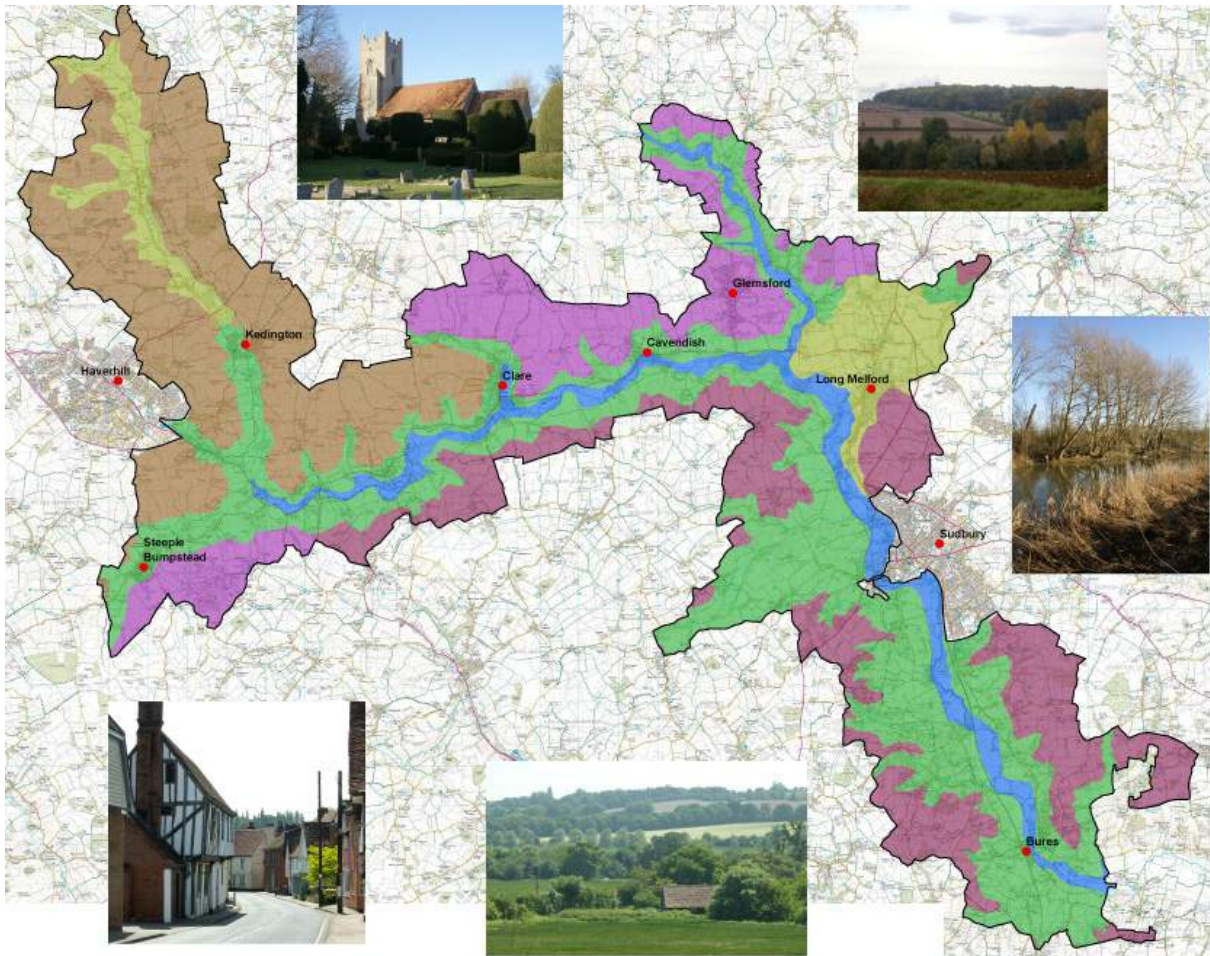


# Valued Landscape Assessment Stour Valley Project Area



Final Report

March 2020



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Appendix 1: Fold out key to settlement mapping

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Appointment

Alison Farmer Associates was appointed in July 2019 to undertake a value landscape assessment of the Additional Project Areas (APAs) associated with the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which lie beyond these designation boundaries.

This report sets out the findings of the assessment for the Dedham Vale APA (referred to in this document as the Stour Valley Project Area - SVPA), and its key settlements. A separately bound report has also been prepared for the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB APA.

### 1.2 The Brief and Scope of Work

The purpose of the study is to:

- Articulate valued aspects of the landscape within the Project Area
- Develop knowledge and understanding about the area's natural beauty, special qualities, landscape and cultural features which contribute to valued landscapes
- Identify the sensitivity of the landscape to change
- Provide evidence which can be used to inform responses to planning applications/appeals in the context of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 170a
- Better protect Project Areas against inappropriate development.

The brief did not require a review of the boundary or extent of the Project Area.

It is anticipated that the outputs from this study will be used to:

- Inform emerging Local Plan policy for the Project Area.
- Ensure that the Project Area is given due consideration in all development proposals.
- Inform future AONB Management Plan reviews (that include reference to the Additional Project Area).

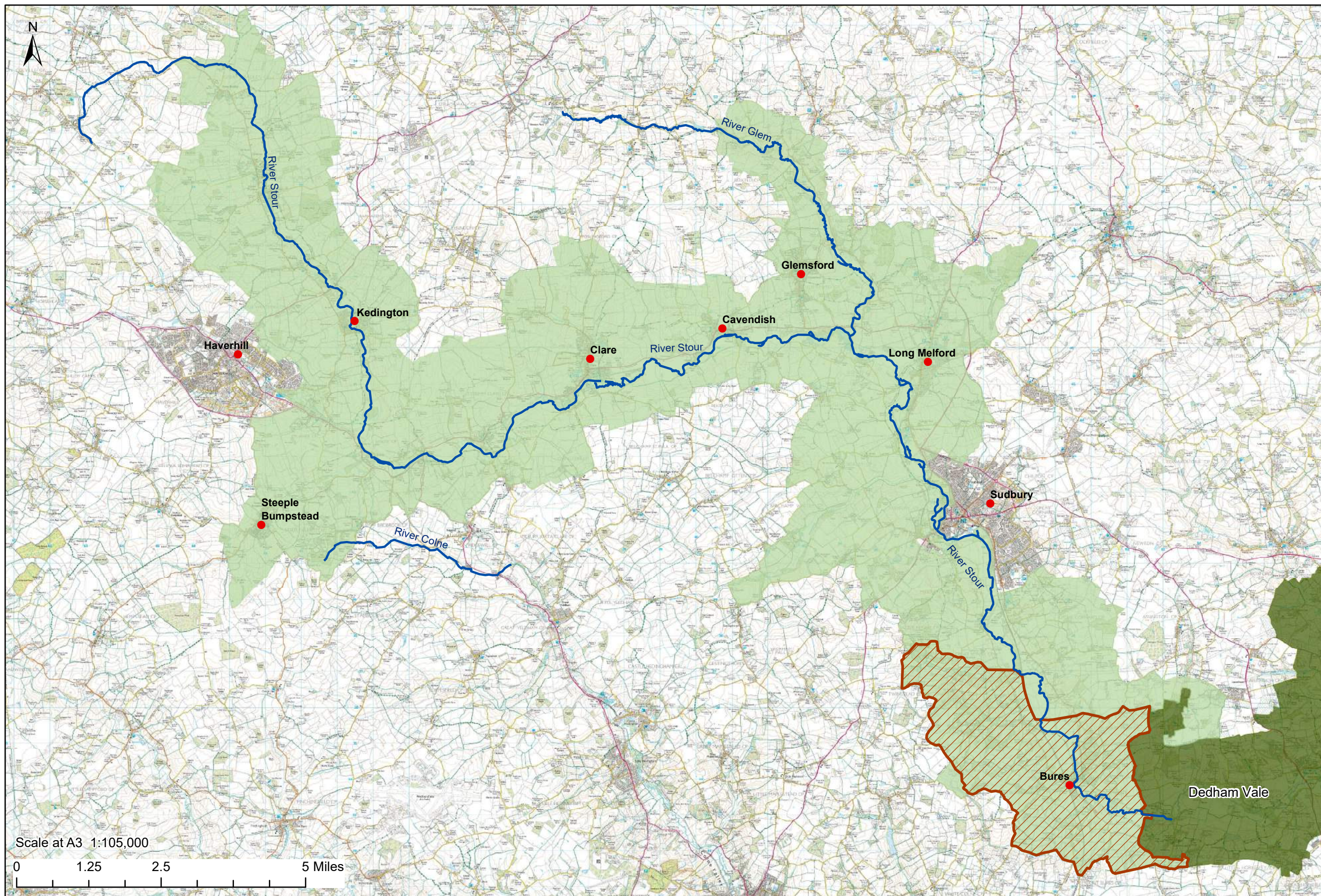
### 1.3 The Additional Project Area

The study area for assessment comprises the Dedham Vale Additional Project Area otherwise known as the Stour Valley Project Area (SVPA). This area is defined in the Dedham Vale AONB Management Plan and is illustrated on Figure 1 below.

The origins of the Stour Valley Project Area stem from early pressure on the former Countryside Commission by Local Authorities in the 1970's to consider a wider area for

**Valued Landscapes  
Stour Valley Project Area**

**Figure 1:  
Study Area**



- Stour Valley Project Area (SVPA)
- Settlement
- Proposed extension to Dedham Vale AONB
- Dedham Vale AONB
- Main River

Source: Natural England

AONB designation. The Countryside Commission, in response to this, set up a "potential AONB" project<sup>1</sup> in 1978. This project was considerably widened in 1981 and eventually became the basis for a project covering an area along the whole of the Stour Valley, upstream of the AONB.

The Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021 describes both the AONB and wider SVPA as *'one of England's finest landscapes with its riverside meadows, picturesque villages and rolling farmland.'*<sup>2</sup> In particular, the Management Plan describes the SVPA as:

*'302 square kilometres (around 181 square miles) running from the Western AONB boundary past Sudbury and Haverhill to near the Cambridgeshire border at Great Bradley. It extends three or four kilometres either side of the River Stour with extensions along the Bumpstead Brook, Belchamp Brook and River Glem.'*

*The Project area is predominately rural and often demonstrates medieval settlement patterns. In places the growth of villages and changes to agricultural practices have altered the landscape but not fundamentally changed it. Many of the villages retain their historic centres and have timber framed buildings, imposing churches and village greens. Historic hamlets and isolated farm buildings are scattered throughout the landscape.'*<sup>3</sup>

The Management Plan also identifies the importance of the villages to the special character of the landscape stating:

*'The significance of the villages to the character of the area has been increasingly recognised and local development plans have reinforced the need for high quality development to contribute to that character.'*<sup>4</sup>

The Additional Project Area is clearly embedded within the Dedham Vale Management Plan and the work of the AONB Countryside Management Service which regularly works within the area, beyond the boundary of the existing AONB.

#### 1.4 Planning Context and Status of SVPA

Although the Stour Valley Project Area is specifically referred to in the AONB Management Plan, it has no formal landscape status in planning terms.

##### **National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019)**

The National Planning Policy Framework refers to valued landscapes in para 170 (a) and states that:

<sup>1</sup> Designation History Series, Dedham Vale AONB, Ray Woolmore, May 2010, para 82.

<sup>2</sup> Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021 Page 7

<sup>3</sup> Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021 Page 12

<sup>4</sup> Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021 Page 28

*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).*

### **Local Plan Policy**

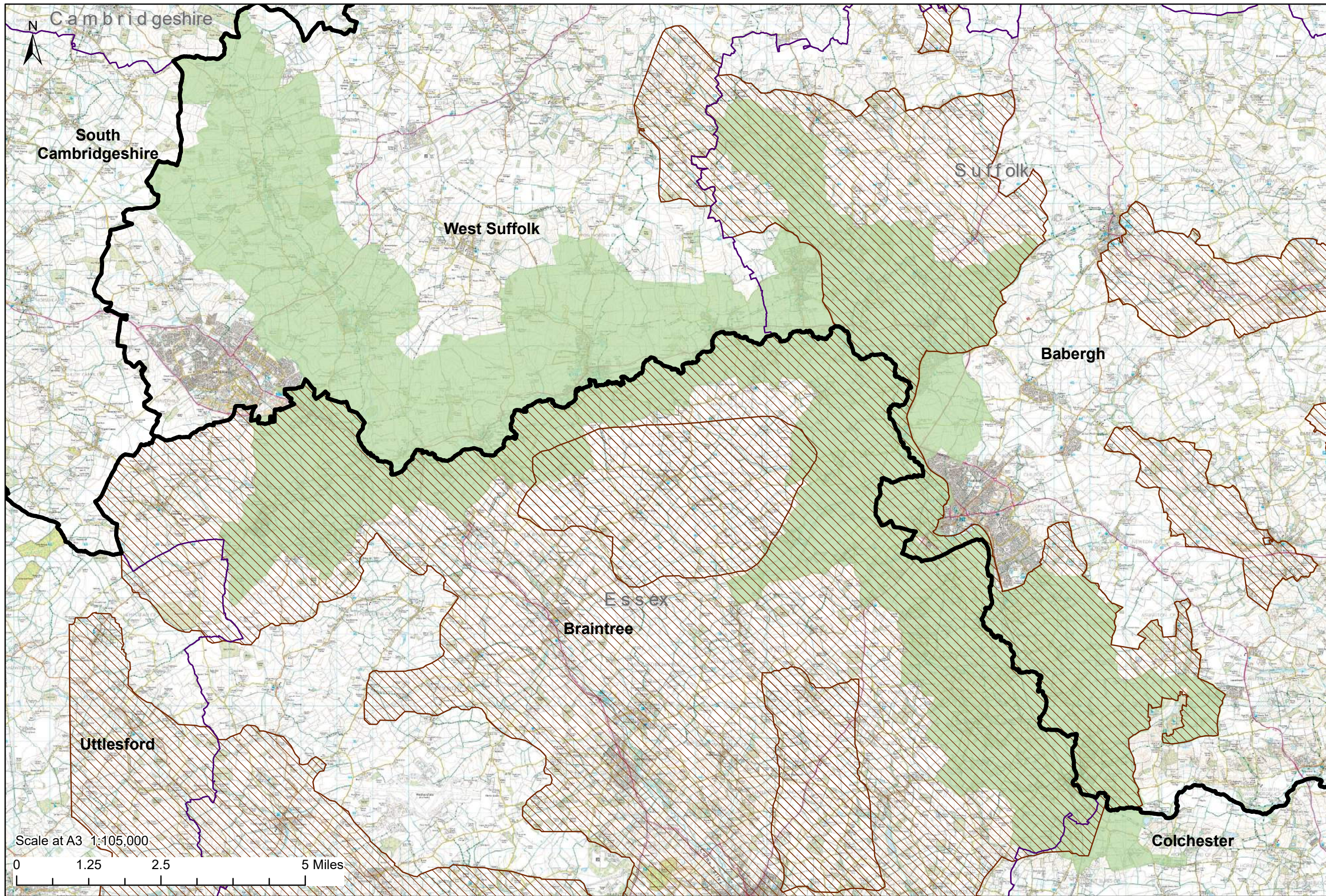
The local authorities which cover the Stour Valley Project Area include Essex and Suffolk Counties, Colchester Borough, Braintree District, Babergh District and West Suffolk District (formerly St Edmundsbury). The extent of these administrative areas is illustrated on Figure 2.

Planning policies associated with each administrative area vary, and current landscape policy is set out in the Table 1 below (emphasis has been added for clarity). Although each local plan is at a different stage, they all make reference to the wider objectives of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan or Special Landscape Areas.

**Table 1: Summary of relevant local plan policy**

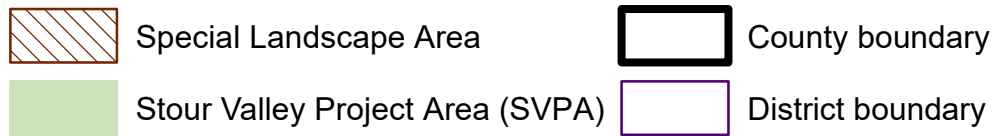
<p><b>Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18))</b></p> <p><b><i>Policy LP19 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i></b></p> <p>The Councils will support development <u>in or near the AONBs</u> that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Gives great weight to <u>conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty</u>;</li> <li>b. Does not adversely affect the character, quality views and distinctiveness of the AONB or threaten public enjoyment of these areas; and</li> <li>c. <u>Supports the wider environmental, social and economic objectives as set out in the AONB Management Plan</u><sup>5</sup></li> </ul> <p><b><i>Policy LP18 – Landscape</i></b></p> <p>The Councils will support: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Development in suitable locations which will not adversely affect the natural environment including landscape character sensitivity and visual impacts of the proposal on the wider area (including effects on health, living conditions).</li> <li>b. New development that integrates positively with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforces the local distinctiveness.</li> </ul>
--

<sup>5</sup> Management Plan includes but not exclusively; Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project Management Plan and Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB



**Valued Landscapes  
Stour Valley Project Area**

**Figure 2:**  
Special Landscape Areas  
and Administrative  
Boundaries



Source: Babergh & Mid Sussex and West Suffolk District Council



- c. Proposals that are sensitive to their landscape, visual or amenity impacts (including on dark skies); subject to siting, design, lighting, use of materials and colour, along with the mitigation of any adverse impacts.
- d. Development that enhances and protects **landscape value** such as; locally characteristic landscape features, archaeological and historic use patterns of settlement and land and designations; being demonstrably informed by local guidance, in particular the Council's Local Landscape Guidance, the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment.

#### **Braintree Core Strategy 2011**

##### ***Policy CS8***

Development must have regard to the character of the landscape and its sensitivity to change and where development is permitted it will need to enhance the locally distinctive character of the landscape in accordance with the Landscape Character Assessment.

#### **Braintree Local Plan Publication Draft for Consultation 2017 (section 2)**

##### ***Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty***

8.27 Just outside the District, the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers a 90km<sup>2</sup> area centred on the lower Stour Valley. This area benefits from the highest level of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty as set out in the NPPF. Legislation in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires that in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or affecting land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the statutory purpose for which the land is designated. In case of an AONB, this is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. **The upper Stour Valley, adjoining the AONB, is partly located along the north and east boundary of Braintree District and is an important and sensitive rural landscape, recognised by the fact that it is part of the wider project area covered by the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project. The impact of development proposals in the upper Stour Valley will be particularly carefully assessed in light of the sensitive nature of this landscape. Proposed developments here should support the wider environmental, social and economic objectives as set out in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan and should not prejudice the long-term aim to enlarge the area included within the AONB designation.**

##### ***Policy LPP 71 Landscape Character and Features***

In its decision-making on applications, the Local Planning Authority will take into account the different roles and character of the various landscape areas in the District, and **recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside**, in order to ensure that any development permitted is suitable for the local context. In doing so regard must be given to the hierarchy of designations as expressed in NPPF

#### **Colchester Borough Local Plan Publication Draft June 2017**

##### ***Policy ENV4: Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty***

Development will only be supported **in or on land within the setting of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** that:

(i) Makes a positive contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB, including tranquillity and the AONB's good quality night/dark skies; and,

(ii) Does not adversely affect the character, **quality views, into and out of the AONB** and distinctiveness of the AONB or threaten public enjoyment of these areas, including by increased motorised vehicle movement; and,

(iii) That there are no adverse impacts on the setting of the AONB which cannot reasonably be mitigated against and,

(iv) **Supports the wider environmental, social and economic objectives as set out in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan.**

#### **West Suffolk (Formerly St Edmundsbury) Core Strategy 2010**

4.28 Suffolk County Council and the district and borough councils in Suffolk have carried out a **Landscape Character Assessment** (2009) that includes a wide variety of factors, such as geology, topography, soil types, ecology, ground cover and condition, land use, field patterns, cultural influences, and historical changes. **Whilst this provides a good level of information it is insufficiently detailed at borough level to form the basis for the replacement of the Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation as advised in PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.** Therefore, for the time being the SLAs will continue to be protected through inclusion in policies in the Development Management DPD until a more detailed Landscape Character Assessment of the borough is carried out.

[Note the SLA does not extend into the Additional Project Area]

#### **Policy CS2 Sustainable Development**

A high quality, sustainable environment will be achieved by designing and incorporating measures appropriate to the nature and scale of development, including:

The protection and enhancement of natural resources:

A) making the most resource efficient use of land and infrastructure;

B) protecting and enhancing biodiversity, wildlife and geodiversity, and avoiding impact on areas of nature conservation interest in both rural and built up areas;

C) identifying, protecting and conserving: a network of designated sites including the Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA)\* and other sites of national and local importance; Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat and species; wildlife or green corridors, ecological networks; and other green spaces will be identified, protected and habitats created as appropriate;

D) **conserving and, wherever possible, enhancing the character and quality of local landscapes and the wider countryside and public access to them, in a way that recognises and protects the fragility of these resources;**

E) conserving and, wherever possible, enhancing other natural resources including, air quality and the quality and local distinctiveness of soils;

F) protecting the quality and availability of water resources;

G) maximising the efficient use of water including recycling of used water and rainwater harvesting;

H) maximising the potential of existing and new sources of energy from biomass including timber and other energy crops.

These policies demonstrate the recognition of the AONB, its setting, and wider Project Area/valued landscapes, but they also demonstrate a degree of variation.

