed as Scheduled Monuments.

The main core of villages are only found beyond the edges of this character area, on the valley sides below. This can be explained from the need, historically, for settlement to be placed close to sources of water and fording points in the small rivers. The character area clips the outer extents of Swilland, Ashbocking and Otley in the south. These villages tend to have a linear form, sometime comprising multiple clusters of varying sizes, and lack historic cores – none have Conservation Areas. Their character is mixed wherein the soft vernacular of old cottages in deep plots are interspersed with more recent infill so they often have quite an indistinctive 20<sup>th</sup> century feel.

The area is served by number of roads that tend to cross the plateau in an approximately north-south direction. These are connected by a network of narrower lanes that take more organic routes to serve the farmsteads and hamlets spread across the landscape. The straightness of the roads, and the geometry of the rows of boundary oaks and hedges, add a sense of linearity. The footpath network is rather sparse, and echoes the road network with its predominantly north-south orientation.

Historic architecture is dominated by the timber framed Suffolk 'long house', with rendered exteriors and soft red pan tiles. Farmsteads can have a very attractive appearance with a small cluster of vernacular buildings. Barns are clad in black weatherboard with pan tile or

red oxide tin roofs, sometimes with the locally distinctive white painted bargeboards. Cottages are red brick or render, some under a thatched roof.

The dominant visual experience is moderately open, with a unified and linear feel. But it is more intimate within the lanes between dense, well managed hedges which link with boundary trees, to provide moderate containment and lightly wooded feel.

There are few detracting features in this landscape. There are some modern village edge extensions, but many farms retain their character with unconverted barns forming attractive clusters of built form. There are localised impacts from occasional large agricultural buildings and the row of pylons that crosses south the area are locally dominant, but overall the feel is of quiet, lightly settled and unspoilt countryside.

## Special Qualities and Features

- There are three SSSI sites in the centre of the area – Monewden Meadows, High House Meadows and Martin’s Meadows. These are approximately 3ha pockets of species-rich lowland meadow, in mixed condition.
- There are a number of remnant ancient woodlands in the east of the area.
- Sense of remoteness and ruralness is strong and unspoilt by 20<sup>th</sup> century development.

## Condition

This landscape appears to be generally in good condition with dense continuous hedges in most places.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the sense of ruralness and remoteness.</li> <li>• Protect the network of small pastures and the hedgerows that enclose them. Encourage good hedgerow management across the area introducing coppicing to regenerate areas with elm die back.</li> <li>• Protect the character of farmsteads and outbuildings - resist inappropriate development or conversions.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage areas of semi-natural woodland through appropriate woodland management regimes, including traditional methods such as coppicing.</li> <li>• Manage meadow systems with grazing by sheep or cattle. Resist proliferation of equestrian land use and associated fencing and structures.</li> <li>• Manage the stock of characteristic field boundary trees for health, and ensure a varied age structure for a sustainable future.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for enhancements to biodiversity, perhaps opportunities that might emerge</li> </ul>

through agri-environmental schemes.

- Plan for losses from the emerging tree disease affecting ash and oak.

## M1 Rendlesham and Tunstall Estate Farmlands

### Location

A relatively small, broadly 'X' shaped area of plateau on the interfluvium of the Ore and Deben. It comprises land from Eyke to Bentwaters Park in the south, with one arm extending northwest to just short of Hacheston and Marlesford, the other extending north-east almost to Blaxhall.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely within the Plateau Estate Farmlands type



### Summary Description

This area is predominantly arable farming, amongst numerous blocks and strips of woodland, with a park estate feel. It is also strongly influenced by Bentwaters airbase in the south of the area. The large structures and fencing associated with the base contribute a distinctive military feel to the area, even though the base has been closed for many years. The now commercial land use here is busy and brings traffic and road noise into the area, and its associated housing zone brings a suburban feel to this part of the Sandlings. Human influence is never far away whether distant glimpses of military structures, the arcing spray of irrigation hoses, the distant hum from the A12 or the sweep of pylons overhead.

This is an area of plateau sandwiched between the upper courses of the rivers Ore and Deben to the north and west respectively. It adjoins the Rolling Estate Sandlands on the south-east side along Bentwaters airfield. The landform is flat or very gently rolling, elevated for the most part between about 20 and 25m AOD. Its soils are a mix of free-draining, sandy and loamy-clay soils, derived from glacial sandy drift deposits. There are occasional pockets where deposits had a more silty character, names like 'Rush Ground Cottage', and groups of small ponds in the centre of the area indicate points with impeded drainage.

The dry soils here traditionally made this zone less favourable for farming which gave rise to landscape parks with substantial wooded belts, avenues and specimen trees. There were significant areas of parkland at Rendlesham Hall (created 18<sup>th</sup> century) and Campsea Ashe (17<sup>th</sup> century) which were linked by common land at Ash Green. The early OS maps show parkland survived up until at least the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at Rendlesham Hall, but was then converted to agricultural land, and later partly built over for housing. But a substantial area of parkland remains at Campsea Park, although arable land also makes incursions into

the original pastures. Lengths of estate railings along roadsides conveys the former landuse, and glimpses into the old parkland studded with oaks are highly scenic and convey a sense of time-depth.