## 1.5 Special Landscape Areas

Planning policy associated with St Edmundsbury (which has the oldest Local Plan) makes reference to Special Landscape Areas - a landscape designation which has, in more recent local plans, been dropped from planning policy. Historically all of the Local Authorities identified Special Landscape Areas – this was not unusual in the 1980's when County Structure Plans highlighted a desire to identify Special Landscape Areas in broad terms and for them to be more specifically defined in District Plans. This was the case for both the Essex and Suffolk Structure Plans. The former recognised areas with *'distinctive scenic attraction and of great landscape value resulting from a combination of features such as vegetation cover and landform'*, while Suffolk defined SLAs as:

- *'River valleys which still possess traditional grazing meadows with their hedgerows, dykes, and associated flora and fauna;*
- *Historic parklands and gardens;*
- *Other areas of countryside where undulating topography and natural vegetation, particularly broadleaved woodland, combine to produce an area of special landscape quality and character.'*

These areas were subsequently defined in respective local plans and incorporated into relevant policy. Although there is no record of assessments which justify the extent of SLAs, reference to former local plans has enabled the SLAs to be mapped in relation to the SVPA – refer to Figure 2. This demonstrates that much of the Stour Valley, and thus the SVPA, fell within a landscape recognised for its scenic quality and combination of features.

Whilst SLAs, and policy relating to them, are no longer in use, the removal of a local landscape designation does not mean that the qualities of the landscape that led to designation have somehow changed, often they have not. The past inclusion of the Stour Valley within a Special Landscape Area is therefore relevant to this study and forms part of the area's designation history.

## 1.6 Past Landscape Evaluation

In 2016 the Dedham Vale AONB commissioned the evaluation of an area between the existing AONB boundary and Sudbury, to determine if the land was worthy of

designation as AONB. This study concluded that part of the land was worthy of designation and the results of this assessment were set out in the report titled *Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB: Evaluation of Area Between Bures and Sudbury*<sup>6</sup> and illustrated on Figure 1 above. Formal proposals have subsequently been submitted to Natural England (the designating authority) for consideration as part of an extension to the Dedham Vale AONB.

On this basis, the area identified as suitable for AONB designation has not been assessed further as part of this project.

## 1.7 Relevant Planning Appeals

Recent planning appeals relating to development within the SVPA are illustrative of some of the issues that currently exist when dealing with the landscape, its value and sensitivities and planning policy. Two appeals are particularly relevant, namely Steeple Bumpstead and Bures and these are discussed below.

### ***Steeple Bumpstead (Braintree District)***

This appeal was in relation to a housing scheme for up to 65 dwellings on the south side of the village of Steeple Bumpstead. The inspector noted that the village and site lay within the SVPA, and that while it did not have any planning status within local plan policy or the proposals map, its inclusion in the AONB management plan enabled it to be given significant weight. The Inspector went on to state *'I do appreciate however that the area is extensive and not all parts of it will have equal landscape quality.'*

The Inspector took account of the value placed on the landscape by local people and the sensitivity of these visual receptors engaged in recreation within the wider landscape, the perception of tranquillity in the area, the scenic quality of the surrounding landscape and the position of the village nestling within the valley bottom - the trees within the settlement creating a verdant impression. She concluded that *'having considered all its characteristics and the inclusion of the site within the Stour Valley Project Area, I conclude that it is a valued landscape in terms of paragraph 109 [now 170a] of the Framework [NPPF Feb 2019].'*

### ***Bures (Colchester District)***

This appeal was in relation to a housing scheme for up to 98 dwellings off Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet. In para 21 the Inspector notes:

*'I consider that recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside would have little practical effect without an assessment of the particular qualities of the countryside and the landscape setting where development is proposed and the effect of that development upon them. Neither, having regard to paragraph 127, do I consider that the exhortation to protect and enhance 'value' landscapes is necessarily limited to*

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<sup>6</sup> Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB: Evaluation of Area Between Bures and Sudbury, Alison Farmer Associates, July 2016.

*landscape that have either a statutory designation or a local designation in the development plan.'*

The Inspector goes on to state in para 22:

*'The Framework does not provide a definition of a valued landscape. However, I consider it improbable that the addition of the words in brackets to paragraph 170(a)...was intended to encourage policy makers to revive the practice of creating local 'Special Landscape Areas' or similar designation in development plans as a means of identifying a valued landscape.'*

And in para 23

*'In any event, whether or not the site qualifies as a 'valued landscape' in terms of the Framework, the Framework at Paragraph 127 requires development to be sympathetic to its landscape setting. Such consideration must necessarily have regard to the sensitivity of that landscape.'*

He concluded in para 24 that *'In this case I consider that there is ample evidence that the landscape around Bures, including the appeal site, is not ordinary countryside of no value but is of high sensitivity and is locally valued.'*

These planning appeals highlight:

- the weight which is given to the inclusion of land within the SVPA and reference to this within the Dedham Vale AONB Management Plan
- that not all land within the SVPA will have equal landscape quality
- that a landscape may be a valued landscape even if it is not defined within policy or a local development proposals map
- that a landscape may be sensitive to a particular development even if it is concluded that it is not a valued landscape

## 2.0 Approach and Methodology

### 2.1 Stages of Work and References

The project comprises four stages of work. Firstly, a desk-based assessment where background information on the area and key settlements was gathered and reviewed. Secondly, site assessment where the Stour Valley Project Area was visited, and information gathered on special qualities and where individual settlements were assessed in detail. Thirdly, analysis of evidence and assimilation and judgements on landscape value. Finally, the writing up of the findings of the study.

Key sources of information used during the study have included the following:

- 1:25,000 and 1:10,000 OS mapping.
- Historic maps and aerial photography.
- Historic Landscape Characterisation and Historic Settlement Atlas.
- Landscape Character Assessments.
- Landscape designations including Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and former Special Landscape Areas.
- Cultural heritage designations including Conservation Area Appraisals, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens.
- Natural heritage designations including ancient woodland, Tree Preservation Orders, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves, Ramsar, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Local Wildlife Sites.
- Recreational routes including public rights of way, bridleways, CROW/access land, national trails, cycle routes, locally important open space.
- Green Infrastructure Strategies.
- Local Plan Policies and Designations.
- Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Neighbourhood Plans.

The main background documents referred to in this study are set out in appendix 2.

### 2.2 Approach to Assessing Landscape Value

Over the past 30 years techniques for assessing and evaluating landscape, (as oppose to simply describing it in landscape character assessments), have evolved. There are three principle sources of information on landscape evaluation and the factors which can be taken into account when determining value as follows:

***Natural England Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England (2012)***

This guidance relates to defining areas for National Park and AONB designation in England. These are our most treasured landscapes and are designated for their natural

beauty and in the case of National Parks, opportunities for open air recreation. As such they are given the highest level of protection within the NPPF (paras 172). Natural England, as the designating authority, published guidance to inform its work in defining new designations and undertaking boundary reviews. This guidance set out the factors which can be taken into account when determining whether a landscape has sufficient natural beauty and (in the case of National Parks) recreation opportunities to warrant national designation. The techniques and approach adopted in this type of assessment are useful to apply when undertaking valued landscape assessments and enable a level of transparency and consistency in making judgements.

***Guidance on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)***

The second source of information which informs landscape evaluation and the identification of valued landscape can be found in Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA)<sup>7</sup>. This defines landscape value as:

*'The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.'*

Box 5.1 on page 84 of GLVIA sets out the criteria used to assist in defining a valued landscape and these are regularly used by the landscape profession in undertaking Landscape and Visual Impact assessments. Importantly GLVIA states in para 5.28 that the criteria listed are not comprehensive.

The criteria listed are similar to those set out in Natural England's guidance for designation as indicated in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Comparison between NE natural beauty factors and those set out in GLVIA**

<b>Natural beauty and recreation factors in Natural England Guidance for evaluating landscapes as National Park or AONB</b>	<b>Criteria in GLVIA for defining valued landscapes (Box 5.1)</b>
Landscape quality	Landscape quality
Scenic quality	Scenic quality
Relative wildness	Perceptual qualities
Relative tranquillity	Perceptual qualities
Natural heritage features	Conservation interest
Cultural heritage features	Conservation interest
	Associations
	Rarity
	Representativeness
Access to high quality landscapes	Recreation Value
Features of interest	Recreation Value
Good recreation provision	Recreation Value

<sup>7</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition).

## **An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management, Natural England (2019)**

The third source of information is the recently published guidance by Natural England highlights the importance of considering an understanding of value when determining the sensitivity of a landscape to a particular type of development/change. It states that:

*'Within the context of the spatial planning and land management, landscape sensitivity is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resources, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the specific development type/development scenario or other change being considered together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resources. Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specific change arising from development types or landscape management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value.'*

It goes on to state that *'Assignments of value will be completely independent of what is being assessed (unlike judgements concerning landscape and visual susceptibility)'*. This is important as it indicates that an understanding of value should be made prior to and separately from judgements on sensitivity in relation to specific types of change.

The value(s) of landscape and their component parts can be ascertained qualitatively with reference to, for example:

- a. Designations
- b. Character and sense of place
- c. Valued attributes such as topography, perceptual qualities, cultural and historic features and associations, biodiversity, areas of outstanding beauty, National Park special qualities etc.
- d. Community values
- e. Recreational value
- f. Intrinsic value

### **2.3 Approach to Assessing Settlements**

An important part of this assessment has included the value of settlements specifically. This study has therefore sought to establish the historical evolution of settlements and to understand factors which influenced their siting and form in relation to the landscape. Information regarding opportunities for enhancement, especially where this may enhance special qualities and increase robustness, has been recorded. The results of these assessments can be found in Section 4.0 of this report. Settlements were considered as a whole to reflect the strategic nature of the project brief. Nevertheless, geographical variations in qualities and issues are detailed in the written descriptive narrative for each settlement. Where settlements lie predominately beyond the SVPA (i.e. Haverhill and Sudbury) focus is concentrated on their fringes which lie adjacent to the SVPA, rather than an assessment of the whole settlement.



The purpose of the settlement assessments in this study is to set out valued characteristics and special qualities of the settlements and their landscape settings and to highlight any vulnerabilities to change. The assessment does not seek to identify specific development sites nor review existing sites which are coming forward for development. Instead the analysis seeks to set out what matters and why (value) and on this basis forms an independent assessment which can be used to inform more detailed sensitivity studies of specific developments. It can therefore assist with decision making as a robust evidence base. The criteria used in the assessment are set out below and have been developed through experience of whole settlement studies, neighbourhood plan landscape appraisals and sensitivity assessments. The criteria form a helpful framework for the assessment of settlements within the brief, ensuring consistency in analysis and descriptive reporting.

**Table 3: Criteria Used to Assess Settlements and Settings**

<b>Criteria Used to Assess Settlements and Settings</b>	
<b>Location and Topographic Context</b>	Includes understanding of the position of the settlement in relation to landform, skylines and landscape elements. It takes account of whether the setting and settlement is representative and typical of the Stour Valley, or if it has unique characteristics
<b>Historical Development</b>	Includes an historical account of the evolution of the settlement including the reasons why it may be located where it is and what factors have led to its growth/decline.
<b>Landscape Setting</b>	Considers the juxtaposition of elements and patterns including land use, enclosure and scale in relation to built form. The coherence, condition and intactness of the physical landscape and its character is noted.
<b>Settlement Form and Character</b>	Considers the settlement form relative to the landscape and its predominant character. Aspects of scale and form are noted as is the character of the urban edges.
<b>Views</b>	Considers important elements within views e.g. landmarks, and inter-visibility between areas, and the main approaches into and out of the settlement
<b>Natural and Cultural Heritage</b>	The presence of and extent to which natural and cultural heritage contributes to special qualities of the settlement including cultural associations with artists for example.
<b>Relationship to Adjacent Settlements</b>	The position of the settlement relative to other settlements is noted especially if there is a physical distinction/gap or if there has been an amalgamation of smaller settlements.
<b>Scenic Quality and Perceptions</b>	Considers any scenic value, sense of rurality, remoteness and tranquillity in the landscape surrounding a settlement.
<b>Value and Significance</b>	Considers the special qualities of the settlement which are important to conserve and enhance and how these qualities may be vulnerable to change.
<b>Sensitivities</b>	Key changes which may adversely affect the special qualities of the settlement.
<b>Conserving Special Qualities</b>	Considers what environmental initiatives could help to bolster existing special qualities.

## 2.4 Project Methodology

The method adopted in this study is based on recognised approaches to assessing valued landscape and sensitivity studies as noted above. For the purposes of assessing landscape value the Stour Valley Project Area has been subdivided into three broad geographical areas namely:

1. Upper Stour
2. Central Stour and Glem Valley
3. Long Melford and Sudbury Stour

These areas have been used as a framework for assessment purposes rather than landscape character types (as defined in existing character assessments) because landscape types tends to segregate the valley into valley floodplain, valley sides and surrounding higher farmland while in reality the special qualities of the Stour Valley are experienced as a whole, where the valley floor, valley sides and surrounding skyline farmland form part of a single scene and are interrelated. The three areas listed above are illustrated on Figure 4 and were assessed through desk study and field work, in relation to the criteria set out in Table 3. The assessment seeks to describe the special qualities of these areas drawing on existing evidence from landscape character assessment and other studies as well as site work. The assessment sets out the special qualities found in the different areas and goes on to highlight opportunities for conservation and enhancement. The results of this can be found in Section 3.0 of this report.

Land which has already been assessed as worthy of AONB designation e.g. Land between the existing AONB boundary and Lamarsh (as noted in Section 1.6 above) has not been assessed again on the basis that its special qualities are already well documented.

Following the broad evaluation of the SVPA, the settlements listed within the brief (see table 4 below and Figure 1) were assessed in detail at 1:10,000 scale through desk work and site assessment. The specific criteria listed in Table 4 were used to gather and order data and to articulate the special qualities of each settlement and opportunities for conserving and enhancing (see section 4.0 below).

These settlements have been considered in detail with attention given to their character and position in the wider Stour Valley landscape. The analysis seeks to understanding the relationship between the built area and setting, as well as the contribution the settlement makes to the character of the wider Stour landscape. Reference has also been made to any existing studies such as Conservation Area Appraisals and or Neighbourhood Plans as listed in the table below.

**Table 4: Settlements Listed in the Brief by Local Authority Area**

Local Authority	Settlement	Neighbourhood Plan	Conservation Area
St Edmundsbury/ West Suffolk District	Cavendish Clare		* *

	Haverhill Kedington		*
Braintree District	Steeple Bumpstead	*	*
Colchester	Bures Hamlet		*
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District	Bures St Mary Glemsford Long Melford Sudbury	* *	* * * *

## 3.0 The Stour Valley Project Area

### 3.1 Existing Character Assessments

The Stour Valley Project Area is described in a number of different character assessments undertaken for the relevant administrative areas as well as broader assessments such as National Character Areas (NCAs). These include:

- National Character Area 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands (whole area)
- The Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment 2009 and update 2011 (northern/eastern part of Stour Valley only)
- The Essex Landscape Character Assessment 2003 (southern/western part of Stour Valley only)
- Braintree District Landscape Character Assessment 2005 (relevant District area only)
- Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2005 (relevant Borough area only)
- Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Managing a Masterpiece Landscape Assessment (covers the whole of the SVPA)

As noted above, most of the assessments have been carried out in relation to local authority areas. Whilst they help contribute to a good understanding of the characteristics of the river valley, many only cover parts of the Stour Valley due to administrative boundaries. The exceptions are the National Character Area description (which covers a broad area) and the Managing a Masterpiece assessment. The latter was based on the Suffolk County Landscape Typology and provides the most comprehensive assessment for the SVPA. It has therefore been the assessment which has been relied on most heavily in this evaluation work and is illustrated on Figure 3.

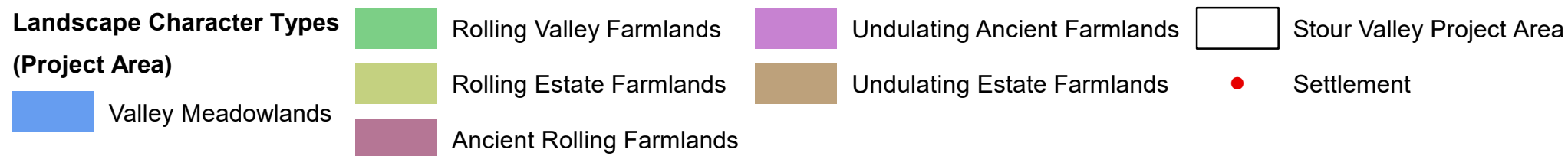
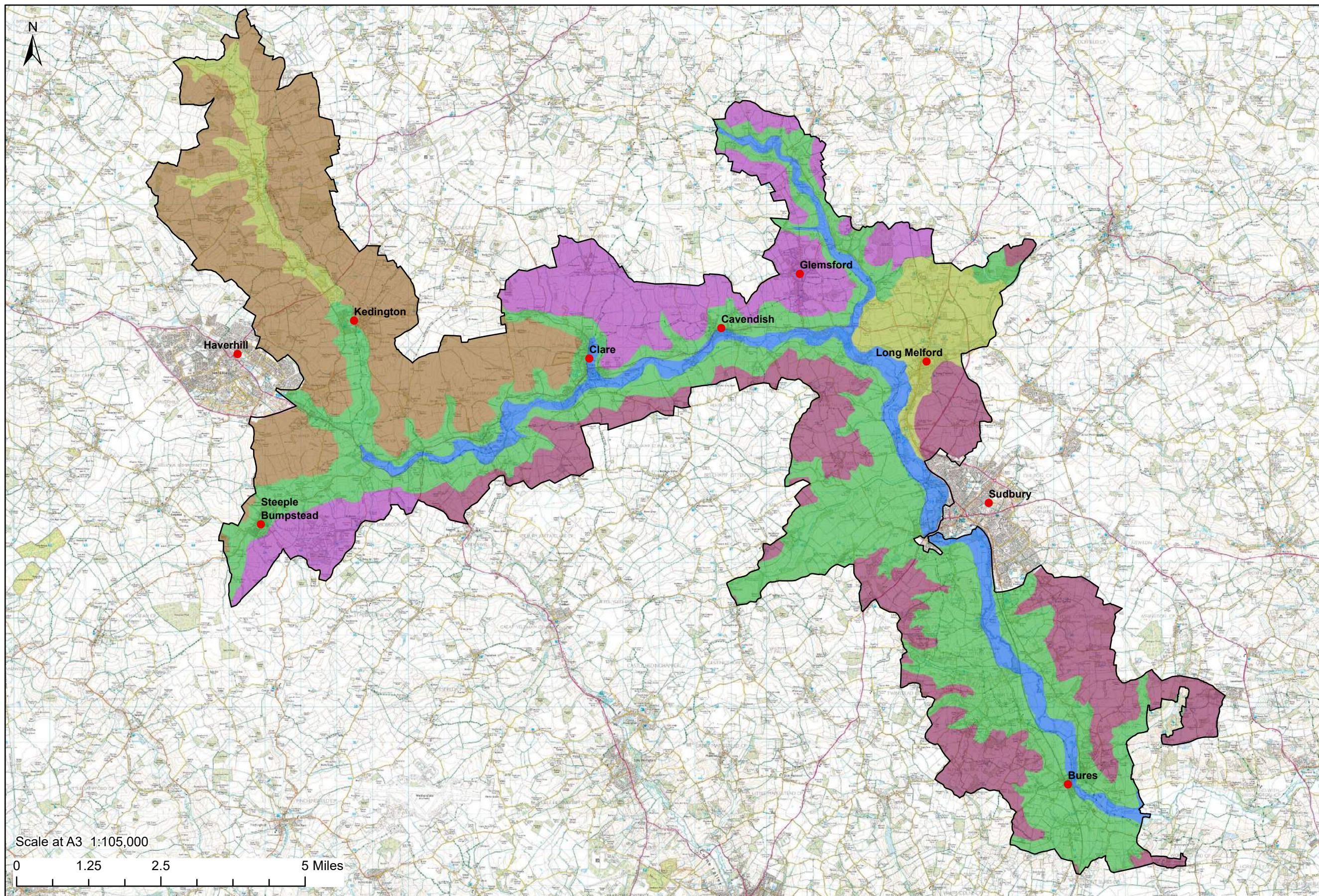
By way of background, extracts from the NCA and Suffolk/Managing a Masterpiece assessments are provided below.

#### **National Character Area 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands**

*'an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century. The widespread moderately fertile, chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character. Gravel and sand deposits under the clay are important geological features, often exposed during mineral extraction, which contribute to our understanding of ice-age environmental change'.*

**Valued Landscapes  
Stour Valley Project Area**

**Figure 3:**  
Landscape Character



## **The Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment 2009 and update 2011 and Managing a Masterpiece Landscape Partnership Project – Heritage Compendia**

This assessment defines the Stour Valley Project Area as comprising six landscape types namely:

- Valley Meadowlands along the valley floor;
- Rolling Valley Farmlands and Rolling Estate Farmlands comprising the valley sides; and
- Ancient Rolling Farmland; Undulating Ancient Farmlands and Undulating Estate Farmlands which form the wider farmland landscape stretching beyond the project area.

The descriptions for these landscape types are relatively generic although further work has been done as part of the Managing a Masterpiece Landscape Partnership Project – Heritage Compendia. A summary of each landscape types is provide below:

**Valley Meadowlands** – this landscape type comprises the relatively flat valley floor of the River Stour through its middle reaches and the tributary valley of the Glem. Within the Project Area this type extends from around Wixoe as far as the AONB boundary.

**Rolling Valley Farmlands** – This landscape type comprises the undulating valley sides to the River Stour and its main tributaries. It occurs on both sides of the Valley Meadowlands, (except for the area around Long Melford), and comprises mainly gentle convex slopes which are in places locally steep.

**Rolling Estate Farmlands** – This landscape type occurs in the area around Long Melford and Sudbury and forms the valley sides which have a strong estate influence.

**Ancient Rolling Farmlands** – This landscape type forms the more elevated landscape above the Stour Valley, especially to the south of the Stour Valley between Stoke by Clare and Glemsford, and the eastern flanks of the Stour from Long Melford southwards.

**Undulating Ancient Farmlands** – This landscape occurs south of Steeple Bumpstead and north of Clare to Glemsford. It comprises the elevated farmland above the river valleys which have a high incidence of ancient woodland.

**Undulating Estate Farmlands** – This landscape forms more open and elevated farmland above the river valleys in the upper reaches of the Stour and provides the setting to Haverhill.

A complete set of the descriptions and guidance notes for these character types can be found at:

<http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/assets/MaM/SQR014B-The-SVHC-Landscape-History-v04.pdf>

### 3.2 Special Qualities of the AONB and SVPA

The Stour Valley Project Area shares similar landscape characteristics to the Dedham Vale AONB. The special qualities of the AONB are set out in the AONB Management Plan<sup>8</sup> as follows:

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

In relation to settlements, the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Management Plan states:

*'The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley is a relatively sparsely populated area with most people living in village settlements that can trace their history back to the Saxon period and are listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. The majority of the settlements have a distinctive settlement pattern with dwellings clustered around small angular greens or tyes. Medieval churches have often been built in prominent positions and knapped in flint reflecting the areas prosperity and the importance of religion during the time of construction.'*

*'Villages show a rich heritage of building styles, reflecting changing building techniques, fashions and relative wealth over the centuries of development but many retain a core of medieval timber framed buildings. Beyond the villages there are a series of isolated farmsteads and manorial halls (often moated) reflecting the areas agricultural heritage and accumulated wealth.'*

### 3.3 Stour Valley as a Valued Landscape

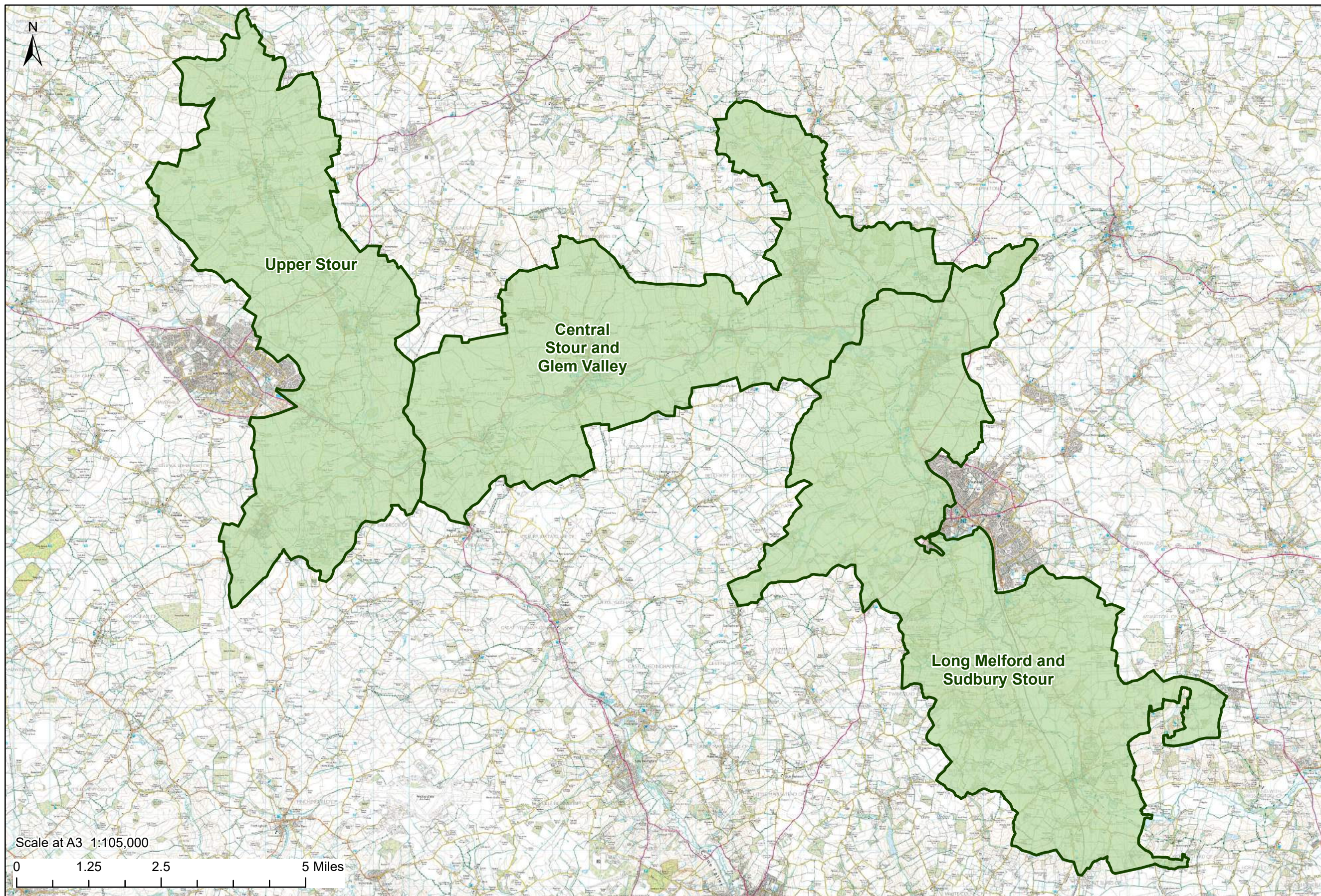
This section considers the qualities of the Stour Valley beyond the AONB in terms of its special qualities and especially where these qualities can be seen to reflect those within the existing AONB. The evaluation is set out in three separate tables relating to the areas defined in Figure 4.



<sup>8</sup> Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021 Page 13.

**Valued Landscapes**

**Stour Valley Project Area**

**Figure 4:**  
Broad Assessment Areas



-  Broad Assessment Area
-  Stour Valley Project Area (SVPA)



### 3.4 Upper Stour

**Location:** This area lies in the western fringes of the Stour Valley Project Area and includes the watercourses that form the upper reaches.

**Relevant Landscape Types:** Rolling Valley Farmlands, Undulating Estate Farmlands and Undulating Ancient Farmlands.

**Key Settlements:** Fringes of Haverhill town and village of Steeple Bumpstead and Kedington. Small hamlets also include Sturmer, Little Wrating, Great Wrating, Little Thurlow, Great Thurlow, Great Bradley.

**Overview of character:** The upper reaches of the Stour comprise three shallow valleys containing the River Stour, Stour Brook and Bumpstead Brook respectively. Within the Stour and Bumpstead Brook valleys are small nucleated settlements while associated with the Stour Brook valley is the larger conurbation of Haverhill, beyond the Project Area. The valley slopes are gentle, forming shallow valleys which sit within wider undulating farmland. The junction between valley and wider farmland is transitional and subtle, the presence of a water course, associated wetland vegetation, and small nucleated villages/hamlets, generally distinguishing the valleys from other landscape undulations. On the more elevated farmland above the valleys there is a high incidence of medieval moated farmhouses and small copses/blocks of ancient woodland. These features reflect the underlying clay soils found on the higher land. Despite woodland blocks, elevated farmland has a predominantly open character, affording long distance views over the shallow valleys. The expansive views and openness perceived from higher land contrasts with that of the more intimate valleys and small settlements. The lack of major transport infrastructure gives this landscape a relative tranquillity reinforcing perceptions of a rural backwater.

Criteria	Assessment
<b>Landscape Quality</b> (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape.	Pre 18 <sup>th</sup> century enclosure patterns on elevated areas and valley slopes have experienced significant post 1950's field boundary loss and intensive arable farming resulting in medium- large scale patterns and largely open landscapes. Arable farmland intrudes close to watercourses in places reducing ecological value of riparian habitat Intact pattern of small villages in shallow valleys especially along River Stour and Bumpstead Brook coupled with a high concentration of early moated hall and church complexes in paired isolation. Some larger industrial/farm development along major roads e.g. A143. Merging of some settlements due to growth and urbanising influences along transport corridors. Landscape condition is generally fair.

<p><b>Scenic Quality:</b> The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses.</p>	<p>Intimate small-scale valleys and villages contrast with open, elevated, sparsely settled arable farmland with wide panoramic views.</p> <p>Scenic views along river valleys at bridging points revealing the small watercourse, pastures and riparian willows giving rise to an intimate and secluded character, especially within villages.</p> <p>Local vernacular buildings within villages and high incidence of thatched cottages.</p> <p>Churches associated with the villages are often located in slightly isolated locations or at the edges, set within landscape undulations, and most visible from the surrounding elevated open landscape.</p> <p>Blocks of woodland on the upper valley sides provide visual structure to the valley and help to reinforce enclosure, while mature and veteran trees in the villages and parklands on the valley slopes create enclosure and verdant character.</p>
<p><b>Rarity:</b> The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare landscape type.</p>	<p>High concentration of rectangular moated halls in wider farmland above the main valleys evocative of the medieval landscape and reflecting the clay soils found within the more elevated farmland.</p> <p>High concentration of ancient woodland sites on the higher land surrounding the Stour Valley.</p> <p>Great Thurlow windmill is one of only two Suffolk corn-grinding smock mills to retain its complete machinery and a local landmark.</p>
<p><b>Representativeness:</b> Whether the landscape contains a character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important.</p>	<p>Wide open views typical of the exposed claylands.</p> <p>Typical settlement pattern with villages often located along roads or around a green, some distance from church.</p>
<p><b>Conservation Interest:</b> The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape.</p>	<p>High concentration of scheduled monuments which are visible features in the landscape including moated sites and mill complexes e.g. Stumer Hall.</p> <p>Evidence of former railway lines evident in the strong linear vegetation and old bridges in the landscape.</p> <p>Stour Mere – County Wildlife Sites is of geological interest.</p> <p>Conservation areas include Great and Little Thurlow, Great Wratting and Steeple Bumpstead.</p>
<p><b>Recreational Value:</b> Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.</p>	<p>Stour Valley Path passes through the River Stour landscape on the lower valley slopes.</p> <p>Dense network of public rights of way connecting small settlements and Haverhill to the wider countryside.</p> <p>Publicised recreational routes including Upper Stour between Haverhill, Kedington and Great/Little Thurlow.</p>
<p><b>Perceptual aspects:</b> A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities,</p>	<p>Overall, this is a tranquil landscape (away from Haverhill and main roads) but it is intensively farmed.</p> <p>Perceptions of modern development and infrastructure imposed on an older, smaller scale intimate valley character especially close to Haverhill.</p>

notably wildness and or tranquillity.	
<b>Associations:</b> Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.	No known associations

### Special Qualities:

- **Small scale villages** nestled into the lower slopes of the shallow valleys some of which are historically rich with notable concentrations of listed buildings and several conservation areas.
- **High concentration of moated sites and hall/church complexes**, along with copses of ancient woodland which reflect patterns of the medieval landscape.
- **Perceptions of a rural backwater** within the shallow valleys away from main roads.
- **Wooded skylines define the valleys** and reduce intrusion from development beyond.

These qualities are particularly well expressed in the following geographical areas:

- Bumpstead Brook and setting to Steeple Bumpstead
- North of the A143 along River Stour Valley and settlements of Great Bradley, Little and Great Wrating and Little and Great Thurlow.

### Opportunity for Conservation and Enhancement

- Restore valley floor pastures and ecological networks along watercourses through reversion of arable to pasture and planting of riparian trees, especially south of Kedington and around Sturmer.
- Plant new hedgerows and establish wider field margins to restore landscape structure and habitat networks.
- Manage existing woodlands and plant new woodland especially on upper slopes that help to define wooded skylines.
- Avoid the expansion of settlements onto higher land and intrusion into the Upper Stour landscape especially on the edges of Haverhill, Steeple Bumpstead and Kedington (see detailed settlement assessments).
- Avoid development along major routes especially A143, where it introduces increased signage and urbanisation of the valley floor and loss of individual identity of settlements.

- Minimise nightlight spill from major conurbations or commercial development and avoid undermining perceptions of this area as a rural backwater – especially in relation to Haverhill and along main roads.
- Seek opportunities to improve recreational links between Haverhill and Clare, and access to natural greenspace for major population adjacent to the Project Area.

### 3.5 Central Stour and Glem Valley

**Location:** This area comprises the Middle Stour Valley where the River Stour forms the main valley with a clear flood plain.

**Relevant Landscape Types:** Valley Meadowlands, Rolling Valley Farmlands, Undulating Estate Farmlands, Ancient Rolling Farmlands, Undulating Ancient Farmlands.

**Key Settlements:** Villages of Stoke by Clare, Clare, Cavendish and Glemsford.

**Overview of character:** This part of the Project Area comprises the middle reaches where the River Stour flows west-east through a clearly defined valley with a distinct but narrow flood plain. It also includes the tributary Glem Valley, that joins the Stour south of Glemsford. These valleys are some of the most intimate and wooded within the whole of the Stour due to the small-scale profile of the valley and narrow valley floor, coupled with valley floor vegetation, valley side parklands and ancient woodland on upper slopes. A necklace of small, nucleated, medieval villages nestle into the northern valley sides at the junction between the lower slopes and the valley floor. These settlements exhibit exceptional historic integrity both in terms of vernacular built form but also settlement form and layout.

Criteria	Assessment
<p><b>Landscape Quality</b> (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape.</p>	<p>Where the valley landscape patterns remain intact and undeveloped, they create a strong setting and sense of separation between settlements.</p> <p>Settlements are predominately historical with vernacular buildings which flank the streets to give a strong sense of place. Where modern housing development has occurred, this has not undermined the predominate character of the villages although in some cases it is getting close.</p> <p>The intensive arable farmland on the upper valley slopes and surrounding higher landscape has influenced the water quality of the river and its tributaries and in places the riparian habitat has become squeezed.</p> <p>Some areas of gravel extraction on the valley floor resulting in small lakes e.g. Glemsford Pits (SSSI) and open water as part of Clare Park Lake Golf Course.</p> <p>Overall, this landscape retains a strong pastoral valley character although in places the arable land uses of the valley sides has extended onto the valley floor and the distinction between valley</p>

	<p>floor and valley side is diminished. Settlements are of exceptional quality and intactness.</p>
<p><b>Scenic Quality:</b> The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses.</p>	<p>The river Stour meanders slowly through verdant pastures along the narrow valley floor with patches of carr woodland and pollarded willow.</p> <p>There are views across meadow from the valley sides or bridging points along the river, exhibiting typical lowland riparian scenes. Settlements are not visually prominent, nestled into the lower slopes and filtered by vegetation, but their churches (reflecting the prosperity of the wool trade in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century), often stand out as landmarks from within the wider valley and upper slopes. The valley floor tends to be unsettled the only built features being former mill buildings close to settlements and bridge crossings.</p>
<p><b>Rarity:</b> The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare landscape type.</p>	<p>High concentration of historic settlements which exceptional numbers of listed buildings which create intact, distinctive and memorable streetscapes. The Parishes of Cavendish and Clare have some of the highest concentration of listed buildings in Suffolk.</p> <p>This landscape contains several medieval and Tudor moated sites e.g. Pentlow Hall.</p>
<p><b>Representativeness:</b> Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important.</p>	<p>The settlement pattern in this landscape is representative of the prosperity from the wool trade and growth of subsequent industry along the Stour</p>
<p><b>Conservation Interest:</b> The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape.</p>	<p>All the villages in this section of the Stour Valley are designated as conservation areas.</p> <p>Glemsford Pits is a SSSI support a variety of aquatic vegetation, tall fen, acid grassland and woodland.</p> <p>Concentration of ancient woodland in Glem Valley e.g. Kentwell Woods.</p> <p>Concentration of wood pasture/parkland associated with halls including Clare Priory, Cliftons, Cavendish Hall, Pentlow Hall, Moor Hall, Stoke Collage, Baythorn Park and Boxted Hall.</p> <p>Norman Castle at Clare.</p>
<p><b>Recreational Value:</b> Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.</p>	<p>Stour Valley Path passes through the River Stour landscape on the northern valley slopes.</p> <p>Dense network of public rights of way and narrow rural lanes on southern valley slopes connecting small settlements to the wider countryside.</p> <p>Publicised recreational routes including in the Glem Valley connecting Glemsford with Hartset.</p> <p>All these sites and features add interest to the landscape.</p>
<p><b>Perceptual aspects:</b> A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities,</p>	<p>The combination of intact historic villages and high-quality valley setting, and valley floor pastures coupled with the remote rural lanes on the southern valley sides give this part of the Stour Valley a high scenic quality and strong time depth. The intimacy and</p>

notably wildness and or tranquillity.	high-quality environment experienced in the settlements and the valley landscape is equivalent to areas of the existing Dedham Vale AONB.
<b>Associations:</b> Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.	Associations with the wool trade of the 15 <sup>th</sup> /16 <sup>th</sup> centuries and later silk industries – Silk from Glemsford was used in HM Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation robe. Clare village associated with the de Clare family.

### Special Qualities:

This area has the following special qualities:

- **Outstanding collection of intact small scale historic nucleated villages** which have a value individually and as a group.
- **Iconic views to wool trade churches** forming repetitive landmarks through the area and seen within the context of the pastoral valley forming a quintessential English lowland scene.
- Areas of **high-quality pastoral river valley flood plain** reflecting traditional land management and of high value for ecosystem services and as a setting to historic settlements.
- Intact pattern of **pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures** on the valley sides coupled with **woodland copses which emphasise valley topography** and impart a strong time depth.
- **Notable areas** of the Glem Valley are **relatively inaccessible** except by foot increasing **perceptions of tranquillity**.

These qualities are particularly well expressed in the following geographical areas:

- Glem Valley
- Villages of Stoke by Clare, Clare and Cavendish

### Opportunities for Conservation and Enhancement

- Seek opportunities to restore ecological networks along watercourses through restoration and traditional management of pastures and planting of riparian trees.
- Plant new hedgerows to improve and reinforce landscape structure and historic patterns and therefore the legibility of the landscape.
- Avoid the expansion of settlements which undermine the current dominance of historic core and settlement integrity.

- Avoid the urbanisation of transport routes where new development undermines sense of perceived separation between settlements.
- Seek opportunities to improve recreational routes along the valley floor and resolve conflicts between cyclists and car users on minor lanes.
- Manage valley vegetation to reinstate and retain key views to churches and watermills.

### 3.6 Long Melford and Sudbury Stour

**Location:** This area lies in the southern part of the Stour Valley Project Area beyond the area previously identified as a Candidate Area for designation.

**Relevant Landscape Types:** Valley Meadowlands, Rolling Valley Farmlands, Rolling Estate Farmlands and Ancient Rolling Farmlands,

**Key Settlements:** Long Melford and Sudbury

**Overview of character:** In this part of the Stour Valley the river widens and flows north-south within a broadening flood plain. On the eastern valley sides sit the settlements of Long Melford and Sudbury while the western valley sides are indented by the Belchamp Brook and its tributaries creating complex topography and some relatively steep slopes. A further distinguishing feature of this part of the Stour Valley is the concentration of cultural heritage related to the high number of parkland landscapes and outstanding collection of listed buildings. The wider valley floor in the vicinity of Sudbury supports extensive areas of valley floor pasture reflecting former common.

The presence of Sudbury on the eastern valley slopes and its associated road infrastructure exerts an urbanising influence on this section of the Stour Valley.