These both had impressive mansions but neither has survived. Campsea High Hall didn't survive the difficult inter-war period when economic depression saw the loss of many great Suffolk houses. Rendlesham Hall was used during WWII war by the army but fell into disrepair and was finally demolished in 1949.

This area is cut through by a number of infrastructure corridors. The A12 crosses the elevated north part of the plateau, across the finger of land that forms an interfluvium between the upper reaches of the Ore and the Deben. The Ipswich- Lowestoft railway line also passes, in parallel, through the north-west side of the area, through the small village of Campsea Ashe where 'Wickham Market' station is located. The double row of tall pylons that crosses this part of the district also pass overhead north of Campsea Ashe with considerable visual impact.

The relatively flat, sparsely settled landscape present in the early 1940s made it ideal for conversion to airfield use, within the existing belt of forestry and semi-natural woodland. Bentwaters airfield was used by both the British and USA military during its period of commission. The USAF departed in 1993 but the infrastructure is still largely in place and a strong military feel endures. The park is served by the busy A1152 which is relatively wide, features a large roundabout, and is trafficked by HVs accessing the commercial zone. Today the Park includes commercial land uses, a small military museum, and claims to be the UK's largest film and TV production site with plans to expand with new studio complexes.

For the farmland, the history of enclosure is not as clear cut here as in other areas. Some common field agriculture endured long enough to be enclosed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enclosure Acts but ancient field patterns are also present. Field sizes vary, from large units around Bentwaters and the estate farms in the west, to smaller and medium sized fields around Tunstall. Boundaries have been regularised and straightened but the underlying ancient organic pattern is appreciable. They are sometimes bounded by hedges, or defined by rows of oaks, but also often not vegetated at all.

There are dozens of small blocks and belts of woodland across the centre and south of the area, the northern plateau edges are less wooded. These are a mix of broadleaf and coniferous plantations and are sometimes organic and sometimes geometric in form. They have a strong impact on the visual experience providing constant containment. Around Rendlesham Hall farm and Campsea Park particularly, woodland is notably frequent, and farmland is often enclosed in thick belts and interspersed with coverts and groves. There are two larger blocks of woodland which are Ancient in origin, Long Grove bounds Campsea Ashe Park on its east side, and Whitmore Wood lies on the north-western edge of Bentwaters Park.

Tree species seen comprise ash and oak, field maple, and sweet chestnut. Planted Horse chestnut and Scots pine are seen along old parkland or village edges. There are some old oak coppices within the old confines of the parklands. Farmland hedges are sporadic, and the condition of those present is mixed, especially where the elm content is high. In addition to elm, hedges feature field maple, hawthorn, and black thorn. There is a random scattering of hedgerow trees, usually oaks, which punctuate the often hedgeless field boundaries.

There is long history of settlement in the area. Rendlesham was well-known and well-recorded in Anglo Saxon times. Recent archaeological works have ascertained there was likely a royal settlement of very high status on the edge of the valley at Rendlesham associated with the nearby burial site at Sutton Hoo.

Today the largest settlement in the area is the extended, military housing zone at Rendlesham, to the north-west of Bentwaters, which continues to expand. This was built partly over the former parkland of Rendlesham Hall, and it shares a somewhat uncomfortable relationship with its remnant historic landscape to the north. It has a suburban modern estate feel which is at odds with the surrounding rural landscape setting. Otherwise, the prevailing settlement character is light and scattered. There are a few small villages – Tunstall and Campsea Ashe, and the western half of Eyke. These villages were nothing more than hamlets by the early 20<sup>th</sup> but these were infilled and extended along the roads in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to create somewhat indistinctive linear settlements today.

Vernacular architecture is found in the farmsteads, where timber framed longhouses prevail, and scattered cottages within the villages. There are lodges on the edges of the old parkland estates – examples include the attractive 19<sup>th</sup> century gault brick building on Ash Lane and Ivy Lodge gatehouse - a mock Romanesque ruin built in the early C.19<sup>th</sup> as a gatehouse to Rendlesham Hall. Houses are roofed in pan or plain tile and are occasionally thatched. Materials are red and gault brick, painted brick and there are some painted board facades. Outbuildings and conversions have black weatherboard with white bargeboards.

The perceptual experience varies depending on the level of containment provided by woodland. Long, expansive views over the flat land are possible in places, under big skies, to distantly wooded skylines - often the large blocks of forestry in the adjacent character to the south. The lanes provide variation - tall hedges/trees sometimes provide a tunnel-like enclosure which contrasts with the sense of exposure in the unhedged sections.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The south-east strip of the area is within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, this comprises the old Bentwaters airbase and the east side of Tunstall village.
- There is a substantial woodland resource in this area with multiple blocks of mixed woodland, fine specimen parkland trees, and old boundary coppice oaks. Two blocks of ancient woodland remain.
- The parkland character is distinctive and rare and gives a strong sense of place. Campsea Ash Park is listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage, and also listed with Suffolk Coastal District Council as a parkland of historic interest.

## Condition

The condition of the farmland is variable, sometimes better in the west side of the area where the estate feel is strongest. Further east, hedges are often not present or present only in short stretches. Where suckering elm is not being managed, the hedges are gappy have an untidy appearance. Staghead dieback to oaks is noticeable, indicating presence of disease.

The parklands are in mixed condition with much loss of area at Rendlesham, and loss of condition in the some of the other remaining areas.



## Strategy Objectives

<b>Protect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the remaining areas of parkland from further loss and protect their features and elements which contribute to the significance of the parkland landscapes.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the many woodlands and tree belts with appropriate traditional management regimes.</li> <li>• Manage the stock of characteristic field boundary trees for health, and ensure a varied age structure for a sustainable future.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the long term future of Bentwaters and ensure landscape and visual effects of proposed changes are fully addressed, including indirect effects such as additional traffic.</li> <li>• Plan for losses from the emerging tree disease affecting ash and oak.</li> </ul>

## M2 Trimley and Foxhall Estate Farmland

### Location

This area comprises the upper spine of the Felixstowe peninsula, close to Ipswich and extending east between the Orwell Estuary to the south and the Mill River Valley / Deben Estuary to the north-east and east respectively. It covers the upland from the south-east edge of Ipswich, east to Kirton and Trimley, as far the edge of Felixstowe.

### Constituent Types

The character area comprises the Estate Sandlands and the Plateau Estate Farmland types.



### Summary Description

This area comprises the interfluvial plateau that tops the Felixstowe peninsula between the river valleys to the north and south. It is a simple, linear, large-scale landscape of arable farmland, punctuated by rows of pine lines, with an altered and organised feel with few semi-natural or natural features in evidence. Its appearance is a result of relatively recent estate farming practise, and the effects of its strategic location between Ipswich and Felixstowe which accommodates significant road infrastructure and commercial enterprises. Land feels generally flat and rises from around 20m AOD on the edges of the river valleys to 25 or 30m AOD along the spine of the peninsula.

The area is bisected from west to east by the busy A14 corridor and the railway line which broadly track each other from Ipswich to Felixstowe. They have a strong influence on character, bringing noise and movement, a high proportion of HGV traffic, and act to divide and separate the two sides of the peninsula. The A14 and A12 join at Bucklesham and the A12 corridor heads north, at a tangent, towards Woodbridge. Felixstowe is the busiest container port in the UK and this is reflected in the high volumes of HGV traffic using these roads, resulting in a belt of noise and movement across the centre of the plateau.

The area's geology is a transition zone between the Sandlings and Suffolk's Claylands to the west. It is primarily glacial deposits of sand and gravels. Soils are fine, slightly acidic sandy loams which are fertile enough, with irrigation, for high value vegetable cropping as well as light enough for keeping pigs outdoor year round. Therefore, the farmed landscape is often overlain with plastic sheeting, dotted with pig arcs and irrigation reels and rigs which have a negative visual impact, although communicate the particularity of the farming types here. There are also embanked reservoirs and a large solar farm beside the A14 north of Levington.

From the medieval period until the twentieth century the agricultural economy of the survey area probably consisted of a mix of arable and grazing on the heath and commons. Before modern farming practices developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these soils were marginal. Some remnant patches of heathland still remain such as at Purdis Heath on the edge of Ipswich and a sense of the acid sands underfoot are also sensed from the bracken and gnarly oaks seen growing by the roadsides.

Large estates began to develop in the 18th and 19th centuries across the Orwell-Deben interfluve. Smaller farms became amalgamated under the control of large estates and today these large estate farms are important growers of barley, potatoes and vegetables. Field sizes are large and the patterns are strongly geometric. There is a strong sense of high value, intensive agriculture. The sway of large harvesting vehicles and teams of labourers in the large fields around Bucklesham are a common sight in the summer months. Another notable Estate is the Trimley estate owned by Trinity College Cambridge.

There are peri-urban land uses such as cemeteries, large school grounds (now converted to residential) and the Suffolk Showground, between the Bucklesham and Felixstowe Roads. This latter site has adjacent grassland car-parking meadows, covering some 80ha on the outskirts of Ipswich. A small civilian airport on the south-east outskirts of Ipswich functioned from 1930 to 1998, now been redeveloped as the Ravenswood housing area.

Tree cover is found in narrow strip plantations, and structural planting along the railway line and trunk roads. Rows of pines are characteristic at Levington, elsewhere further west, boundary oaks are prominent - around Foxhall for example. Woodland blocks are rare on the plateau – Bucklesham Wood in the centre of the area is the exception, around which the course of the A14 makes a curving detour. Woodland then links down on the adjacent valleyside through estate farmland and the parklands at Orwell Park and Broke Hall. Woodland rarely makes much impression on the visual experience which results in a prevailing experience of openness although poplar plantations in the adjoining valley landscapes can have a strong vertical impact in this flat landscape eg at Bucklesham.