Criteria	Assessment
<p><b>Landscape Quality</b> (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape.</p>	<p>This section of the Stour Valley contains some of the most extensive areas of water meadows adjacent to the town of Sudbury. The western valley sides and the tributary valley of Belchamp Brook have suffered some loss of pre 18<sup>th</sup> century sinuous field enclosures however close to the small hamlets, adjacent to the valley floor and adjacent to parkland there is a high concentration of intact field patterns. As a result, the old patterns are still discernible. There is also a high incidence of veteran oak trees - in fields (former hedgerow oaks) and along the sinuous lane network and a high concentration of wood pasture associated with parkland.</p> <p>In places the patterns of the landscape have become fragmented as a result of field boundary loss and field enlargement, arable which has crept onto the valley floor, urban development especially of Sudbury and new infrastructure including A134 and associated roundabouts as well as pylons and masts (beyond the study area but which visually intrude).</p> <p>Overall, this landscape retains a strong pattern of hedgerows and woodlands and valley floor pastures and arable valley sides but</p>

	there are some areas where these patterns have started to break down.
<b>Scenic Quality:</b> The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses.	The scenic qualities of this landscape arise from the contrast of the widening valley floor associated with the Stour and the contrasting intimate Belchamp Brook Valley and its tributaries which create complex western slopes. Within the Belchamp Brook the narrow and yet relatively steep valley sides are cloaked in a pattern of sinuous field boundaries and small copses which emphasise the folds in the landform. From the valley sides there are cross valley views and intervisibility between church towers associated with the small hamlets that adorn this landscape. These villages are remarkably intact reflecting Medieval hall/church complexes, and coupled with fields and woods, give rise to a strong sense of time depth. In contrast the Stour Valley is larger and more open but nonetheless has a strong pastoral character derived from the valley floor pastures and woodlands and the widening presence of the river which is flanked by willows and alders and occasional poplar plantations. This is undermined in places where pastures have been converted to arable on the valley floor and where field boundaries have been lost. On the mid to upper valley slopes around Sudbury there is also some visual intrusion from the growth of industrial development, light coloured and large-scale buildings appearing particularly prominent.
<b>Rarity:</b> The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare landscape type.	The concentration of historic parkland in this landscape is rare in the context of the Stour Valley as a whole. The exceptional number of listed buildings in this part of the Stour Valley is rare in the context of Suffolk and Essex.
<b>Representativeness:</b> Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important.	The landscape features and patterns in this landscape are representative of the Stour Valley and where patterns are intact, they give a strong impression of the Medieval landscape.
<b>Conservation Interest:</b> The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape.	The nature conservation and heritage interest of this part of the Stour Valley makes a significant contribution to its special qualities. Extensive water meadows at Sudbury are designated as County Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserve. There is also a nature reserve at Long Melford again associated with the valley floor. The river and associated wetland support important populations of damselflies. Elsewhere conservation interest includes ancient woodlands (Brundon Wood and Heaven Wood) and a notable concentration of woodpasture associated with parkland e.g., Melford Hall, Kentwell Hall, Liston Hall, Belchamp Hall, Bulmer, Auberries (associated with Gainsborough) and Middleton Hall. The area contains a high concentration of listed buildings and conservation areas especially Long Melford and Sudbury and the



	<p>villages and hamlets on the western valley sides e.g. Foxearth and Belchamp.</p> <p>Along the western side of the Stour are various pill boxes which formed part of the 'Stop Line' erected in 1940.</p>
<p><b>Recreational Value:</b> Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.</p>	<p>The Valley Walk along the disused railway between Sudbury and Long Melford connects Sudbury Meadows with Long Melford Nature Reserve.</p> <p>There are opportunities to walk along the edge of the valley floor within Belchamp Brook valley and connect to other public rights of way which offer a range of circular routes.</p> <p>The Stour Valley Path passes through the main Stour Valley connecting Long Melford and Sudbury and south towards Bures.</p>
<p><b>Perceptual aspects:</b> A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and or tranquillity.</p>	<p>The relatively remote and intimate valley of Belchamp Brook has a tangible time depth as a result of views to church towers, remnant parkland landscapes, small-medium sinuous field patterns and woodland copses coupled with a high concentration of mature trees.</p> <p>The lazy slow flowing nature of the Stour coupled with traditional pastures, wet woodlands and pollarded willows affords many classic lowland river scenes with little intrusion from modern development.</p> <p>On some of the western valley slopes and on the margins of Sudbury, modern development visually intrudes.</p>
<p><b>Associations:</b> Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.</p>	<p>This landscape is associated with Gainsborough who painted Mr and Mrs Andrews from Auberries.</p>

### Special Qualities:

This area has the following special qualities:

- **Outstanding collection of historic buildings** which collectively define intact historic settlements and streetscapes
- Significant **collection of churches whose towers create key landmarks** and are often inter-visible across the Stour Valley and Belchamp Brook
- Extensive areas of **valley floor pasture grazed by livestock and associated with pollarded willows** creating quintessential valley floor scenes which are accessible only by foot
- The **coincidence of historic features and patterns** - small church/hall complex hamlets/villages, remnant parkland, pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures and

small copses on the valley sides - gives rise to a ***tangible time depth*** and sense of Medieval landscape patterns

- Notable areas of ***valley and valley floor with are relatively inaccessible except*** by foot increasing ***perceptions of tranquillity***.

These qualities are particularly well expressed in the following geographical areas:

- Belchamp Valley
- Meadows adjacent to Sudbury
- Foxearth and Liston

### **Opportunities for Conservation and Enhancement**

- Avoid new road infrastructure which undermines the tranquil qualities and traditional patterns of the valley landscape.
- Avoid development which reduces the physical and perceived gap between settlements resulting in a loss of individual identity.
- Retain open valley sides which form a backdrop to Sudbury when viewed from the western valley slopes.
- Manage veteran oaks and seek to replant hedgerows and lane trees to retain the well wooded character of this landscape.
- Seek opportunities to plant new hedgerows and create wide field margins and restore valley floor pastures to improve habitat networks.
- Manage valley vegetation to reinstate and retain key views to church towers.
- Avoid visual intrusion of development beyond the SVPA boundary e.g. tall vertical structures and seek to screen effects of existing infrastructure through environmental enhancements.
- Seek opportunities to manage valley floor landscapes for outdoor recreation providing easily accessible open green space close to centres of population.

## **4.0 Settlement Assessment**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This section sets out the individual settlement assessments.

## 4.2 Steeple Bumpstead

### Location and Topographic Context

Steeple Bumpstead is located at the western end of the SVPA and nestles in the folds of the upper reaches of Bumpstead Brook – a tributary to The Stour. The settlement sits on the lower valley slopes historically between the 70-75m contours and is framed by rising land to the north and south.

### Historical Development

The name Bumpstead is derived from Old English, meaning “place of reeds” while ‘steeple’ is thought to relate to the church.

The village is considered to have Medieval origins and is mentioned in Domesday. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the settlement appears to have flourished with the Moot Hall constructed in 1592 as a market hall. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping shows the village comprising high-status houses and church with an area of undeveloped land centrally close to the Bumpstead Brook and with parkland associated with Bower Hall (moated site) to the south.

The main area of the settlement lay to the south-east of the brook. The extent of the village changed little up to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Local Authority housing to the north-east of the historic core at End Way and Blois Road was built. Little further development took place until 1970, when new housing was constructed south of Church Street, beyond the recreation ground on slopes above the Bumpstead Brook. Infilling of the central open area of the historic core took place with the construction of Lion Meadow Close between 1981 and 2002. Today the main area of residential expansion within the village has been to the south.

### Landscape Setting

Steeple Bumpstead’s immediate landscape setting comprises the Undulating Valley Farmlands of the tributary valley in which it sits. The rising slopes, above the 75m contour, comprise Ancient Estate Farmland to the south and Undulating Estate Farmlands to the north. The change from Rolling Valley Farmlands to the higher slopes of Ancient Estate Farmlands and Undulating Estate Farmlands is very subtle due to topography but also as a result of similar land uses.

Tree cover is associated with the settlement and its edges but importantly it is backed by open fields which rise to a more wooded skyline in the distance. The large-scale fields reflect post 1950’s boundary loss. This pattern of treed village on lower land, arable field backdrop on mid and upper slopes and distant treed horizon imparts a sense of scale, reinforcing the small rural nature of the village set down in the folds of the landscape. This arrangement also enables the church tower to stand out against an open arable landscape backdrop. The trees associated with former parkland at Bover Hall are also an important part of the village setting.

## **Village Form and Character**

Steeple Bumpstead was designated a conservation area in 1969, although there is no conservation appraisal prepared for the village. The conservation area encompasses the old centre of the village which coalesces around a junction of roads, forming a central circular arrangement of lanes.

The Bumpstead Brook is a key component of the village character and the area of open space/recreation ground forms an immediate setting to the church. This latter open space separates the conservation area from more recent housing development.

The historic core of the village is located below the 70m contour. Residential expansion of the village during the latter half of the twentieth century took advantage of a shallow sloping terrace to the south of the village which expanded the settlement boundary to around the 75m contour along the settlement edge.

## **Views**

The topography of the landscape enables elevated views across the tributary valley and village of Steeple Bumpstead. As a result, the position of the village in the landscape is readily apparent on approaching the settlement from the north or the south and is part of its sense of place and distinctiveness. Where more recent development has extended onto land above the 75m contour it is visually more prominent. All development, including the church tower, sits below the skyline due to the angle of views from higher land. However, once close to the settlement the tower of the church is the only built element to break the skyline – this key building in the settlement retains its supremacy over other built form.

## **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

The conservation area covers the core area of the village and includes most listed buildings.

There are no local or national natural heritage designations associated with the village although there is an area of ancient woodland at Balance Wood. The wider landscape shows signs of loss of landscape structure as a result of field boundary removal.

## **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Steeple Bumpstead sits remote from other settlements within the folds of the tributary valley. Rising topography separates it from the larger settlement of Haverhill, 5km to the north. Within the context of the valley there are two hamlets in relatively close proximity – Broad Green to the northeast and Smith's Green to the southwest. Both are small scale and associated with farmsteads and remain separate from the village of Steeple Bumpstead.

## **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

The small scale quality of the tributary valley and rising farmed slopes coupled with the church as a local landmark, and the historic buildings within and on its outskirts of the village (including the moated site of Bower Hall and historic stained black boarded barns

at Blois Farm), combine to create the scenic qualities of the settlement and its setting. The village and its setting are perceived as rural and relatively remote and strongly related to agriculture and the watercourse.

### **Value and Significance**

- Low-lying small-scale character of village nestled within the valley.
- Elevated views from the surrounding landscape over the top of the village and to surrounding open farmed slopes and distant treed horizons.
- Supremacy of church tower within the village as the key built structure set with a backdrop of farmed slopes.
- Juxtaposition of historic buildings on the edge of the settlement including weather boarded barns and isolated moated site.
- Bumpstead Brook, bridge crossings, and associated open space, contribute to the character and history of the village and are an important component of its sense of place.

### **Sensitivity**

The village is sensitive to development that erodes perceptions of it sitting down within the valley landscape and which obscures the land backdrop in views from the surrounding higher land, particularly in relation to the church tower. The village is also sensitive to development which obscures the presence of Belstead Brook on which the village is located.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Seek opportunities to enhance the function of the landscape setting of the village in terms of providing habitat networks, flood alleviation and water quality through reinstatement of hedgerows, introduction of grass field margins, recreation of valley meadows, valley side pasture/parkland and carefully sited woodland copses.
- Protect the form and character of the village and its close relationship with the wider rural valley slopes through careful siting of new development below the 75m contour.
- Protect gateway points into the village; ensure the setting of listed buildings and their association with the river valley is conserved; and avoid change which blurs the distinction between Steeple Bumpstead and wider hamlets of Broad Green and Smith's Green.
- Consider the implications of land use and flood issues along the Bumpstead Brook and within the village. Seek to reduce water runoff from surrounding valley sides through appropriate land management such as hedgerow planting, new woodland copses and restoration of meadows.

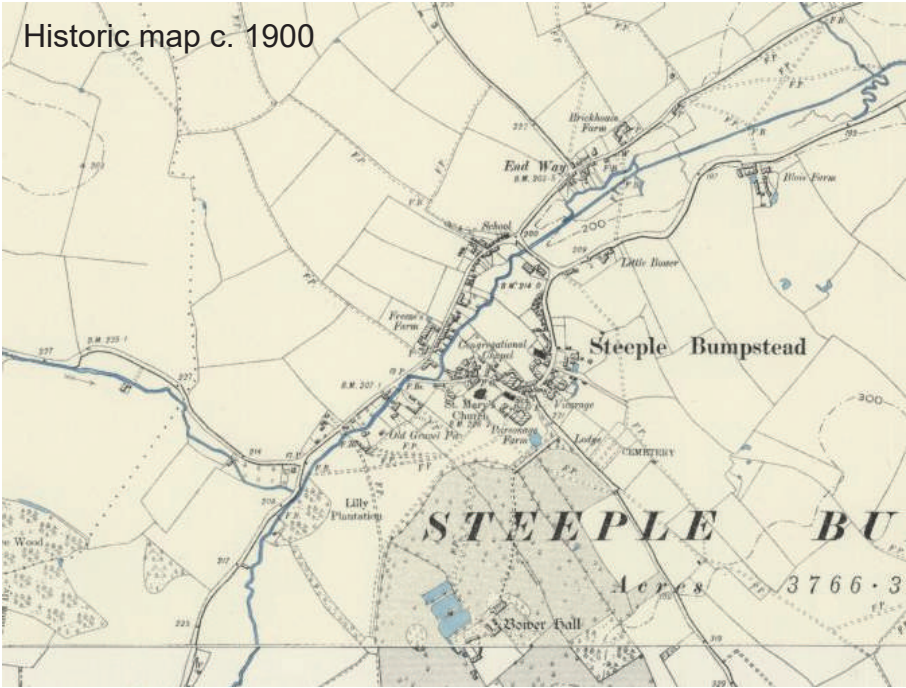
### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

Conservation Area Appraisal (when available)

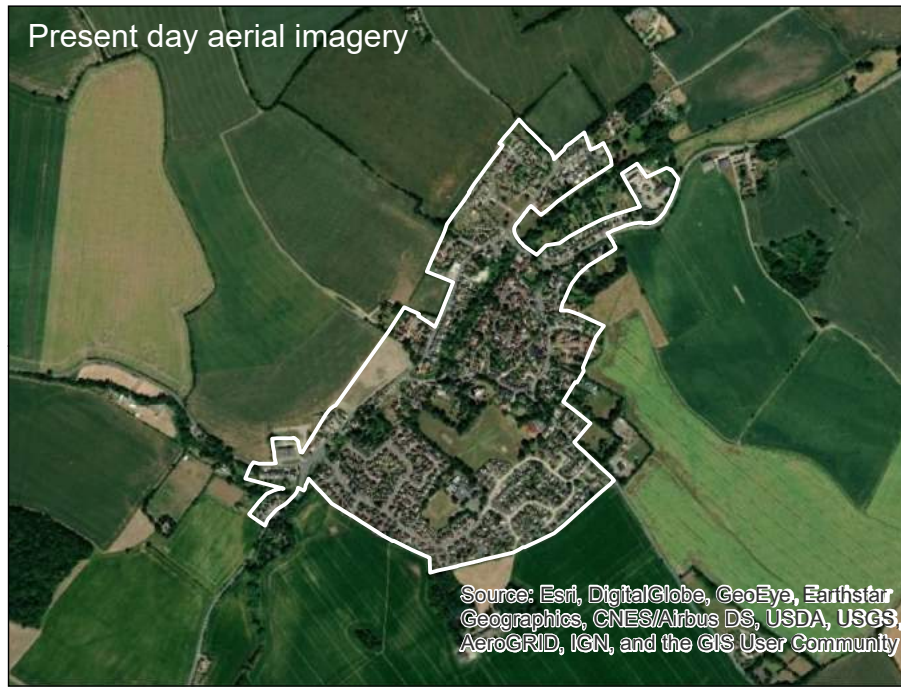
Neighbourhood Plan (when available)

Planning Appeal APP/Z1510/W/17/3173352

Historic map c. 1900

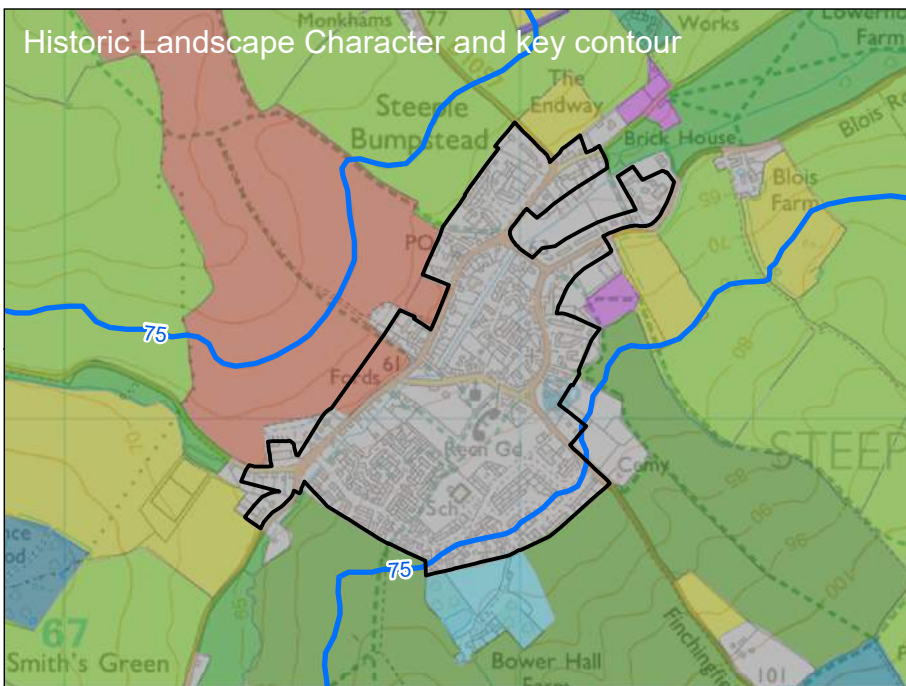


Present day aerial imagery

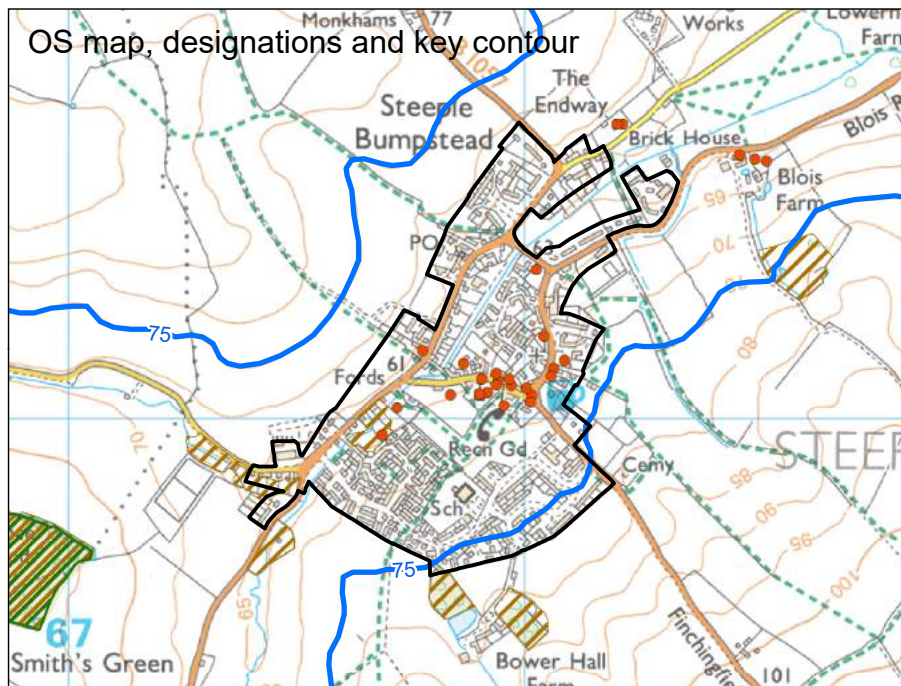


Settlement Assessment:  
Steeple Bumpstead

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.3 Kedington

### Location and Topographic Context

Kedington is located in the upper reaches of the Stour Valley and straddles the River Stour on the lower valley slopes below the 70m contour.

### Historical Development

The historic development of Kedington originates around the church and associated moated manor (Kedington Hall - now gone), which were located on the valley slopes and associated with a small tributary stream in the northern part of the village. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries the settlement comprised clusters of development such as a smithy and malthouse on the river along Silver Street and a further smithy, inn and mill and associated dwellings on the higher land to the west. To the east of the church was Dash End comprising a loose linear arrangement of rural cottages along the lane. In the northwest of the village was the Risbridge Hundred Workhouse (now gone).

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Kedington experienced significant growth as a dormitory settlement to Haverhill. Substantial housing estate development occurred first to the west of the village, then on the site of the Risbridge Hundred Workhouse and most recently in the east of the village connecting Dash End with Silver Street area. The result is that the former clusters of development have become joined to form a more nucleated settlement form.

Ketton House is located on the southern margins of the village and retains its parkland landscape setting.

### Landscape Setting

The setting of the village is the Stour Valley. In particular, the valley meadowlands run along the course of the River Stour and form a central green corridor through the village. Rising land beyond development comprises the Undulating Estate Farmlands which is predominately open and large scale, reflecting post 1950's boundary loss, particularly to the east and south of the village. It forms an important landscape backdrop to the settlement although its open character means the interface between arable farmland and housing is often abrupt and stark.

Woodland on the upper valley slopes forms an important treed horizon in places, giving a sense of scale and defining the wider valley landscape.

### Village Form and Character

The form of the village reflects its relationship with the river valley and the network of small lanes which converge on the village creating a circular network and two crossing points over the river. The valley floor meadows along the meandering course of the River Stour are subject to flooding and in the main are undeveloped, resulting in a ribbon of open spaces through the centre of the village. These open spaces are constrained at road crossing points where development has clustered.

Historic clusters of development are reflected in small concentrations of older buildings which form distinctive and important components of the village fabric at key focal points and vistas e.g. the water mill and church. Recent housing estate development has substantially altered the scale and form of the settlement.



## Views

From elevated views approaching the settlement, especially from the south and east, the rising farmland slopes form an open rural backdrop to the village. Built form appear to nestle in the valley and amongst mature trees. These mature trees occur along the course of the River Stour (including poplar plantations or linear woodland) and within the grounds of the church and Ketton House. These areas of woodland provide a well treed context for the village such that, in many views, only parts of the modern housing estates are visible. There are also important views across the valley landscape when leaving the village along the B1061 heading north and south, and when in the village, sharp bends in the street can afford views to key historic buildings.

## Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

There are a number of scheduled ancient monuments in the landscape which surrounds the village including an interrupted ditch system west of Hall Farm on the banks of the Stour north of the village, the site of a Roman settlement to the south of the village (again on the lower valley slopes), and a moated site at Great Wilsey Farm on higher land to the southwest.

There are several sites of nature conservation interest including River Stour Woodland to the north of the village and species rich grassland in the village churchyard, while Jollys Wood, on the upper valley slopes to the southeast, is an ancient woodland site.

## Relationship to Adjacent Settlements

The villages of Little and Great Wratting lie to the north of Kedington, separated by a small area of valley landscape. Employment development and recent waterworks at the junction between B1061 and A143 has eroded the sense of separation between these settlements.

Calford Green and Brockley Green are separate small hamlets located on the higher land surrounding the village.

A distinctive ridge of higher land separates the village and Stour Valley from the major conurbation of Haverhill which lies 4.8km to the west.

## Scenic Quality and Perceptions

The small scale quality of the Stour valley pastures which weave through the settlement, coupled with the church on the outskirts of the village and parkland landscape in the south, combine to create a scenic setting. To the east and west of the village the valley slopes are more open and have an 'empty' character.

## Value and Significance

- Central ribbon of open space associated with the River Stour extending through the village.
- Elevated views from the surrounding landscape over the top of the village and to surrounding open farmed slopes.
- Mature trees which form a wooded context for development and break up views to estate housing.

## **Sensitivities**

The village is sensitive to development that erodes perceptions of it sitting down within the valley landscape and which obscures the land backdrop in views from the surrounding higher land. The village is also sensitive to development which urbanises the rural lane network or gateways.

## **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Seek opportunities to improve the landscape structure to the west to improve resilience to pressures exerted by the proximity of Haverhill, in particular the planting of woodland on the higher land and reinstatement of hedgerows/copses.
- Ensure new development sits below the 70m contour and is small in scale. Built form should reflect the local rural vernacular and the road network should reflect characteristic rural lanes. Such measures will help protect the form and character of the village and its close relationship with the wider rural valley slopes.
- Retain a sense of the river valley and associated meadows through the heart of the village - avoid changes which undermine the rural character of this area such as lighting, loss of planting (hedgerows and trees) and the introduction of elements at the periphery such as close board fencing and signage.
- Seek to soften the interface of existing modern housing estates where they form an abrupt interface with the wider valley sides through new hedgerow boundaries and creation of layers of vegetation to filter views.
- Seek opportunities to improve the street scene in the housing estates through a programme of non-ornamental street tree planting and development of community conservation initiatives to create meadow grasslands in areas of open space and verges.

## **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

Rural Vision 2031, (Sept 2014) St Edmundsbury Borough Council

St Edmundsbury Local Development Framework, Opportunities and Constraints, March 2012

Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Study, Kedington, Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners

St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Study, LUC, 2009

Historic map c. 1900



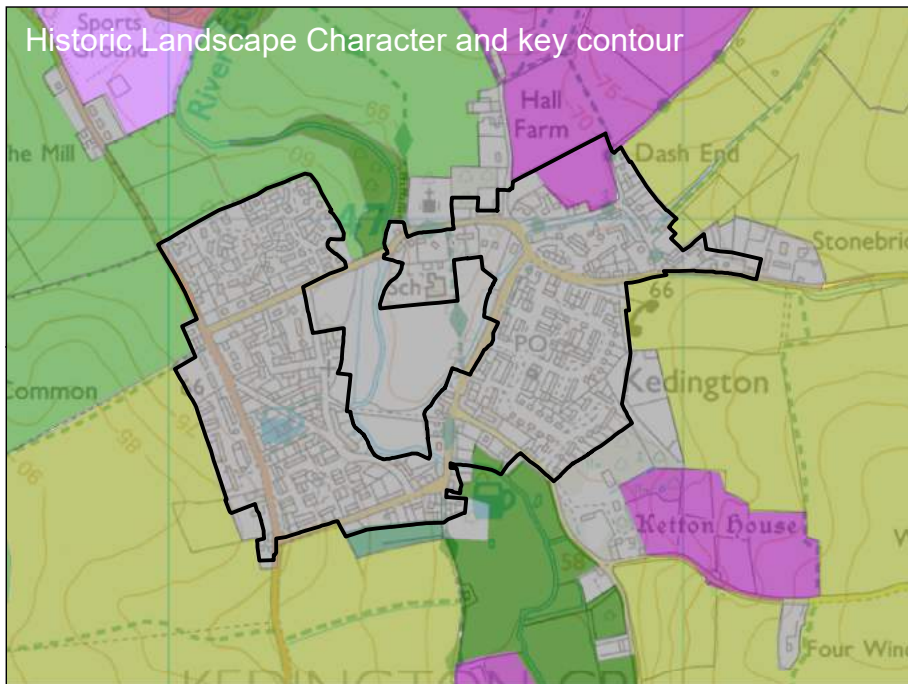
Present day aerial imagery



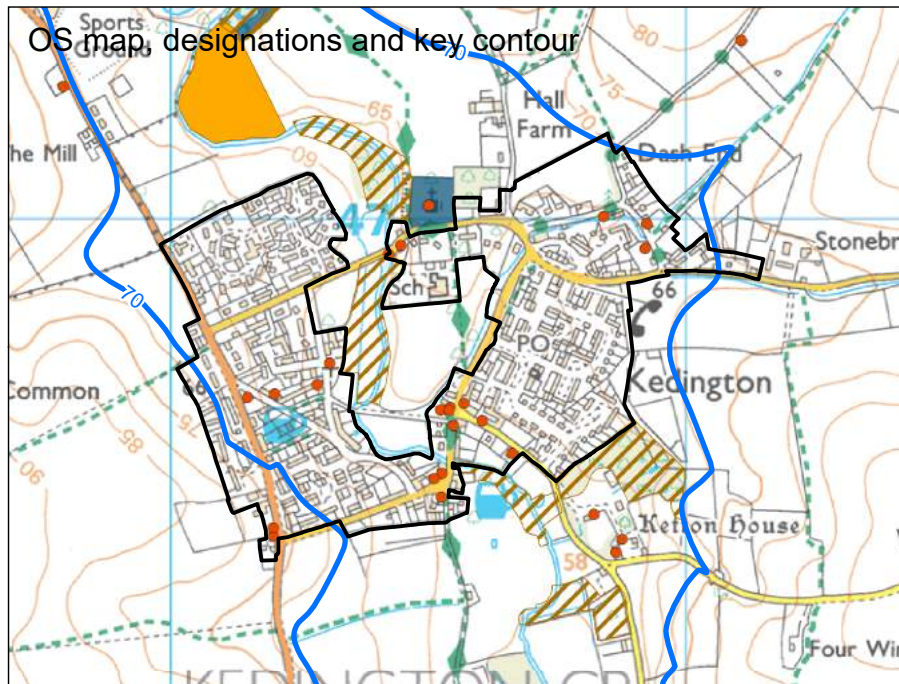
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Kedington

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.4 Clare

### Location and Topographic Context

Clare is located on the northern bank of the River Stour at the confluence between the main river and Chilton Stream which enters from the north. The settlement is located on the lower slopes of the Stour Valley historically between the 45-55m contours and is framed by rising land to the east, west and south that define the main Stour Valley and its tributary.

### Historical Development

Evidence of early settlement at Clare comes from Roman relics found in the area and also evidence of earthworks at Lower Common (to the west of the town) which form a D-shaped defensive enclosure called Erbury, the Anglo-Saxon name meaning 'earthen fort', although they are possibly earlier. By the Norman Conquest (1066) Anglo-Saxon CLARA (Clare) was held by Ælfric, a nobleman and son of Wihtgar. After the Norman Conquest Clare, along with 94 other Suffolk estates, was gifted by William the Conqueror to his cousin Richard Fitzgilbert, who built a new castle by the river (on the southern edge of the town) and whose descendants adopted the name of 'de Clare'.

Clare became an important medieval manor and by 1350 Erbury was a busy administrative centre on the edge of the developing settlement. Clare castle developed into a formidable stronghold and residence from the eleventh century to the fifteenth century and in 1248 a Priory was established at Clare and was the first house of the Augustinian (or Austin) Friars in England.

The establishment of a market and the development of the woollen cloth trade in the late fourteenth, fifteenth and early part of the sixteenth century provided employment and business opportunities. Clare's finest timber frame buildings date from this period.

The arrival of the railway in 1865 opened up markets further afield for local farmers and the old Clare market declined and had disappeared by the time the railway was finally closed in 1967. It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that Clare grew to its present size with the development of new housing estates on the roads to Cavendish, Stoke and Chilton.

### Landscape Setting

The landscape setting of Clare is defined by the river valley sides of the Stour and Chilton Stream. The latter tributary valley is particularly strongly defined with steep slopes rising on the eastern side that contrast to the relatively flat expanse of flood meadows at the foot - the juxtaposition forming a distinctive setting to the town. The open space associated with the former castle and redundant railway station, along with common land to the west and the valley floor meadows of the Stour and tributary, collectively provide an outstanding setting with a strong sense of place. When in the settlement mature trees on the valley slopes and within the valley floor along with small scale enclosures gives a leafy backdrop to the settlement. The field patterns surrounding the village are relatively intact reflecting pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures.

## **Village Form and Character**

The surviving historic core of Clare is an important example of a structured i.e. planned settlement laid out by a major family (the de Clares). The castle acts as the focus, but the street layout provides a link with the church and, beyond this the early settlement on Lower Common, to the north.

The centre of Clare retains its medieval street patterns. The Church of St Peter and St Paul visually and physically continues to dominate the centre of the town and the curve of southern end of Market Hill reflects the form and presence of the Motte and Bailey castle to the south. The linear nature of the village and 'one plot deep' character in places ensure that the rears of properties are often visible from nearby lanes and streets, and from locations above the c.55m contour views are afforded to the wider valley sides.

The Conservation Area contains over 175 listed buildings and is centred on Market Hill, around which development is dense and compact.

In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the town has included:

- housing estate (Highfields) to the east of the town off Cavendish Road
- several housing estates to the north of Stoke Road on the outer south-westerly extremities of the town which are visible on approach from the west
- a housing estate (Hertford Road) to the north of the town on the western valley sides of the Chilton Stream, which has risen up onto higher land above the 55m contour such that it is seen breaking the skyline when approached from the north.

As a result of these developments all three approach roads and gateways into the town have been altered. Nevertheless, the strong historic street pattern and built form remains dominant. Mature trees and shrubs are abundant throughout Clare such that many vistas down streets are to buildings with a mature tree backdrop or towards wooded areas within the valley or on the valley sides. This helps to reinforce the contained, small scale and compact nature of the town.

## **Views**

From within the town there are tantalising glimpses of countryside in gaps along the street frontages.

From the wider landscape much of the historic parts of the village are not visible, however, more recent housing has increased the visibility of the settlement within the landscape.

## **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

There is a high concentration of natural and cultural assets surrounding the town which are accessible to the public and which contribute to quality of life. There are three scheduled monuments and an exceptional concentration of listed buildings, as well as County Wildlife Sites. Key assets include the Clare Castle Country Park, Clare

Common (open access land), Roadside Nature Reserve (a marked protected strip of grass at the top of Maple Hill where it joins Chilton Street, on the SE corner), as well as walks along the River Stour and disused railway line and along the Bury to Clare Walk which heads north out of the village.

### **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Clare is separated from other settlements within the Stour Valley by areas of valley floor and valley sides. It is therefore perceived as separate from Stoke by Clare to the west and Cavendish to the east. The land which separates the villages can be appreciated from the A1092 and has a strongly rural and river valley character.

### **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

The scenic qualities of Clare and its valley setting derive from its exceptional historic integrity and tangible time depth within the built form and wider landscape. Land which is historically linked to the town forms a mature and high-quality setting. The position of Clare in the landscape at the confluence of two watercourses, and on the northern side of the Stour Valley only, are all fundamental qualities to its identity and history.

### **Value and Significance**

- All major periods of its history remain manifest both in built form and open spaces giving a rich variety of character and spaces with strong time depth.
- Association with artists including Kenneth Rowntree and contemporary artist Annette Ashton.
- There is great potential for archaeology in Clare which could contribute to the understanding of medieval urbanism, manufacturing and trade within the region
- The surviving setting of historic landscape and low-lying meadow land to the south and east and the commons to the west are an essential part of the historic value of the settlement.
- The entire group of monuments (castle, camp and priory) and settlement are an unusual survival nationally and are remarkable in the level of integration into the original urban street scene.
- The settlement retains its small-scale historic character and has not been overwhelmed by post-medieval and modern development.
- The castle is one of the largest and best preserved 11th century Norman motte and baileys in Suffolk (the only comparable sites are Eye and Bungay).

### **Sensitivity**

The historic integrity and high-quality setting of Clare make it highly sensitive to change both within and on the margins of the settlement. It is especially sensitive to further peripheral development along the three main routes into the town which could alter perceptions of an intact compact historic settlement.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Conserve the perceptions of the town sitting down within the valley landscape
- Avoid development which extends above the c. 55m contour where the valley slopes are particularly visually sensitive to change and where new buildings may break the skyline due to their height and/or elevation on the valley slopes

- Limit further ribbon development along the three main routes into the settlement – where development occurs ensure it contributes positively to the settlement gateway.
- Ensure the intact medieval character remains dominant and avoid additional modern housing development which weakens this
- Seek opportunities to improve urban edges where housing is particularly visible.
- Seek opportunities to reinstate valley floor pastures south of Cavendish Road to the east of the town to strengthen landscape character on approach to the town.
- Seek opportunities to underground overhead wires to improve streetscapes and reduce visual clutter

**Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

Clare Conservation Area Appraisal

Rural Vision 2031 (Sept 2014) St Edmundsbury Borough Council

St Edmundsbury Local Development Framework, Opportunities and Constraints, March 2012

Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Appraisal Appendix 3 Settlement Proformas

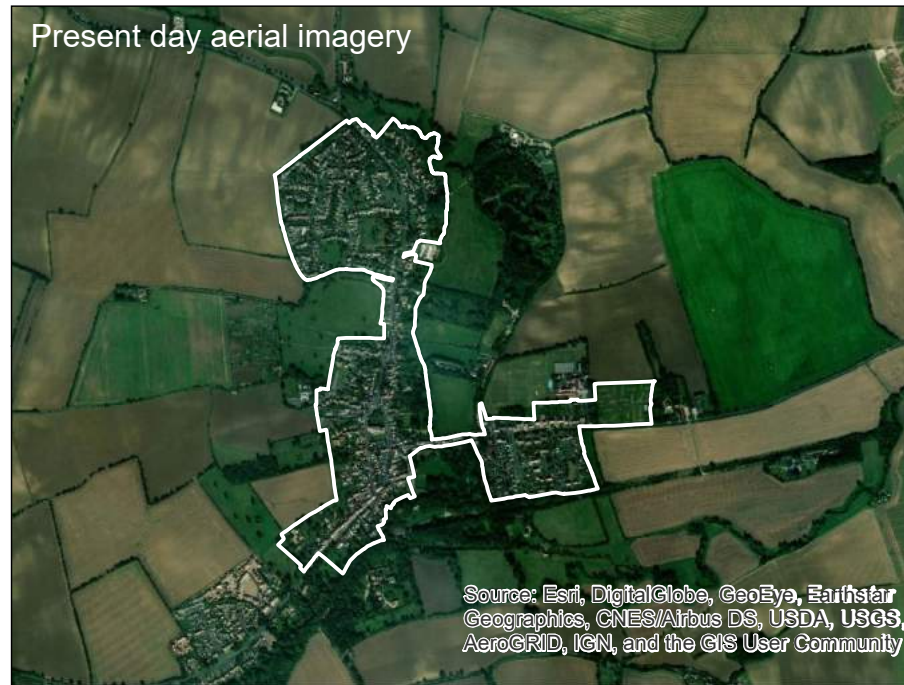
Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils 2018

St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Study, LUC, 2009

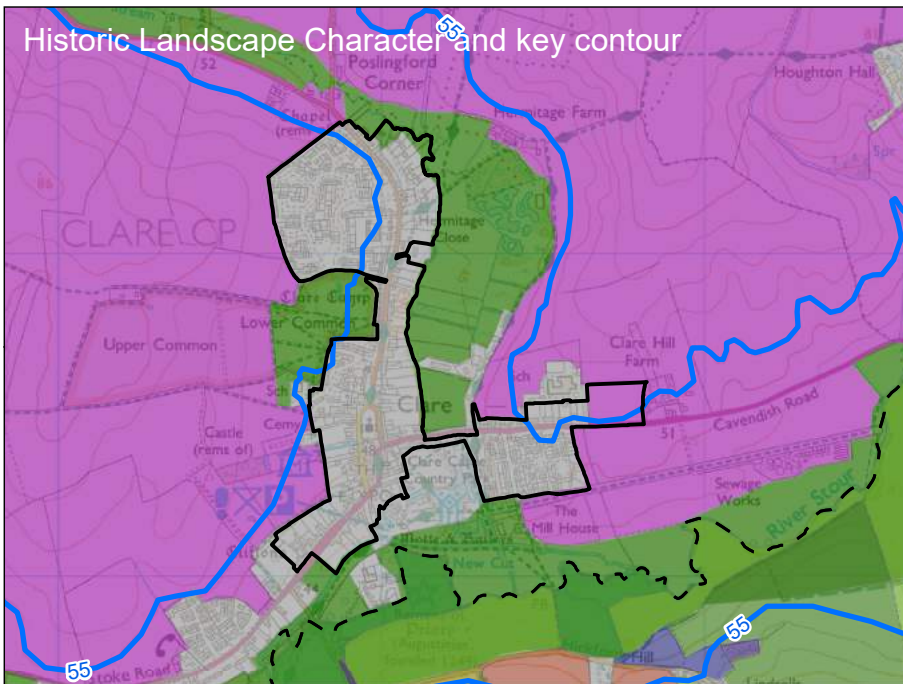
Historic map c. 1900



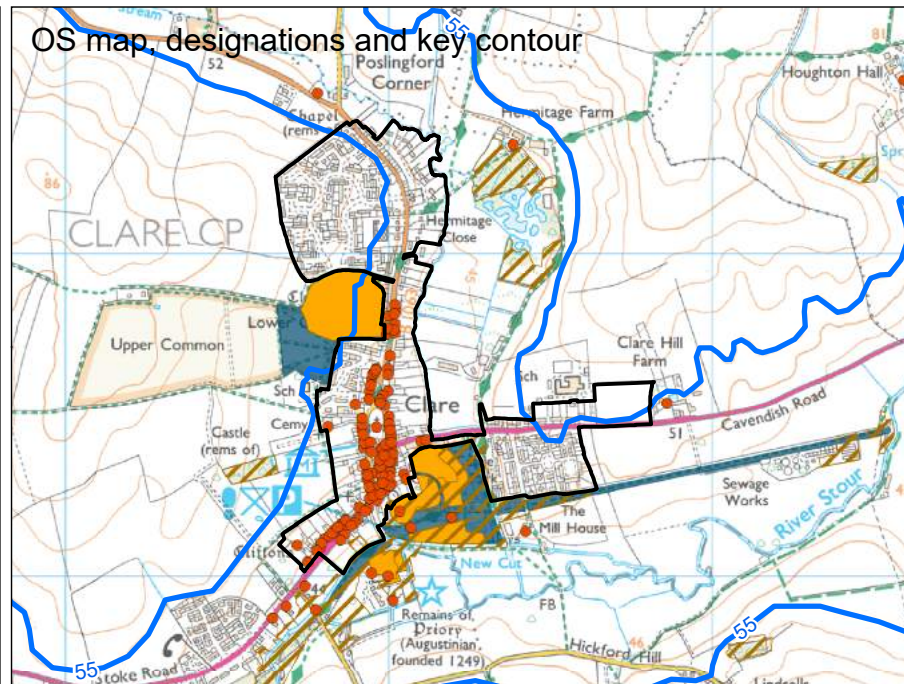
Present day aerial imagery



Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour





## 4.5 Cavendish

### Location and Topographic Context

Cavendish is located on the lower south facing slopes of the Stour Valley, north of the river and is a predominately linear settlement on the A1092 between Clare and Long Melford. The majority of development has historically located between the 40m and 45m contours. Below the 40m contour the land is liable to flood on the valley floor and above the 45m contour development starts to climb onto the higher slopes and be more visually prominent.

### Historical Development

Cavendish refers to a Saxon by the name of Cafa who owned an 'edisc' or meadow beside the River Stour. The village has a long connection with the family of 'Cavendishes, the Dukes of Devonshire.

In the west of the village, where the main road forks to form Pool Street (main road) and Peacocks Road, is the broad village green which is gently sloping reflecting the location of the village on the Stour valley sides. Adjacent sits the village church reflecting the wealth of the Wool Trade in the Medieval period. The green and main street is flanked with historic buildings and included in the Cavendish Conservation Area.