The area has rich archaeological history. There are a scattering of Neolithic burial features across the landscape to the west of Ipswich. Some are Scheduled Monuments – such as at Levington Heath and Seven Hills, but other sites, identified in recent work, has identified important burial features at Kirton - potentially one of the oldest features in the area and of national significance. Nearer the coast there are military archaeological site such as the anti-aircraft ensemble at Searson's Farm installed in 1946.

There is a sparse network of lanes in the area, these can be fairly wide and are often straight with verges and hedges. Hedge species are mixed with a high proportion of elm – where managed the appearance is tidy, but where unmanaged the hedges can look unkempt as the elm passes through its cycles of growth and decline.

The current settlement pattern is a dispersed mix of isolated farmsteads, country estates and small villages. Villages were originally just a scattering of old cottages, now interspersed and added to by piecemeal 20<sup>th</sup> century housing. For example in Bucklesham the historic one-plot-deep pattern of the hamlet was absorbed amongst small estates of mainly bungalows in the interwar period, which create an indistinctive, suburban feel.

Vernacular architecture is found in modest rendered and red brick cottages, often with dormers and white timber detailing. Farmstead often have a attractive collection of brick or black weather boarded farm buildings. Some cottages have the locally distinctive black pan tiles.

Landmarks in the adjoining Felixstowe character area are visible from eastern parts of the

plateau - the looming container port cranes on the wharves not always seen, but when visible are constant reminders of the proximity of the docks. The water tower at Trimley is another familiar landmark.

Tranquillity in this area is usually limited, owing to the transport routes. However, the large scale and open nature of the landscape can make it feel somewhat quieter and emptier in parts and this has a useful function for providing separation between the urban areas.

## Special Qualities and Features

- The area has a distinctive Sandlings character with associated vegetation, remnants of heathland and distinctive elements like pine lines.
- Parts of the fringe of the character area are within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.
- Two short sections of long distance paths pass through the character area as they leave the outskirts of Ipswich. The southern branch of the Sandlings Walk leaves Ipswich at Bixley Heath and the Stour and Orwell Walk passes over the plateau at Nacton from its route from Ipswich docks through Orwell Country Park.
- Purdis Heath is just outside the urban area of Ipswich, and is a remnant of heathland designated SSSI but in poor condition.

## Condition

It is a landscape under pressure at both its eastern and western ends - from the west including commercial land use at Ransomes, and from the east, where there is growth from the port, and Felixstowe. Local villages are subject to development pressure given their proximity.

The condition of the remnant heathlands is generally poor owing to their location on the urban edge.

In the wider landscape hedges tend to have a lot of suckering elm and are in mixed condition.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the remaining semi-natural features and habitats from loss or harm due to development. Restore, maintain and enhance the pattern of locally distinctive pine lines.</li> <li>• Protect heathlands from any reduction in area. Consider how to prevent indirect effects resulting from adjacent land use changes such as increase in recreational pressure.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage change in areas adjacent to the AONB to ensure its landscape and perceptual qualities are not harmed.</li> <li>• Manage the heathlands to ensure retention and conservation of the remnants that remain. Manage bracken encroachment.</li> <li>• Manage proliferation of further leisure and tourist related land uses (eg golf courses, caravan parks) especially in the quieter areas of the character area to avoid the profound direct and indirect impacts can result.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restore, maintain and enhance the network of tree belts and pattern of small plantations found across much of this landscape type.</li></ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan to integrate new development using characteristic linear belts of trees, and replicate local species mixes.</li><li>• Plan to improve pedestrian/cycle path access across the infrastructure corridor to provide access to the AONB to help promote healthy lifestyles.</li></ul>

## N1 Boulge Park and Bredfield Rolling Farmland

### Location

This is gently rolling farmland that wraps around the east and north sides of Woodbridge and Melton, the eastern extents defined by the A12. It includes a small wedge of land between Woodbridge and Bealings, then a tract from Burgh and Clopton in the west to Bredfield, and north to Wickham Market.

### Constituent Types

The landscape is defined by the Ancient Rolling Farmlands type.



### Summary Description

This is a scenic gently rolling arable landscape, with a pleasant rural character. The gently undulating topography and well-vegetated enclosure networks, make for varied and scenic compositions in the views.

The area gently undulates between about 50m AOD along the edge of the high Suffolk clay plateau to the northwest, down to about 20m AOD along the Deben valley at Bealings and Melton, where streams have eroded shallow valleys i.e. tributaries to the Lark. Deben and Byng Brook. Its main soil type is derived from chalky clays left behind by the great Anglian glaciation - clay and loam soils dominate. There is a fringe of sandier soils to the south west of Woodbridge where Seckford Hall golf club is found.

The Byng Brook and its tributaries drain towards Ufford along a looping path creating the pleasing local variation in topography across the centre of the area. There is also a regular scattering of ponds across the landscape, often associated with farmsteads, some ancient in origin. A number of farms feature medieval moats.