The railway and station (located in the east of the village) opened in 1865 and closed in 1967. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were several new housing developments on the outskirts of Cavendish most notably at Peacocks Close, northwest of the village, and along the Melford Road to the east, beyond the junction to Petlow. There has also be a small-scale housing estate in the southwest at Grays Close. These developments have served to extend the village along the main road and to extend development above the 45m contour such that it rises up the valley slopes. As a result, all three main gateways into the settlement have been influenced by modern housing development.

### Landscape Setting

The immediate landscape setting of the village comprises the gentle slopes of the Stour Valley and, the well wooded valley floor to the south. Within the valley the Stour River, smaller mill race and former course of the railway are linear features.

The historic small-scale pastures (pre 18<sup>th</sup> century) on the edge of the village form a transitional landscape and interface between built form and wider arable landscape. Immediately north of the village and most notably to the south of the Stour the valley sides the landscape enclosure patterns have experienced substantial post 1950 loss.

### Village Form and Character

Cavendish has a distinctive village form focused around the village green at its western end and linear development along the main road to the east where historically small-scale industry associated with horsehair factory, malthouse and smithy developed.

The village retains a predominately linear character with a strongly defined main street and with some small-scale development behind. The sinuous course of the main street at the eastern and western ends of the village serve to focus a strong vista across open space to key landmarks. For example, in the west it is the village green

and church, while at the eastern end it is the Old Railway Arms and School at the junction with Petlow Hill. In this latter example the open space along the road marked the former entrance into the old railway station and beyond this modern housing and boundary treatments lack distinction. The Columbines development to the east of the village lacks a distinctive street scene and the edge of development is open to the wider arable landscape.

### **Views**

Cavendish has one of Suffolk's most iconic views and quintessential English scenes – a row of pink thatched cottages with a backdrop of St Mary the Virgin church on the village green.

The topography of the landscape enables elevated views across the Stour Valley from the higher slopes to the north of the river (especially from the Stour Valley Way) towards Stour Street and Cavendish Mill. There are also river valley views across the Stour to the village from Hulleys Wood.

### **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

The conservation area includes the majority of listed buildings in the core of the village.

There are no local or national natural heritage designations associated with the village although there is an area of ancient woodland at Balance Wood.

### **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Cavendish is one of several Stour Valley villages which are strung out along the A1092 and sits between Long Melford and Clare. The gaps of open valley slopes and valley floor are important breaks between these settlements which reinforce their individual identity and separateness. In the case of Cavendish, the village is associated with a few other small clusters of development namely historic halls and farmsteads which form small groups of buildings in close proximity to the main village, and yet historically separate from it. These clusters form an important part of the heritage and development of the village and include Blacklands Hall to the north (moated hall, farm and former parkland), Pentlow (hall, farm and mill on River Stour), Neather Hall (including former site of Over Hall) and Cavendish Mill and Bower Hall (on the river Stour to the west). The growth of Cavendish to the northwest has compromised the setting of Nether Hall although it retains its immediate setting of small pastures.

### **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

The small scale quality of the tributary valley; rising farmed slopes; church landmark; historic buildings within the village and on its outskirts (including the moated site and historic stained black boarded barns), combine to create the scenic qualities of the settlement and its setting. The village and its setting are perceived as rural and relatively remote and strongly related to agriculture and the watercourse.

### **Value and Significance**

- High concentration of historic local vernacular buildings and especially pink cottages and thatch roofs and historic integrity of the main street and green.
- Visual supremacy of church tower overlooking the village as a key landmark.
- Low-lying small-scale character of village nestled within the valley.

- Elevated views from the surrounding landscape over the top of the village and to surrounding open farmed slopes and distant treed horizons.
- Relationship of village with outliers of historic moated sites and farm complexes and designed landscapes.
- High concentration of native woodland which forms a backdrop to built form on the main street.
- Contrasting scale of enclosures on the Stour valley slopes and the larger scale arable fields to the south.
- Historic view towards the village from Hulleys Wood across the Stour flood meadows and woodland.

### **Sensitivity**

The village is highly sensitive due to its compact historic form and position on the lower valley slopes of the Stour.

It is sensitive to:

- elongation along the A1092 and introduction of development which creates weak gateway into the settlement and undermines the rural gaps and breaks in development between settlements.
- Development which extends onto the valley floor or rising up slopes and therefore undermines the historical position of the village within and associated with the River Stour.
- Further cul-de-sac development of similar housing styles which start to dominate the eastern and western extremities of the village and may, if allowed to continue, dominate the overall character of the village.
- Development which introduces urbanising curtilage treatments along lanes or abrupt built edges and interfaces with the wider landscape.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Ensure new development sits below the 45m contour, is small in scale and reflects the local rural vernacular in order to protect the form and character of the village and its outlier historic manor/farm complexes.
- Protect the landscape which forms the gateway to the village and avoid further development which elongates the village or reduces the gaps between the village.
- Screen housing development where it rises up the valley sides above the 45m contour and is open to the wider landscape and visible in longer distant views.
- Avoid light colour materials in new buildings as they can be highly visible from the wider landscape.
- Reinstate hedgerows along lanes where they have been lost and rear garden fencing is intruding and avoid domestic planting along lanes and loss of lane character through new access arrangements which have an urbanising influence e.g. Manor Close.
- Protect the small-scale pastures which surround the village as part of the transition between the built edge and wider arable farmland.

- Enhance the valley floor to the east of Cavendish to improve setting, protect sense of openness beyond the village and improve functioning of valley floor for ecosystem services.
- Enhance the approach to the village from the east through enhancements to the street scene including reinstatement of hedgerow boundaries to properties and planting of non-ornamental street trees.
- Avoid cul-de-sac developments and seek to establish back lanes and individual housing styles that reflect the local vernacular found in properties which sit behind the main street.
- Any new development should respect the hierarchy of routes and building types within the village.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

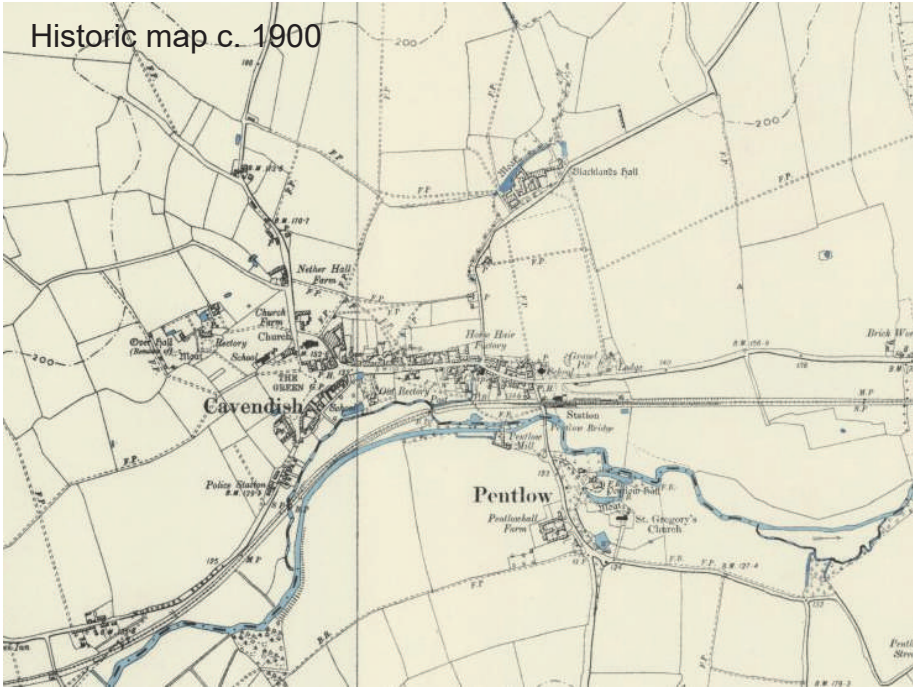
Cavendish Conservation Appraisal (when available)

Rural Vision 2031 (Sept 2014) St Edmundsbury Borough Council

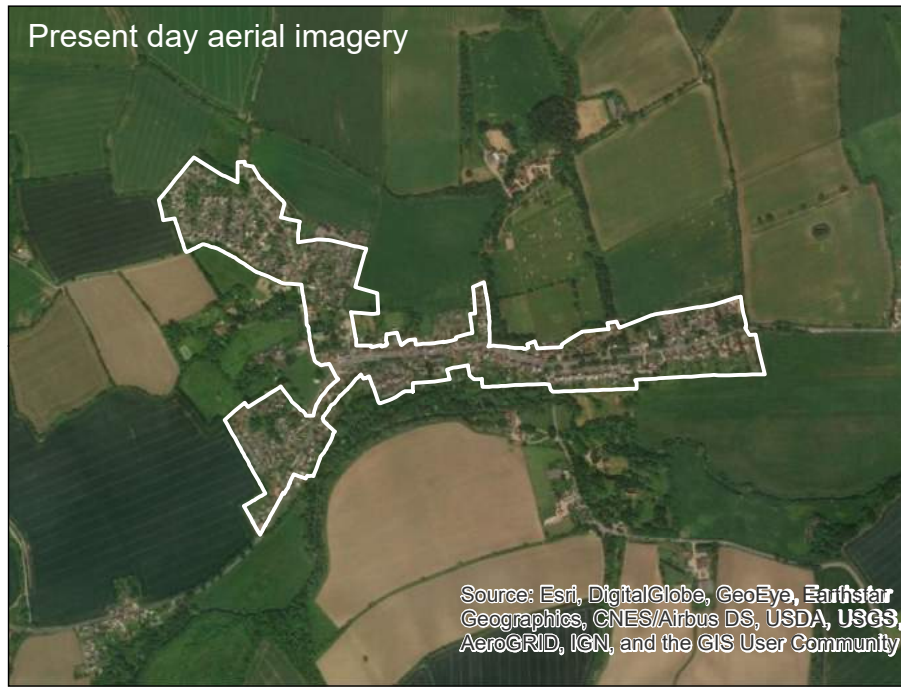
St Edmundsbury Local Development Framework, Opportunities and Constraints, March 2012

St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Study, LUC, 2009

Historic map c. 1900



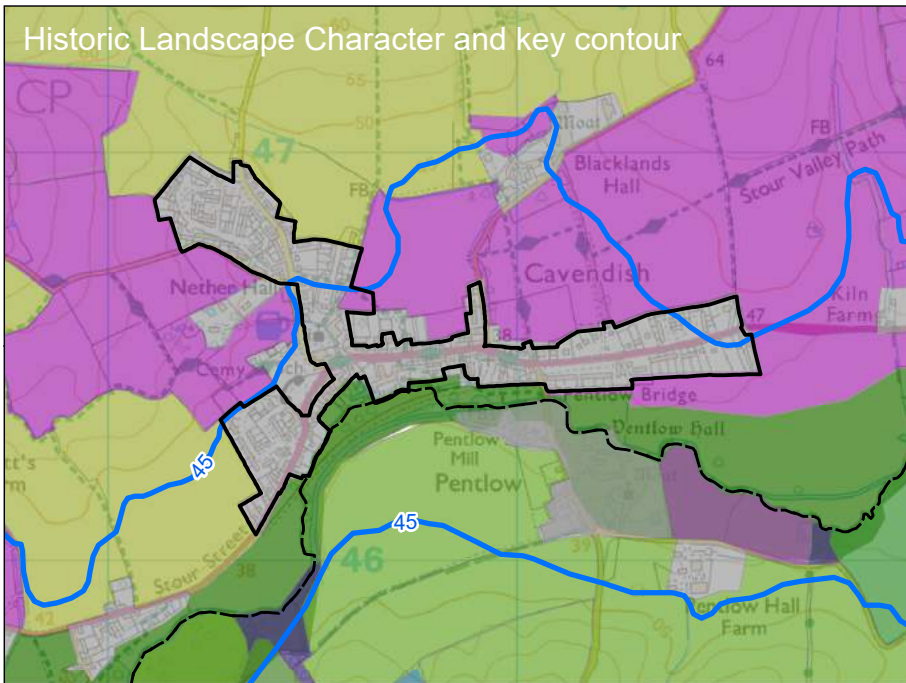
Present day aerial imagery



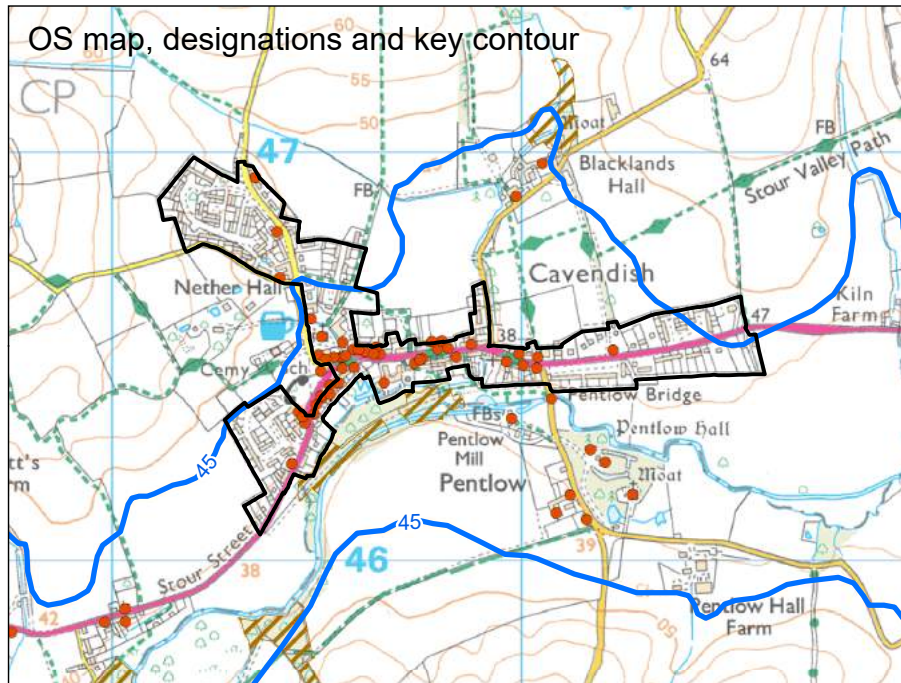
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Cavendish

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.6 Glemsford

### Location and Topographic Context

Glemsford is located on an elevated spur of land above the Stour and Glemsford Valleys to the northwest of their confluence. Above the 70m contour the landform has a gentle gradient but below this to the south and east the land drops more steeply into the two respective valleys.

### Historical Development

Glemsford is a polyfocal village made up of several historic centres as identified in the Glemsford Conservation Area Appraisal which, over time, have joined to form a predominately linear settlement along the principle road. Today the village form retains this linearity, the built form punctuated by small greens at the junctions of roads e.g. Tye Green and Fair Green.

Glemsford was a significant centre for Suffolk's woollen cloth industry in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century housing a number of small industries. This characteristic and association with rural industries continues in subsequent centuries and the vernacular architecture of the village still reflects this e.g. the former Horsehair Factory on Bells Lane and former Silk Factory on Chequers Lane.

### Landscape Setting

Glemsford's immediate landscape setting comprises the Undulating Ancient Farmlands which form the elevated land above the valley on which the settlement sits. The Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape type comprise the steeper valley sides that drop into the adjacent valleys to the east and south, while the Valley Meadowlands landscape type comprise the valley floors. The change from Undulating Ancient Farmlands to Rolling Valley Farmlands is very subtle due to topography but also as a result of similar land uses. Much of the immediate setting to the village comprises pre 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosure patterns.

### Village Form and Character

Glemsford is essentially a linear village focused on the long main road through the settlement. However its origins are polyfocal and the junctions of the main street with subsidiary lanes (Ness Street, Shepherds Lane, Duffs Hill, Flax Lane, Low Street and Park Lane), results in key focal points and breaks within the built form e.g. Tye Green, Fair Green and Churchgate (this latter group comprises the church on the edge of village, overlooking the Glem Valley and two historic farmsteads).

As a result, the road network, hierarchy of routes and character of the junctions, are important characteristics of the village. To the west and north of the settlement, development along the main street remains predominately one plot deep.

Development in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century has resulted in cul-de-sac development between Tye Green and Bell's Lane. This has started to erode the settlement form and perceptions of it as a linear village as well as the strong hierarchy of routes. This development has also given rise to increased views of the urban edge from the surrounding landscape as development has started to extend onto the transitional slopes.

## Views

Where more recent development has extended onto land below the 75m contour it is visible on the skyline from elevated locations on the opposite valley sides e.g. housing along Kings Road. Because views across the valley are either from similar elevations or slightly lower only the outer edge of development is visible.

The Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment (2018) identified a series of views which it considered made a particular contribution to the settlement and its sense of place. Those associated with the church on the eastern side of the village were noted as especially valued. From the church and Lower Road there are long views down the Glem Valley which are scenic.

## Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

Glemsford is designated a conservation which extends along the main street. Listed buildings form four separate clusters reflecting the areas of historic settlement and include a cluster in the south of the village, around Tye Green and along Brook Street.

## Relationship to Adjacent Settlements

Glemsford sits remote from other settlements in part due to its elevated location. However, it is inter-visible with the settlements of Stanstead (in the Glem Valley), Long Melford and Foxearth.

## Scenic Quality and Perceptions

Although physically separate from the adjacent valleys Glemsford borrows character from them as a result of elevated views from the settlement edge. The views from the eastern edge of the village around the church are especially valued where the landmark qualities of the church connect closely with the scenic quality of the wider Glem Valley.

## Value and Significance

- Juxtaposition of historic buildings, lane hierarchy and village greens give rise to distinctive character and quality.
- Edge of village location of the church which is a local landmark and contributes to the character of the village and scenic qualities of the Glem Valley.
- Linear form of the village and close association with the wider landscape as a result of development being one plot deep to the north and west of the main street, and around Tye Green.

## Sensitivity

The village is sensitive to change that further erodes the linear form of the settlement and hierarchy of lanes and characteristic junctions. Furthermore, the position of the church on the outer edge of the settlement and the elevation of the settlement above the high quality Glem Valley increase its sensitivity.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Seek opportunities to undertake new woodland planting on upper slopes (between 60-70m contours) to mitigate the effects of existing development and create a wooded skyline especially in views from the Stour and Glem valleys.
- Protect rural valley views to the church and its sense of isolation.
- Protect the linear street character, the hierarchy of routes and village greens at junctions and avoid further cul-de-sac development which undermines settlement form and creates an abrupt interface with the surrounding landscape.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

Glemsford Conservation Area Appraisal

Glemsford Neighbourhood Plan (when available)

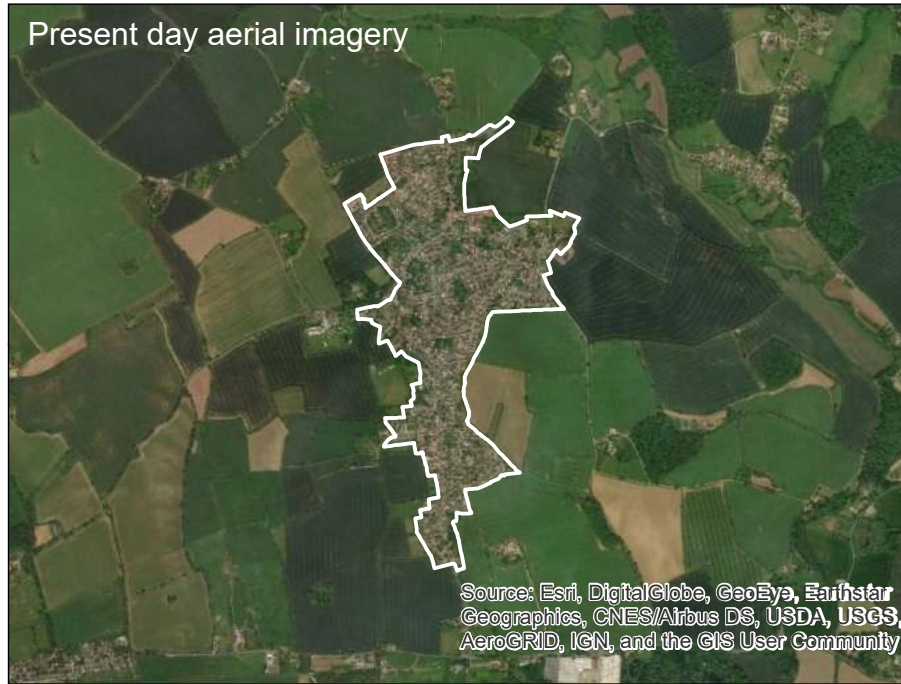
Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils 2018