The landscape is dominated by arable farming with scattered woodland, and some areas of pasture. It is organised into regular, medium sized field, within a generally intact network of hedges. To the west of Woodbridge there are late enclosure patterns, with characteristic straight field boundaries. There are other areas where field amalgamation has taken place resulting in a post 1950s agricultural landscapes, such as between Bredfield and Petistree



where the feel can be very open. The area features a large industrial scale poultry rearing sheds west of Boulge operated by Gressingham Duck, but the site is well screened and has little impact on the wider landscape.

Much of the area is well wooded comprising Ancient Woodland and some plantations, and the character of the tree cover can be notably mixed. As well as the broadleaf woodland, there are coniferous plantations, including Christmas trees, parkland species around Boulge Park such as horse chestnuts and recently planted avenues, and stands of poplars, e.g. south of Bredfield village, which have skyline impact. Some field boundary oaks are present but not as frequently as in other plateau areas.

There is a particular density of woodland north of White House Farm Hasketon, west of Ancient Boulge Wood and includes a nature reserve run by the Sinfield Trust featuring thick tree belts enclosing a series of wild-flower meadows and ponds. Here, traditional management practices include cattle grazing, hay cutting and coppicing.

Boulge Park was created in the 18th century and used to feature a grand house, Boulge Hall, which was demolished in the 1950s. It is associated the Fitzgerald family, and notably Edward Fitzgerald (1809 –1883) a Suffolk born poet and writer, friend and contemporary of Thackeray and Tennyson. The grounds of the park were turned over to cultivation during World War II, and only a copse of ancient trees marks out the site. The landscape still has a parkland feel, resulting from its stock of mature trees, and the wooded estate feel to the farmland. The Estate's impressive isolated flint and red brick church still stands, and is an attractive feature when glimpsed from the Woodbridge-Debach road just to the north.

The settlement pattern comprises small, and spread out linear villages and frequent farmsteads. The villages are formed of historic cottages and more modern infill, one plot deep, dispersed along the lanes. Farmsteads and cottages continue to be seen at regular intervals along the roadside. Sometimes inappropriate boundary treatments add a suburban touch but modern development has limited impact.

The settlement of Wickham Market in the north of the area. This is a historic, attractive and well-provisioned village that sits on the on high ground on the west bank of the River Deben. It has a nucleated form and has a medieval core, centred around the market square, known as The Hill, and its Conservation Area stretches north along the High Street, containing many attractive timber framed listed buildings. All Saints church has a notably tall spire which functions as a key local landmark.

The road network contrasts from the busy A12 trunk road to tiny lanes, enclosed in a tunnel of trees. The rural area is served by a winding network of small, hedged interconnecting lanes which form an organic or loosely rectilinear structure. They are key to the character of this area and how it is experienced.

Vernacular architecture is typical for East Suffolk and includes the timber-framed Suffolk 'long house', with rendered exteriors and soft red pan tiles. Cottages are red or gault brick or render, sometimes under a thatched roof. Barns are clad in black weatherboard with pan tile. Barns and houses sometimes have locally distinctive white painted bargeboards, sometimes decoratively edged. Wickham Market has some fine exposed timber frame buildings, and varied facades including flint and iron slag facings.

The perceptual experience is varied. In close proximity to Woodbridge, the A12 corridor, and the reasonably heavily trafficked cross-country A and B routes, the area can feel busy and overtly affected by human activity. The large double row of pylons that crosses the north of the area affect the sense of scale in the locality and detract from the rural character. It also feels somewhat eroded and featureless where field boundary loss is evident.

Away from the urban area and infrastructure, the landscape feels more peaceful. The gently undulating topography and well vegetated enclosure networks, make for a pleasant rural character, and on the edge of the area at Hasketon for example, there are longer views across the well wooded Lark valley. Elsewhere, blocks of woodland, depressions in the landform, and regular well managed roadside hedges provide containment. Scenic quality derives from variations in topography, variations in vegetation and attractive views and land use patterns.

## Special qualities and Features

- Boulge Park is listed by SCDC under policy SSP37 as 'Park and Gardens of Historic Interest' and it retains a parkland feel despite land use being mainly for agriculture.
- There are three Ancient Woodlands in the area, Ufford Thicks, Boulge Wood and Blunts Wood just west of Woodbridge.
- Wickham Market has a wealth of medieval architecture and Victorian heritage. Its church spire is a key landmark in the far north of the area in views towards the village.

## Condition

Generally, in the more intact parts of the area, the landscape is well managed. There is scope for improvement in the area of field amalgamation. The woodland and tree stock is in good condition and is well managed in many parts of the area. Recent parkland tree planting has taken place at Boulge Park.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the essentially undeveloped rural character of the area and the character of the dispersed linear villages.</li> <li>• Protect the quiet, rural character of the narrow lanes, avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, or widening, for example or urban curtilage treatment e.g. fencing.</li> <li>• Protect the plateau landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area e.g. from new tall vertical features such as masts or turbines or new urban development.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of elm dominated hedgerows through coppice rotations.</li> <li>• Management the woodlands to ensure the existing proportions are maintained.</li> </ul>

**Plan**

- Plan future expansion of any villages carefully to retain character and settlement patterns.
- Plan for enhancements to biodiversity in this highly agricultural landscape, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.
- Plan for further restoration and enhancement of parkland.

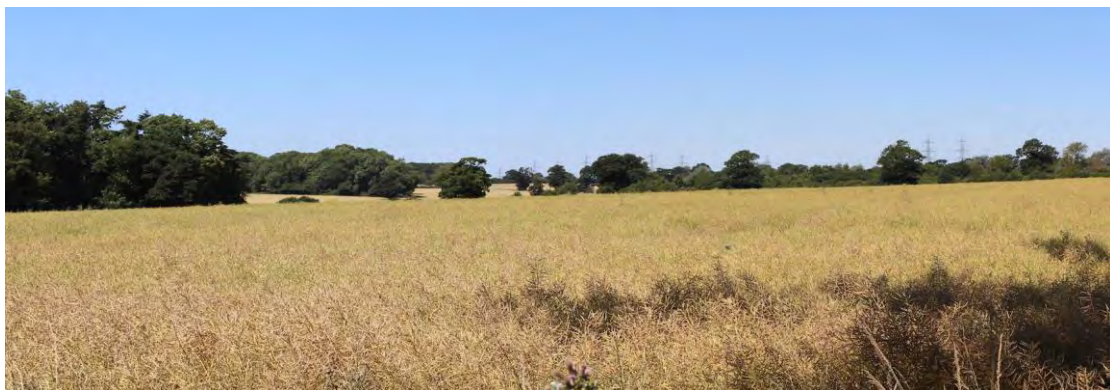
## N2 Culpho and Westerfield Rolling Farmland

### Location

Elevated farmland on either side of the Fynn Valley, and south-east of the Lark Valley. It comprises the parishes of Westerfield and Rushmere on the NW fringe of Ipswich, sweeping north and east to Witnesham, Swilland, Culpho and Grundisburgh. (It extends into Mid-Suffolk District to the east as far as Claydon).

### Constituent Types

The landscape is defined entirely by the Ancient Rolling Farmland type.



### Summary Description

This is an area of flat and gently rolling, fairly unified countryside, of farmlands studded with oak trees and lined with ancient hedges. The adjoining wooded river valleys below, that have incised through the plateau, provide opportunity for longer and scenic views. Its location on the edge of Ipswich makes it the setting to a number of roads and villages; it is a conduit for traffic leaving the town on a radial network of often busy roads so tranquillity is somewhat compromised. The contrasting experience of passing over the more open plateaus, and then down into the wooded valleys is a key part of the experience of the landscape. The area is likely to see much change in coming years from the planned northern expansion of Ipswich.

The agricultural landscape is organised within patterns of pre-18th 'ancient' enclosure, and some species-rich hedgerows and associated ditches survive. But this area has also seen much amalgamation and regularising of the enclosure patterns resulting in large fields with straight boundaries, often unhedged, particularly in the west of the area. Here, where the vegetation network has been lost, there are some large field sizes giving rise to very open views. In such areas, detracting features can have a substantial impact – such as the double row of tall pylons that cross the area. From some points, between Culpho and Witnesham, nearly 20 pylons can be seen dominating the skyline. Large-scale agricultural buildings also have a negative impact in this fairly open landscape.

This is a wide belt of interfluvial plateau elevated between approximately 35 and 55m AOD. The soils are somewhat varied and are derived from the chalky clays left behind by the great Anglian Glaciation. The minor undulations are a result of the action of minor streams, which feed into the main valleys to either side. As well as these small streams, there are ponds

associated with farmsteads scattered across the landscape, reflecting areas with more impermeable clay soils.

Woodland is sparse in the west of the area but more frequent in the east where regular blocks of plantation woodland can be seen. Two pockets of Ancient woodland are found at Culpho Woods and Lux Woods in Playford but is otherwise absent. Yet the landscape feels well 'treed' as hedges and field boundary trees are regularly found. Hedges are predominantly of hawthorn and elm, with oak as the characteristic hedgerow tree. There are enough of them, that they link with hedgerows and occasional plantation to give the skyline a wooded feel.

Settlement is found in a number of moderately large villages - Rushmere St. Andrew, Westerfield, and parts of Tuddenham, Witnesham, and Grundisburgh. Apart from Grundisburgh (its historic core in area B9), these were historically small, linear settlements but have seen much addition and infilling in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today they feature a range of historic and more modern buildings and often have a mixed character, which can be somewhat suburban.

Away from the main road, lanes are narrow, often hedged and become sunken within vegetated embankments as they pass down into the valleys. Farmsteads are encountered at intervals. Farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, the houses colour-washed and the barns blackened with tar. Roofs are frequently tiled. There are some ancient Hall farms e.g, Toad Hall, Newton Hall, Westerfield Hall and Tuddenham Hall.