Historic map c. 1900

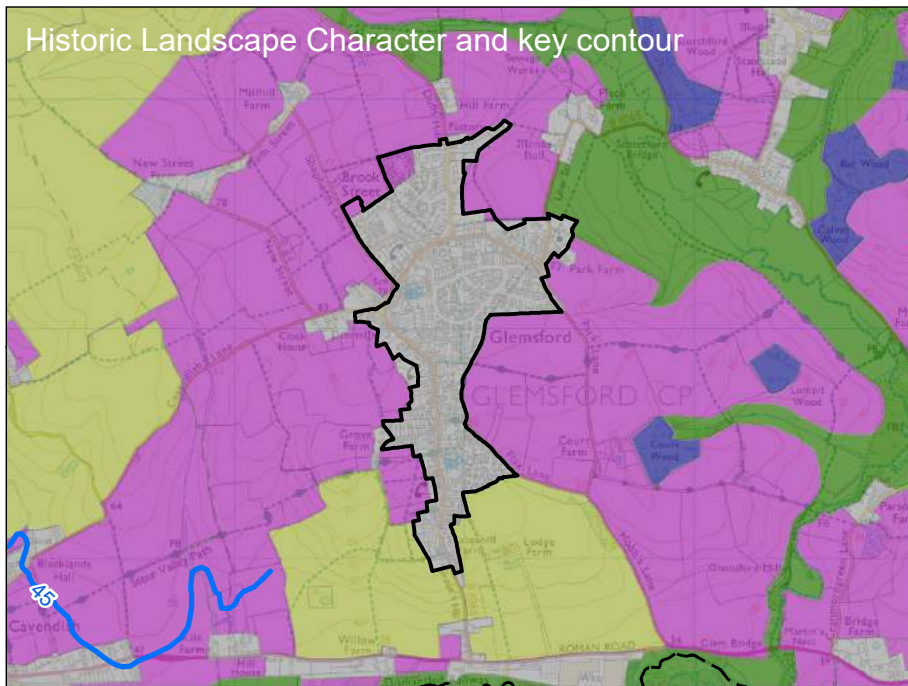


Present day aerial imagery

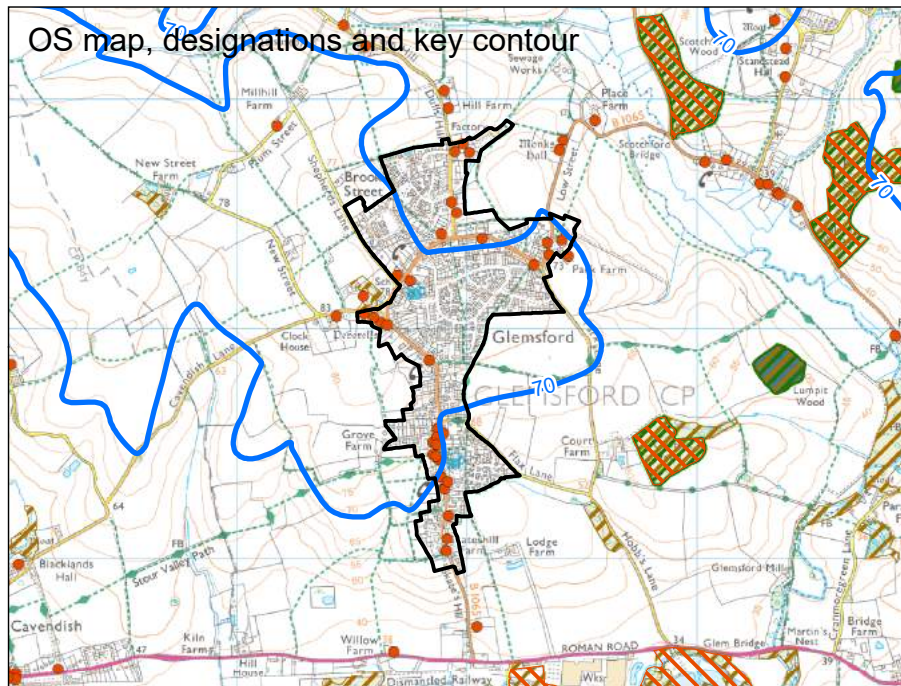


Settlement Assessment:  
Glemsford

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.7 Long Melford

### Location and Topographic Context

Long Melford is located on the lower valley slopes immediately to the east of the River Stour at the confluence of the river with the Chad Brook (a tributary stream which enters the main valley from the east). This is a fulcrum point in the wider Stour Valley where the river turns from an east-west orientation to one which is north-south. Topographically the valley is asymmetrical with the valley slopes to the east and north being steeper than those to the west. The main valley slopes rise from the valley floor to approximately the 50m contour and then slacken off whilst continuing to rise. This slight break in slope, whilst subtle tends to affect visibility of slopes from within the valley, with wider more distant views possible from elevations of approximately 35 AOD and above.

The main part of the village is orientated north/south reflecting the course of the river and comprises two distinct components. The first is a wide main street lined with historic buildings which give rise to a strongly linear and well-defined built form. The second is a more triangular cluster of buildings on rising land to the north associated with Melford Green around which the Church, alms-houses, Melford Hall and Kentwell Hall and their associated parkland which coalesce. The course of the Chad Brook is reflected in a subtle declivity and, in association with Melford Park and open lower valley slopes, provides a sense of separation between these two distinct areas of built form.

### Historical Development

There is a long history of settlement in this specific area of the Stour Valley. Long Melford has two schedule monuments which are Roman Villa sites. However, it was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the village grew as a major centre for Suffolk's woollen cloth industry. Many of the buildings along the main street are timber framed and later faced with brick in the Elizabethan, Georgian and Victorian times. The buildings in the northern part of the village date to the Elizabethan period including Melford Hall and Trinity Hospital (former alms-houses). The Victorian terraced houses to the south of the village reflect the railway influences, while agriculturally based enterprises are still expressed in the built form including maltings, mills, blacksmiths and foundry buildings. Place names such as Windmill Hill also indicate the former presence of windmills on the surrounding higher land.

Long Melford's recent growth has included housing estates that have filled in the area between the former railway and Bull Lane.

### Landscape Setting

The landscape character which forms the setting to Long Melford is relatively complex comprising a range of different character types which make up the Stour Valley at this point.

The Valley Meadowlands lie to the west along the valley floor. Here there are areas of pasture, wet woodland and willows along the course of the river. Roads across the valley meadows connecting to Liston and at Rod Bridge, along with the footpaths, enable access to this landscape, connecting Long Melford with the valley and western valley sides.

To the east, beyond the built edge of the settlement, the valley sides are most pronounced between approximately the 35m and 55m contours. Beyond this they continue to rise towards the A134 bypass, but more gradually. Small east west stream valleys have created gentle undulations and the area is traversed by two historic lanes that connected the outlying farms of Cuckoo Tye Farm and Highlanders Farm, the latter is still extant, the former is a recreational route.

To the north the valley slopes flank the Chad Brook and form the north-eastern slopes to the Stour as it changes direction. This landscape comprises the Rolling Estate Farmland reflecting its historic land use as parkland (Melford Park and Kentwell Park).

The landscape condition of the setting is generally good. There has been some loss of field boundaries on the eastern valley slopes and a loss of parkland character around Liston, but field enclosure reflects pre 18<sup>th</sup> century patterns. To the west of the settlement arable cultivation has extended onto the valley floor resulting in a weakening of the legibility of the Stour Valley character. However much of the area shows an intact pattern of fields enclosures (pre 18<sup>th</sup> century) and land use including parkland character and veteran trees in the north.

Overall, the landscape surrounding Long Melford is strongly rural, has a tangible time depth and is tranquil.

### **Village Form and Character**

The village form reflects its association with the watercourses of the River Stour and Chad Brook. Both have offered natural resources and shaped the historical evolution of the village. The valley floor meadows which are liable to flood have prevented development from extending to the west and continue to do so. The introduction of the railway has also shaped urban form. Its construction and crossing of the main street in the south resulted in the clustering of Victorian properties in the vicinity as this has overtime extended the village southwards. As further development has been added in the northeast, the (now disused) railway has become a physical barrier and green edge to the village. To the north the Chad Brook and south facing valley slopes have influenced the location and design of parkland associated with Melford Hall which, as a valued historic asset, places a constraint on development to the north.

The village retains an historic pattern of routes comprising the main street through the village but also the junction of routes around Melford Green. Beyond the main street to the east there are several rural lanes which connected the settlement with dispersed farms.

### **Views**

The village appears to nestle down within the landform on the lower valley slopes. Its full extent is not perceived from the wider landscape, with only glimpsed views to houses possible and with wider and more prevalent and views of the church tower. There are important views from the west, around Liston, where the valley sides of the Stour afford views across the valley meadows, to glimpses of the village and the Church and Melford Hall within its parkland setting. There are also elevated views from Windmill Hill south and east across the village, and from the upper slopes of Melford Green looking south.

## Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

Long Melford is a notable medieval “wool town” and contains a high concentration of exceptional listed buildings which reflect its historical importance and its present-day intact character. It is also largely designated a conservation area which extends in the north to embrace areas of outstanding parkland landscape associated with Melford Park and Kentwell Park. Within the valley meadowlands to the west the landscape supports habitats along the disused railway line (CWS, LNR) and The Railway Walks LNR to the southwest of the village in the valley floor. Chad Brook is a CWS and valued for its aquatic fauna and flora, while Long Melford Green is valued for its wet species rich grassland. The village contains three scheduled monuments (two Roman villas and Water Conduit on Melford Green).

## Relationship to Adjacent Settlements

The extension of Long Melford southwards along the main street, whilst reinforcing its linear character has nonetheless, in association with the expansion of Sudbury, brought these two settlements into relatively close proximity. The introduction of the A134 bypass to the east of the village and introduction of a roundabout junction with the A131 has perceptually extended the edge of Sudbury to this junction.

Consequently, the open agricultural land between the junction and Rodbridge Corner (former tollhouse and turnpike gate) provides an important landscape gap between these settlements, and comprises rising land to the east, and gently sloping land onto the valley floor meadows to the west. Views from the B1064 to the wider landscape in this ‘gap’ are important in reinforcing the separateness and sense of place. The urbanisation of this ‘gap’ would undermine perceptions of the rural approach to Long Melford.

## Scenic Quality and Perceptions

The scenic qualities of Long Melford are reflected in its strong linear form and distinctive wide and treed main street and the estate and parkland character to the north of the village. The built form includes a significant number of visually distinct buildings which add to the street scene and act as local landmarks along with churches dotted within the valley on the mid to upper valley sides. Avenues of trees within Kentwell Park and the brick perimeter wall of Melton Park are also distinctive features. The combination of distinctive open spaces defined by historic built form; views to the wider rural landscape which embraces the town; and the distinctive and unmistakable valley context, give rise to a landscape and townscape which are closely and harmoniously related and which exhibit high scenic quality.

## Value and Significance

- Distinct settlement pattern - Linear character of the settlement is still evident – reinforced by retention of views from the main street to the surrounding landscape valley floor and valley sides.
- The value and character of Long Melford as a settlement depends upon its high-quality landscape setting. The strength of character of this setting and its condition are critical to maintaining Long Melford’s sense of place.
- Varied landscape setting as a result of riparian landscape, parkland and rolling valley side agricultural land.

- Supremacy of the church tower on rising land to the north of the village and limited visibility of the settlement when viewed from the surrounding landscape
- Relatively small scale and legible links of the village with the wider landscape both in terms of views, development which is narrow and built form which reinforces the agricultural ties and origins of the settlement to the Stour Valley.
- Long Melford makes a particular contribution to the special qualities and character of the Stour Valley as one of its most notable and intact “wool towns” within the Project Area and indeed within the Dedham Vale AONB.
- The settlement forms a key focal point on publicised long-distance routes (Stour Valley Path and St Edmund Way), from which the small scale, intact and close association of the settlement and the Stour Valley can readily be perceived.
- Number of nationally important assets on the periphery of the settlement increases the sensitivity of the area.
- The rising land of the valley sides to the Chad Brook and River Stour form the undeveloped backdrop to the settlement.
- Views are critical in defining and reinforcing sense of place and local distinctiveness both out from the settlement and towards the settlement from the surrounding landscape.

### **Sensitivity**

Long Melford is highly sensitive due to its exceptional built character, distinctive settlement form and position on the lower valley slopes of the Stour and in association with extensive parkland.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Ensure new development protects the form of the settlement and its visual, physical and historic connections to its immediate landscape setting.
- Ensure new development is kept to the lower valley slopes around the c.35-40m contour and around the 30m contour in the south of the village.
- Protect views from the wider landscape - any new development should sit low in the landscape with a backdrop of rising land.
- Protect the supremacy of the church tower as a key landmark in the valley landscape.
- Retain the rural valley slopes on both sides of the river between Long Melford and junction with the A134 in order to protect the setting of Long Melford and sense of separation from Sudbury – encourage new hedgerow and woodland planting in this area to restore landscape patterns and increase resilience to urbanising influences.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

Long Melford Conservation Area Appraisal

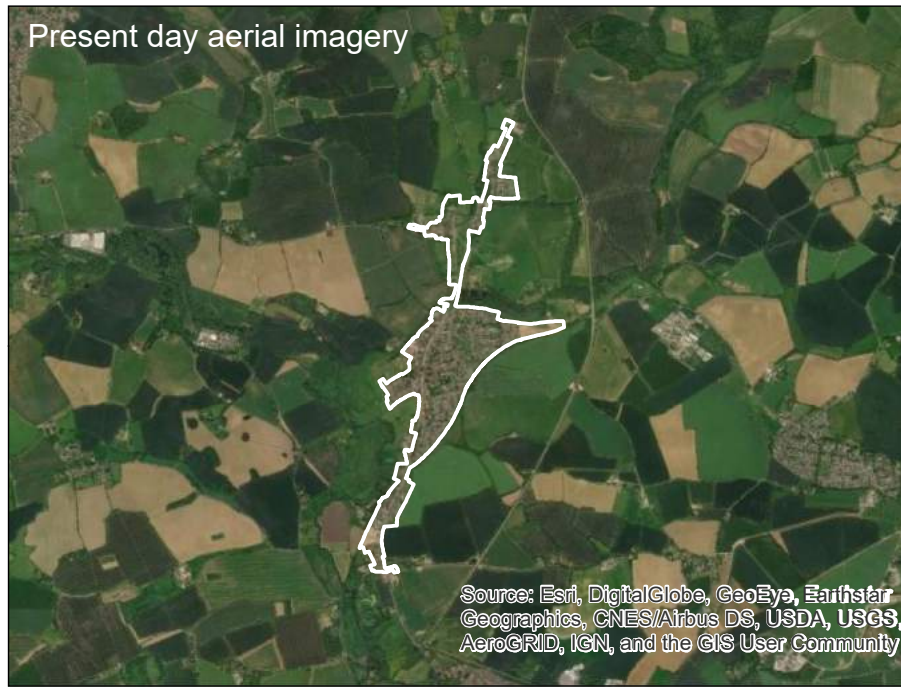
Draft Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan

Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils 2018

Historic map c. 1900



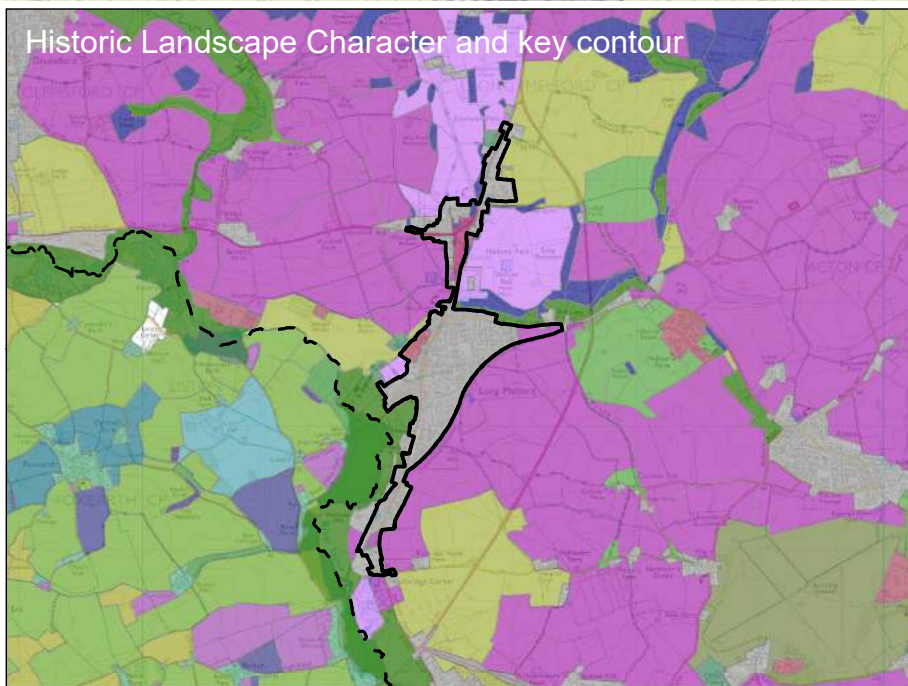
Present day aerial imagery



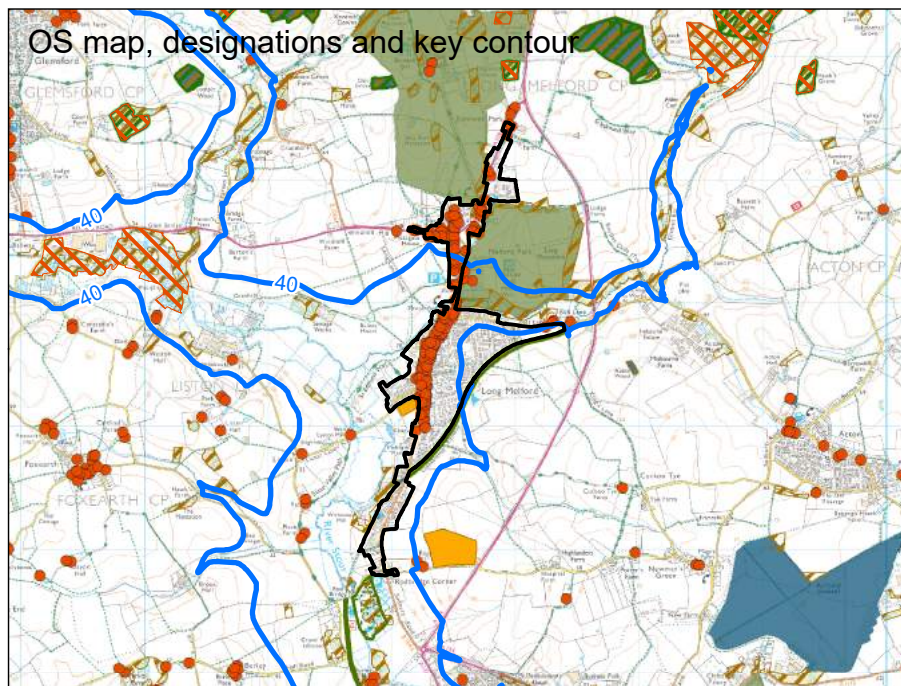
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Settlement Assessment:  
Long Melford

Historic Landscape Character and key contour



OS map, designations and key contour



## 4.8 Bures

### Location and Topographic Context

Bures straddles the River Stour and comprises two settlements – Bures St Mary (east side of the Stour) and Bures Hamlet (west side) which are framed and embraced by valley slopes that rise to c. 65m + and where the River Stour changes direction from north-south to east-west. For the purposes of this study both settlements have been considered together and referred to as Bures.

### Historical Development

The historic settlement of Bures established at a crossing point on the River Stour. Excavations within the settlement and associated with Bures Common indicate the area is likely to have been settled in the Anglo-Saxon period. In 1086 Domesday refers to the Church at Bures (located close to the river in the centre of the village) and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Bures had its own medieval market and fair. Bures Mill is located on the eastern side of the river and was first recorded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The River Stour was made navigable and operated from 1709 becoming a busy trading route between the port of Manningtree and Sudbury. This was followed by the construction of the Sudbury branch railway line from Colchester in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century which included a station at Bures Hamlet and brought development to the western side of the riverbanks.

With the improved communications network provided by the river and railway, the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Bures became the home to several industries including smithy, maltings and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, textile manufacturing and latterly a cheese factory.

### Landscape Setting

The wider landscape is undulating and relatively pronounced comprising rolling valley sides which embrace the village and contrast with the relatively flat valley meadowlands along the river. On the western sides of the Stour there are numerous small brooks and tributary streams which cut through the undulating landscape, including Cambridge Brook to the south and an unnamed watercourse and shallow valley immediately to the west of the village.

To the north of the settlement is the grade II\* listed Great Bevills manor house set within parkland, its wooded slopes making an important contribution to the setting of Bures. On the western side of the village the railway line is also well wooded and not an obvious feature, vegetation contributing to the wooded character of the valley slopes and characteristic wooded skylines.

The river corridor and associated pastures, along with the crossing point within the village, give rise to open space adjacent to the church and the penetration of river valley character into the heart of the village which reinforces the settlements sense of place.

### Village Form and Character

The settlement sits on the lower valley slopes between the 20m and 30m contours and is closely associated with the River Stour and its associated valley floor meadows. The historic core of the village has a dense and compact character, focusing on the river

crossing and railway station. The streets are tight and narrow and built form appears dense and contrast strongly with areas of open space associated with the valley floor where the landscape opens up and the wider countryside penetrates the heart of the settlement. More recent 20<sup>th</sup> century development occurs to the south and east of the village extending along the roads and on rising slopes behind e.g. Normandie Way, and Nayland Way. A sense of leaving the village is gained as a result of rising up the valley sides or as a result of views opening up down the River Valley and across the flood plain.

Where modern housing development extends onto higher slopes and or is relative tall or has white detailing, it is more visually apparent from the wider landscape. Otherwise the village sits down in the valley landscape and is relatively unassuming.

### **Views**

The tightly defined streets in the centre of the village, combined with right angle bends and open spaces, gives rise to several distinctive and memorable vistas and views that connect the built-up areas with the landscape setting.

Cross valley views from the valley sides or along the River Stour valley are often panoramic and can be channelled along the valley floor.

From within the valley bottom and heart of village there are views out to the surrounding valley sides which embrace the settlement and reinforce its small scale and rural location.