The Ipswich-Lowestoft railway line enters the Character Area of Westerfield, where there is a station and level crossing, and heads east towards Woodbridge. It is not a prominent feature as it is located away from the main routes and villages and is frequently in cutting.

The predominant visual experience is one of openness, but roads and lanes are often hedged providing intimacy and contrast to the lengthy views otherwise experienced.

## Special Qualities and Features

- This area is important as the rural setting to the northern edge of Ipswich and as setting to a number of villages. The visual experience is one of variety from longer views over open arable land, with a lightly wooded feel, to contained views where hedged roads and lanes offer intimacy.
- Oak trees at intervals along lanes and field boundaries are very distinctive.
- There is a small area of parkland on the edge of the character area south of Grundisburgh associated with Grundisburgh Hall.
- Ancient woodland is found at Culpho and Lux Woods.

## Condition

The field boundary hedges that are left are in moderate condition but they are somewhat dynamic owing to the high proportion of elm with its characteristic cycle of growth and decline. Young boundary oaks are seen on roadsides indicating positive maintenance of these characteristic boundary features.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the separation between the edge of Ipswich and the villages of Westerfield,</li> </ul>

<p>Tuddenham and Rushmere.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the network of hedges and trees within any future urban expansion proposals and seek opportunities to link and strengthen the network.</li> <li>• Protect the quiet, rural character of the lanes, avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, widening, or lighting.</li> <li>• Protect the plateau landscape from visual intrusion of development in areas beyond this character area e.g. from new tall vertical features such as masts or turbines or new urban development.</li> </ul>
<b>Manage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of elm-dominated hedgerows through coppice rotations.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan future expansion of any villages carefully to retain character and settlement patterns.</li> <li>• Plan for the ongoing maintenance and careful management of the characteristic oak trees along hedges, verges and field boundaries.</li> <li>• Plan for enhancements to biodiversity in this highly agricultural landscape, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.</li> </ul>



## O1 Benhall Estate Sandlands

### Location

A small area of rolling land between the river Alde, to the west, and the Fromus to the east. It comprises the parishes of Farnham and Benhall, and reaches north as far as the edge of Saxmundham.

### Constituent Types

The area is entirely comprised of the Rolling Estate Sandlands landscape type



### Summary Description

This is a small area formed of shallow valley slopes in the wedge shaped interfluvium of the Alde and Fromus. The area is bisected by the A12 corridor which creates a sense of separation and the character to the west of the A12 is dominated by a large area of parkland – Benhall Park. The character has a strong Sandlings feel and away from the major transport corridors that pass through, it feels quiet and empty. It has a strong estate character, with blocks of mixed woodlands enclosing and forming a backdrop to the arable parcels or parkland.

The soils are a typical Sandlings mix of sandy soil types, overlying thin glacial deposits on top of Crag sands. The gently undulating landform is a result of incision by the small rivers on either side, through the layers of easily denuded minerals revealing different profiles and giving rise to variation in soils.

Such light lands were once considered marginal but the effect of C20<sup>th</sup> improvements to agriculture meant land which was previously too poor and dry, became valuable with irrigation. Today, crops such as barley, herbs and vegetables are important here, as well as outdoor pigs with the growth in demand for higher welfare standards for pork. Farms consolidated and estates grew up, the resulting landscape has a more uniform appearance as coordinated management practices were applied to large areas. However, there is a little more variation and organic feel here than on the adjoining clayland estate uplands on the plateau further north.

A large area of the western part is extant and former parkland. Benhall Park sits just west of the A12 in the centre of the area. There are records of a manor house here since at least 1225. The mansion here – Benhall Lodge - has been remodelled and rebuilt by various Lords of the Manor, sometimes following serious fires (eg 1885 and 1967) The manor was purportedly once in the ownership of King Henry VIII. The parkland is a mix of landuses - grassland managed for hay, horse grazing as well as areas converted into arable fields. All are studded with specimens or small groups of parkland scale trees and views through the parkland are attractive and distinctive.

Ancient Woodland is absent from this area. Instead woodland is found in irregular small plantation blocks and rectilinear strips where it has a strong visual impact and provides containment. The species are typical sandland species - oak and ash, sweet chestnut, brought into East Anglia by the Romans, as well as conifers. The wider than usual mix of species in the estate plantations gives them more height variation, tones and texture than the more uniform clayland woodlands. Rows of Scots Pine as field boundaries are sometime seen and along with the bracken-filled verges help convey a Sandlings character. Hedgerow restoration in the south of the area means hedges are species-rich with hawthorn, hazel, field maple, elder as well as suckering elm in the older hedges, which are usually fairly well managed in the farmlands, less so along the Parkland boundaries.

Settlement is light and dispersed – Benhall has both a small nucleated village just beyond the eastern extents of the character area, as well as other outlying hamlets – Benhall Low Street and Silverlace Green are on the valleyside to the west and sit within a quiet rural part of the parkland fringes. Occasionally farms are found sitting alongside the roads, but are often down tracks. When tucked away from sight, the area can feel fairly devoid of settlement, but the farmsteads contribute a sense of settlement when glimpsed through vegetated settings.

Visually the contribution of vernacular architecture is limited, given the hidden nature of many of the farms, but the cottages and outbuildings seen are attractive soft red brick, sometimes with ornate brickwork details on chimney stacks. As in much of this area black weather boards are seen on outbuildings but also some flint in the west. Roofs are red pantiles. Many of the cottages have unfortunately suffered unsympathetic plastic window ‘upgrades’.

One landmark is the unusual brick towered church on elevated land at Farnham which overlooks the village and River Alde valley below towards the west. Its main nave is Norman in origin with lancet windows and very thick walls, but its crenelated brick tower dates from the Tudor period. St. Mary’s church, Benhall, is an isolated flint church west of the park (C19<sup>th</sup> but possible a remodelled more ancient structure), and a small flint gatehouse lies nearby.

The passing tourist traffic accessing the beaches and scenic resorts of the Suffolk coasts provides opportunities for businesses, but visitor attractions create seasonal pressures and visual impacts. At Friday Street large numbers of cars park, in summer, on the meadows beside the A12 to visit the Maize Maze and Farmshop/café and supporting signage is often intrusive. Contrasting small-scale operations, such as smallholdings, where there can be a proliferation of structures and fencing, and planting of inappropriate species such as eucalyptus, also have a negative effect on character.

The visual experience is mixed. Where field boundaries are not hedged, extensive views are possible over consecutive large fields and stretch to distant wooded skylines, punctuated by pylons in the south of the area. Elsewhere there is a stronger estate feel, with more

containment from woodland which forms a backdrop views over the fields, strips of Scots Pine are distinctive.

## Special Qualities and Features

- Attractive estate farmland and parkland landscapes, each with strong and distinctive character, unified by the well wooded nature of the landscape and the mix of native and semi-ornamental tree species.
- Benhall Park is recognised as a 'Park or Garden of Historic or Landscape Interest' by the District Council and offers a scenic combination of pasture and scattered trees, for the most part unappreciable to traffic passing on the A12. It features a number of Listed Buildings including Benhall Lodge. The Walled Garden to the west of the Lodge is a tourist attraction.
- Away from the busy A12 corridor the area provides a quiet peaceful area of very productive countryside, overlooked by the crowds heading past to Aldeburgh Dunwich and Southwold.

## Condition

Generally the farmed and parkland landscapes are in a good condition, maintaining a high percentage of woodland cover, and long lengths of recently planted and restored hedgerows are in evidence. Where parkland has been reverted to arable land the character is eroded. Small holdings can have a negative effect with inappropriate ornamental tree species such as eucalyptus and a proliferation of garden structures and fencing.

## Strategy Objectives

Protect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect this area from development, as settlement is generally not found here. Protect the character of the historic farmsteads.</li> <li>• Protect the features and elements which define the estate farm landscape character, particularly its robust structure of woodland belts and hedges.</li> <li>• Protect the quiet, rural character of the narrow lanes, avoiding unnecessary signage, kerbing, or widening, for example. Resist further proliferation of signage, or highways interventions, along the A12 corridor.</li> </ul>
Manage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage elm dominated hedgerows through coppice rotations.</li> <li>• Manage woodlands, via traditional methods, to ensure the existing characteristic species mixes and proportions are maintained.</li> </ul>
Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for enhancements to biodiversity in the agricultural landscape, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.</li> <li>• Plan for further restoration and enhancement of the parkland and plan for a sustainable, mixed age structure in the parkland trees.</li> </ul>

## 3.0 Conclusion

This Landscape Character Assessment provides a detailed understanding of the entire landscape of Suffolk Coastal District both within and outside the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

This landscape character assessment classifies and describes the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes one landscape different from another and gives a landscape its sense of place. Judgements are made about the character and condition of the landscape and pressures for this character and condition to change.

Previous Local Plan documents for Suffolk Coastal have contained Special Landscape Area (SLA) policy designations inherited from the former Suffolk County Structure Plan of 2001. The Suffolk County Structure Plan listed particular characteristics for a landscape to exhibit in order to be subject to a Special Landscape Area (SLA) policy designation in local planning documents.

This Landscape Character Assessment report has been commissioned in order to provide scrutiny of Suffolk Coastal landscapes consistent with current national policy and practice around landscape assessment, notably Natural England's 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2002). This Landscape Character Assessment does not concentrate on landscape types that exhibit a particular combination of characteristics. Instead it breaks the entire District down into particular landscape areas.

The landscape areas are unique areas that occur in only one place and are geographically specific. They have their own individual character and identity. Rather than categorically determining the extent of a type of special landscape character, this piece of evidence values the whole landscape. It provides more comprehensive analysis and recommendations including key features and sensitivities to be protected in each mapped landscape area.

This Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared as a stand alone piece of evidence. It informs separate Settlement Fringe studies for settlement in Suffolk Coastal District as well as around Ipswich.