In views from the valley floor recreation ground and meadows the village edge is well vegetated, and the church tower and mill are notable built landmarks in views reflecting the quintessential Stour Valley.

### **Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations**

There are two conservation areas which cover the village – one for Bures Hamlet and one for Bures St Mary which are contiguous. The latter includes much of the built form and extends to include areas of landscape to the north and south comprising Bevills Manor and landscape grounds and valley meadows respectively. The Bures Hamlet Conservation Area includes just the core historic built form.

Several important habitats for wildlife and biodiversity are scattered throughout the area (including sites of importance for nature conservation), comprising a mixture of ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, and scrub and wetland habitats.

Within the wider setting there are a number of listed buildings and scheduled monuments, along with network of historic lanes that give rise to a strong time depth.

### **Relationship to Adjacent Settlements**

Bures Hamlet and Bures St Mary read as a single settlement; however, they are distinctively separate from the hamlet of Mount Bures to the south. Bures and Mount Bures are separated by the Stour valley sides and the valley floor associated with the confluence of the Cambridge Brook and River Stour.

### **Scenic Quality and Perceptions**

The valley floor pastures and contrasting undulating and relatively pronounced wooded valley sides, along with the historic character of the settlement, narrow rural lanes that



weave off into the wider landscape and key landmarks such as the church, give rise to a settlement and wider landscape setting which has scenic quality and feels deeply rural. Where modern housing estates have extended the settlement along the roads the compact and historic character of the settlement, (set within the lower valley sides) has been undermined to some degree. Nevertheless, the historic core of the village remains dominant in terms of overall perceptions and character.

### **Value and Significance**

- Significance of the river crossing and change in orientation of the River Stour, Bures being located at a 'pinch' point in the valley.
- Historic, intact and relatively dense urban form which contrasts with the open spaces of the valley floor that penetrate the settlement.
- Pronounced valley slopes which have a wooded character and form the backdrop to built-form - existing built form nestling on the lower slopes and focused around the river crossing and railway.

### **Sensitivity**

The village is sensitive due to its small scale and high-quality setting in the Stour Valley and rural lanes which lead into and out of the settlement and are vulnerable to urbanising influences.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

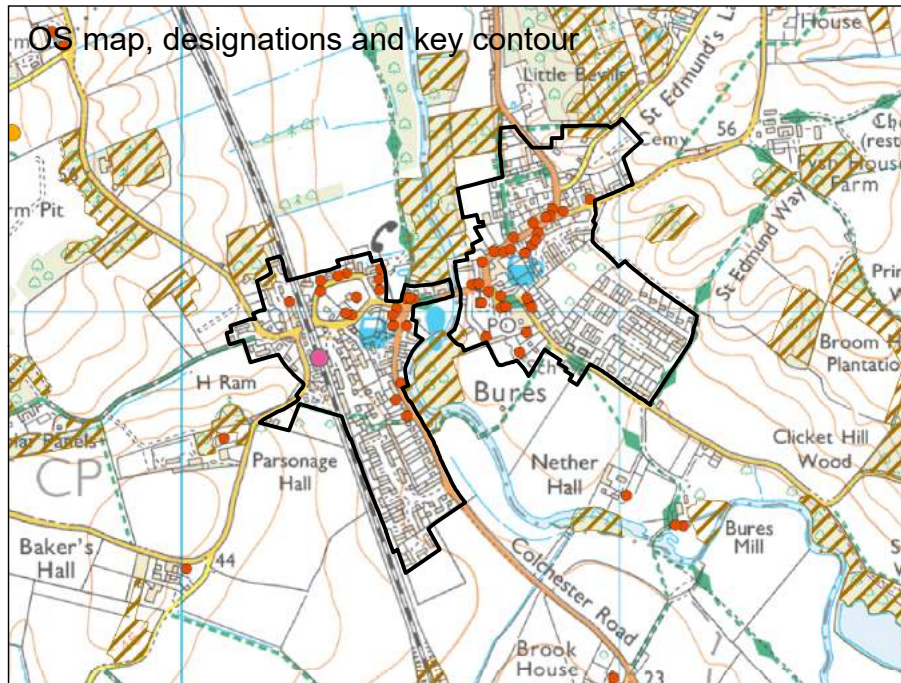
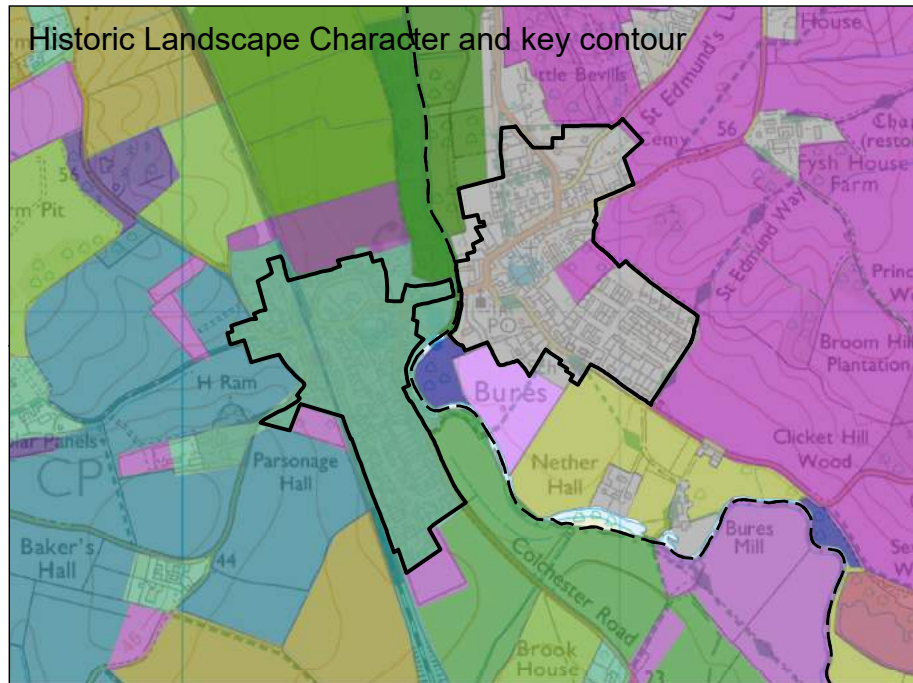
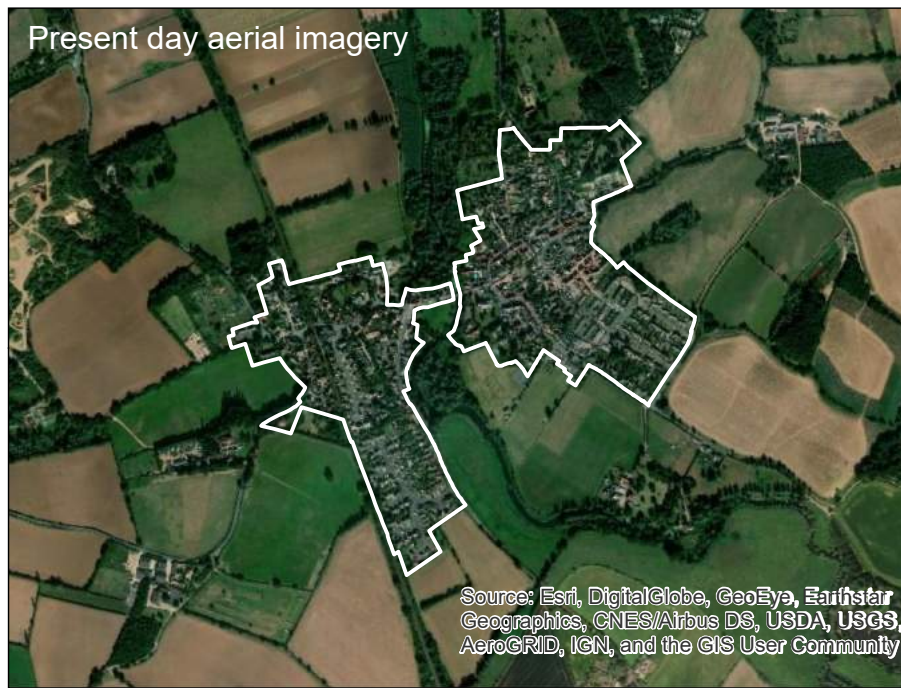
- Conserve compact form of the settlement and its association with the River Stour and avoid changes which alter perceptions of the settlement nestled on the lower slopes.
- Protect small-scale rural lanes leading from the settlement from incremental changes that extend development along the main roads and alter gateways
- Protect open valley slopes which are visually sensitive especially in cross valley views.
- Avoid development which reduces sense of separation between the settlement and Bures Mount.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information**

Bures St Mary Conservation Area Appraisal

Bures Hamlet Conservation Area Appraisal

Planning Appeal APP/Z1510/W/18/3207509



## 4.9 Conurbations Adjacent to SVPA

There are two major conurbations on the edges of the SVPA namely Haverhill and Sudbury. As these settlements lie outwith the study area they have not been assessed in the same way as settlements which fall fully within the Project Area. Nevertheless, they are of relevance to this study because changes to settlements can have a direct effect on the special qualities of the Project Area. On this basis they are each discussed below with a focus on:

- a) the historic development of the settlement and its relationship with the Stour Valley landscape
- b) the value and significance of the SVPA as a setting
- c) opportunities to conserve special qualities

### Sudbury

#### Historic Development and Relationship to SVPA

Sudbury is a market town located on the eastern valley side of the Stour Valley while Ballington forms a small settlement associated with the river crossing, on the western side of the Stour. The valley floor and western valley sides within the SVPA form a distinctive and highly valued landscape setting to the town and hamlet.

The River Stour forms a wide looping meander adjacent to Sudbury and Ballington and is likely to have been a contributory factor leading to the historical river crossing and subsequent growth of settlement. Sudbury's historic core and Conservation Area sits within the meander of the river on rising land between the 23 and 35m contours and extends across the river along the main route. This historic core contains an exceptional concentration of churches and other religious establishments, indicative of the fact that it was historically a significant settlement.

Sudbury has expanded significantly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now four times its historic size, such that the historic core is a small component compared to its modern growth. However, the interface between the historic core of the town and the valley floor and wider valley sides remains, the Stour valley providing a landscape setting to the town which contributes to its sense of place. The historic core of the town is now most readily appreciated from the wider Stour Valley where the relationship of the settlement and the valley remains intact.

The built edge the settlement in the vicinity of the Conservation Area is well treed and the former railway line which continued northwards from Sudbury Station to connect with settlements along the Stour Valley is now a recreational route (The Valley Walk) traversing the valley meadowlands.

Land within the SVPA which forms the valley floor and western valley sides in the vicinity of Sudbury is affected by the growth of the settlement on the opposite valley slopes such that there is visual intrusion and night light spill. These effects are felt over approximately 4km and are most noticeable from the middle and upper valley slopes. When on the lower slopes or valley meadowlands, vegetation on the valley floor or built edge helps to filter views to built development. Similarly, the SVPA to the

south of Sudbury, in the vicinity of Prospect Hill and Little Cornard, is visually sensitive to expansion of Sudbury or development on the valley slopes.

### **Value and Significance of the SVPA as a Setting**

Land within the SVPA adjacent to Sudbury is valued due to:

- Extensive and intact water meadows - Sudbury Common Lands Nature Reserve and Wardman Meadows (County Wildlife Sites).
- Undulating valley slopes around Prospect Hill and Little Cornard which express visually diversity, scenic views and historic interest and form a high-quality setting to the south of the settlement.
- Cultural associations with Thomas Gainsborough.
- Opportunities to access natural green space and recreational routes into the wider landscape.
- Intact pattern of historic enclosures on the valley sides – medium size fields enclosed by tall hedgerows and hedgerows trees with sunken lanes on valley slopes.
- Wooded skylines which define the upper valley slopes and form a backdrop to Sudbury.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Avoid development beyond the junction of the A131 and A134 which may undermine the sense of separation between Sudbury and Long Melford.
- Avoid development which extends up the valley slopes resulting in a loss of open fields as a backdrop to the town especially at Great Cornard and where development may become visible from the SVPA on the skyline.
- Seek opportunities to retain wooded skylines through management of woodlands and the planting of new woodland on upper slopes.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

Sudbury Conservation Area Appraisal

Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils 2018

Appeal Decision APP/D3505/W/19/3230839

## **Haverhill**

### **Historic Development and Relationship to SVPA**

Haverhill is located in the upper reaches of the Stour Valley beyond the SVPA and within the shallow valley of the Stour Brook.

The early focus of settlement along the Stour Brook was originally at Sturmer but this shifted to Haverhill and by 1068 Domesday describes Haverhill as an established market town. The medieval town developed first around Burton End where there was

a church, but a second church established on the main highway in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the settlement shifted to this new location. Haverhill prospered in the later Middle Ages as a significant trading centre. By 1620 it had become known as a Puritan town and in 1667 most of the town was destroyed by the 'great fire'. The town was to develop significantly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of the Gurteen's textiles and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was a red bricked factory town with evidence of company housing. The railways – Colne Valley and Stour Valley lines, contributed to its success. After the second world war the Greater London Corporation identified Haverhill as an overspill community and a significant number of new housing estates were constructed. A bypass and further industrial estate development occurred in the 1990s. The form of the town now extends as far as the bypass to the southwest, creating an unusual urban form. Significant new housing growth is planned for the north and west of the town.

### **Value and Significance**

- Callestone Hill and Copse Hill are especially important areas of higher land that define the setting to the town and separate the valley of the Stour Book in which Haverhill sits from the River Stour and Bumpstead Brook valleys which form part of the SVPA.
- The former railway provides a linear route which connects the town with villages of the Upper Stour Valley.
- The SVPA forms high quality landscapes on the doorstep of the town.

### **Conserving Special Qualities**

- Ensure development does not extend onto the upper slopes of Challestone Hill in the north and Copse Hill in the south.
- Seek opportunities to plant woodland on the prominent hills surrounding the town to define the valley in which Haverhill sits and to protect adjacent valleys from the visual intrusion of development.

### **Relevant Documents for Additional Information:**

St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Study, LUC, 2009

Haverhill Vision 2031, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Sept 2014

## 5.0 Future Application

### 5.1 Conclusions

This study has highlighted the special qualities of the Stour Valley Project Area and the reasons why it is of particular landscape value. Importantly the assessment has demonstrated that the value attached to the Stour Valley varies along its length – those qualities in the middle reaches of the valley are not the same as those in the upper reaches for example. Furthermore, the quality and condition of the landscape also varies along its length with some areas being especially valued and other areas requiring enhancement.

This study has demonstrated the inextricable link between settlements and the valley landscape settings. It has also demonstrated the high sensitivity of some settlements which are constrained due to their characteristics and setting. Throughout much of the area settlements fall within Suffolk, although in the case of Bures, the settlement straddles the River Stour falling into both Essex and Suffolk. This study has demonstrated that in many instances the location of settlement on just one side of the valley is an important component of what makes it special.

The information contained in this document aims to give transparency about the special qualities of the Stour Valley. It is anticipated this evidence base will be useful in determining the sensitivity of landscape and settlements to change which may affect their special qualities and to assist in prioritisation of resources for conserving and enhancing these qualities. Decision makers will need to make their own judgements about sensitivity in relation to specific proposals for change utilising this evidence.

### 5.2 Issues

The Stour Valley Project Area shares many of the special qualities of the Dedham Vale as defined in section 3.2 above. It also experiences several pressures and changes which are also known to affect the AONB such as:

- Loss of field boundaries
- Loss of meadowland to arable production
- Lack of woodland management
- Road improvements
- Night light intrusion
- Traffic noise and loss of tranquillity
- Loss of views to key landmarks e.g. church towers due to vegetation growth or new development
- Introduction of highly visible large-scale housing in the open countryside
- Urban extensions and housing estates which are visually intrusive
- Abrupt urban edges
- Pylons

However, it differs from Dedham Vale AONB in that:

- The Stour Valley, as it extends into its upper reaches, becomes less pronounced and smaller in scale
- Some of the settlements within the valley have undergone substantial expansion
- There are large conurbations on the edge of the area which exert an urbanising influence

### 5.3 The Future

The special qualities of the Stour Valley landscape lie not in dramatic scenery or arresting views but rather in its gentleness, subtleness and quiet tranquillity - the overlapping lines of vegetation on the valley floor and interlocking areas of woodland on valley slopes adding structure to the gentle convex slopes that define the valley systems. The settlements also reflect similar qualities being predominately small in scale, nestled into the gentle folds of the landscape such that they recede in views (save for their churches). Their intact vernacular and form and built landmark features enhance the agricultural scene.

The Stour Valley has always been a working landscape, the production of crops and the utilisation of the river are essential to its qualities. Many parts of the Stour Valley reflect a combination of quintessential English lowland landscape and built form which rivals that of the existing AONB. However, where it has suffered from change it has been due to inappropriate development (which is poorly sited, of inappropriate in scale, or design), or the intensification of agriculture which has resulted in the loss of landscape features that provide visual structure, and a fragmentation of habitat networks.

Conserving and enhancing the special qualities articulated in this report is a key aspiration of the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB Management Plan. This assessment has revealed that whilst much of the Stour Valley has a weight of evidence to demonstrate it is a valued landscape in terms of para 170a of the NPPF, there are also areas which have suffered some loss of special qualities. The evidence base provided here should therefore be used to target resources and develop and implement enhancement initiatives.

In terms of development, the evidence base presented in this report can inform the AONB's response to planning applications, and more widely, be used by local authorities in reaching planning decisions and by developers and their consultants in identifying and designing appropriate developments which achieve a good degree of fit. The evidence in this report should also help to ensure that, where change occurs, it also seeks to deliver net environmental gain that demonstrably enhances special qualities.

Due to the position of the Stour Valley on the Essex and Suffolk border and the location of settlements along the lower slopes of the valley, cross boundary collaboration will be essential to the effective management of the area especially in terms of development control.

Appendix 1

Fold Out Key to Settlement Mapping



### Historic map

Maps taken from Ordnance Survey 6-inch, 1888-1913 series.

### Present day aerial imagery

Aerial imagery source: ESRI, Digital Globe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, Aerogrid, IGN and the GIS User Community.

### Historic Landscape Character and key contour

Suffolk HLC	Essex HLC
<b>Category</b>	<b>Category</b>
No category	19TH-20TH CENTURY PLANTATION
18th-century and later enclosure	19TH-20TH CENTURY WOODLAND PLANTATION
Ancient monument	ANCIENT WOODLAND
Built up area	BOUNDARY LOSS - POST 1950 WITH RELICT ELEMENTS
Common pasture	BUILT-UP AREAS
Communications	ENCLOSED MEADOW PASTURE
Horticulture	INDUSTRIAL
Industrial	INFORMAL MEDIEVAL PARKLAND
Meadow or managed wetland	LATER ENCLOSURE - 18TH C OR LATER
Post-1950 agricultural landscape	POST 1950 BOUNDARY LOSS
Post-medieval military	POST 1950 BOUNDARY LOSS - WITH RELICT ELEMENTS
Post-medieval park and leisure	POST 1950'S ENCLOSURE
Pre-18th-century enclosure	PRE-18TH CENTURY 'IRREGULAR' ENCLOSURE
Unimproved land	
Woodland	
built up area	
Settlement	
Key contour(s)	
County boundary	

### OS map, designations and key contour

Listed Building	Settlement
Special Protection Areas	Key contour(s)
Special Areas of Conservation	
AONB	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
County Wildlife Sites	
Local Nature Reserves	
Roadside Nature Reserves	
Ancient Woodland	
Woodland	
Scheduled Monument	
Parks And Gardens	
County GeoSites	

Source: Natural England; Historic England; Suffolk County Council, Essex County Council.

## Appendix 2

### Reference Documents

## **Landscape Character**

- Dedham Vale Landscape Assessment: Technical Report to the Countryside Commission and others, Landscape Design Associates, 1996.
- The Dedham Vale Landscape, An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Countryside Commission, 1997.
- East of England Landscape Character Assessment (2009).
- Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment 2009 and updated 2011.
- Essex Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates, 2003.
- Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates, November 2005.
- Historic Landscape Characterisation, Suffolk (2008).
- Managing a Masterpiece Landscape Partnership, Historic Landscape Study, 2013.
- The Stour Valley Heritage Compendia, The Historic Landscape Compendium, Howard Brooks, 2013.
- Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance

## **Designation History and Past Landscape Evaluation**

- Designation History Series, Dedham Vale AONB, Ray Woolmore, May 2010
- Special Qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB: Evaluation of Area Between Bures and Sudbury, Alison Farmer Associates, July 2016.

## **Management Plans**

- Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021

## **Local Planning Documents**

- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18))
- Braintree Core Strategy 2011
- Colchester Borough Local Plan Publication Draft June 2017
- West Suffolk (Formerly St Edmundsbury) Core Strategy 2010
- Rural Vision 2031, (Sept 2014) St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- St Edmundsbury Local Development Framework, Opportunities and Constraints, March 2012
- Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Study, Kedington, Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners
- St Edmundsbury Green Infrastructure Study, LUC, 2009
- Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils 2018

## **Assessment Guidance**

- Natural England Guidance on Assessing Landscapes for Designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England (2012)
- Guidance on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013)
- An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management, Natural England (2019)

### **Planning Appeals**

- Planning Appeal APP/Z1510/W/17/3173352
- Planning Appeal APP/Z1510/W/18/3207509