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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1
- Little Hallingbury Parish has a strongly undeveloped, rural character dominated by productive arable farmland contained in fields of varying sizes. Boundary treatments often comprise hedgerows and trees. Areas of woodland are found along the northern edge of the River Stort and along a tributary close to Little Hallingbury Hall. Woodland in the wider landscape, beyond the Parish provides a backdrop to expansive views. There is a good network of public rights of way radiating outwards from Little Hallingbury Village, criss-crossing the rural landscape through agricultural fields and along field boundaries. The ancient tow path route travels along the eastern edge of the River Stort.
- 1.1.2
- The Parish inhabits the River Stort Valley floor and topography generally slopes in a westerly direction towards the River Stort. There are some gentle undulations in the landscape and some small valley formations where tributaries of the River Stort flow through the Parish. Views along the valley floor are intimate and enclosed by woodland and the sloping valley sides. Whereas there are panoramic views across the parish towards the settlement of Little Hallingbury from a number of elevated locations to the south and north of the village. The M11 is located in the eastern part of the parish on a well vegetated and elevated embankment which dissects the landscape. The elevated nature of the M11 screens views of the settlement from the east of the Parish.
- 1.1.3
- The rural landscape of Uttlesford district provides the setting for the village of Little Hallingbury. There are 58 Grade II Listed Buildings and three Grade II* Listed Buildings including St Mary the Virgin Church, Hallingbury Mill and Gaston House. The historic settlement pattern, was originally dispersed along the route of the now A1060 and is now connected with spurs of development extending along Dell Land and has infilled the land between Wrights Green and the A1060 and between Wrights Green and Goose Lane. The historic settlement pattern at Gaston Green survives well with limited development focused around the pond.
- 1.1.4
- Although locally-generated development pressure is relatively small compared to other parts of the District, the potential of future pressures of development from the conversion of equestrian paddocks poses a threat to the Parish's remote, tranquil character. Development within the village envelope is limited by the Districts Planning Policies and the fact that the Parish is situated within the Green Belt.
- 1.1.5
- Little Hallingbury Parish Council commissioned Liz Lake Associates to undertake a locally based Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment of the Parish, which forms the project area for the Neighbourhood Plan. This study will provide a clear and concise evaluation of various parcels of land to determine their overall landscape sensitivity. The results of this assessment are to form part of the evidence base that Little Hallingbury Parish Council will use when compiling its Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 1.1.6
- A combination of desk top study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation was used to identify ancient field patterns and parcels of land with common characteristics, known as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCA) within the identified study area of Little Hallingbury Parish. A range of landscape character and visual amenity criteria were identified and assessed in order to evaluate the overall sensitivity of the landscape parcel by parcel. Each parcel was rated as having low, medium or high overall landscape sensitivity based on the criteria set out in Section 3 – Methodology for the Study.
- 1.1.7
- This study has only considered criteria relating to landscape character and visual amenity. It

takes into account the locations of ecological, heritage and recreational assets in the parishes but does not include detailed studies of these topics.

- 1.1.8
- The Landscape Character Assessment found that there are 9no Local Parish Landscape Character Areas with common characteristics within Little Hallingbury Parish. The areas are broadly defined as being sloping or valley landscapes, due to the topographical differences within the project area. For practical purposes, boundaries were aligned where possible on landscape features or elements that could be identified on the ground. Analysis was typically at the field level grain/scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.
- 1.1.9
- A description of the key landscape and visual characteristics were provided for each LPLCA and key landscape planning and management issues were identified. For each area ‘Suggested landscape planning guidelines’ and ‘Suggested land management guidelines’ are provided. These are presented in Appendix A.
- 1.1.10
- The evaluation of the landscape and visual factors which were analysed for each parcel revealed that LPLCAs 1, 3 - 7 and 9 have a High overall landscape sensitivity; LPLCA 2 and 8 have a Medium overall landscape sensitivity. No LPLCAs in the Little Hallingbury Parish have a Low overall landscape sensitivity. The proposed landscape strategy objective for areas of High sensitivity is to Conserve; Medium sensitivity is to Enhance; and Low sensitivity is to Restore.
- 1.1.11
- In conclusion, the landscape and visual character of Little Hallingbury has been assessed to have a High overall landscape sensitivity in most areas where a policy of enhancing and reinforcing the rural and undeveloped character of the landscape is required.
- 1.1.12
- In LPLCAs 2 and 8, every opportunity should be taken to restore and replace lost landscape features and field patterns to strengthen the contribution to local landscape character.



2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background to the study

- 2.1.1 Little Hallingbury is a Civil Parish situated in the Uttlesford District of Essex. It lies to the south east of Bishop’s Stortford and includes the village of Little Hallingbury. Little Hallingbury Parish Council are currently working on the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.1.2 Development in Little Hallingbury Parish is restricted by Uttlesford’s Local Plan and a general policy against development beyond the defined ‘Development Limits’ of Little Hallingbury.
- 2.1.3 Little Hallingbury Parish Council commissioned Liz Lake Associates to undertake a locally based Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and landscape sensitivity assessment, of the landscape of Little Hallingbury Parish, which forms the project area of the Neighbourhood Plan. The boundary of the study area is contiguous with the parish boundary and is shown on Figure 1 - Study Area.

2.2 Objectives of the study

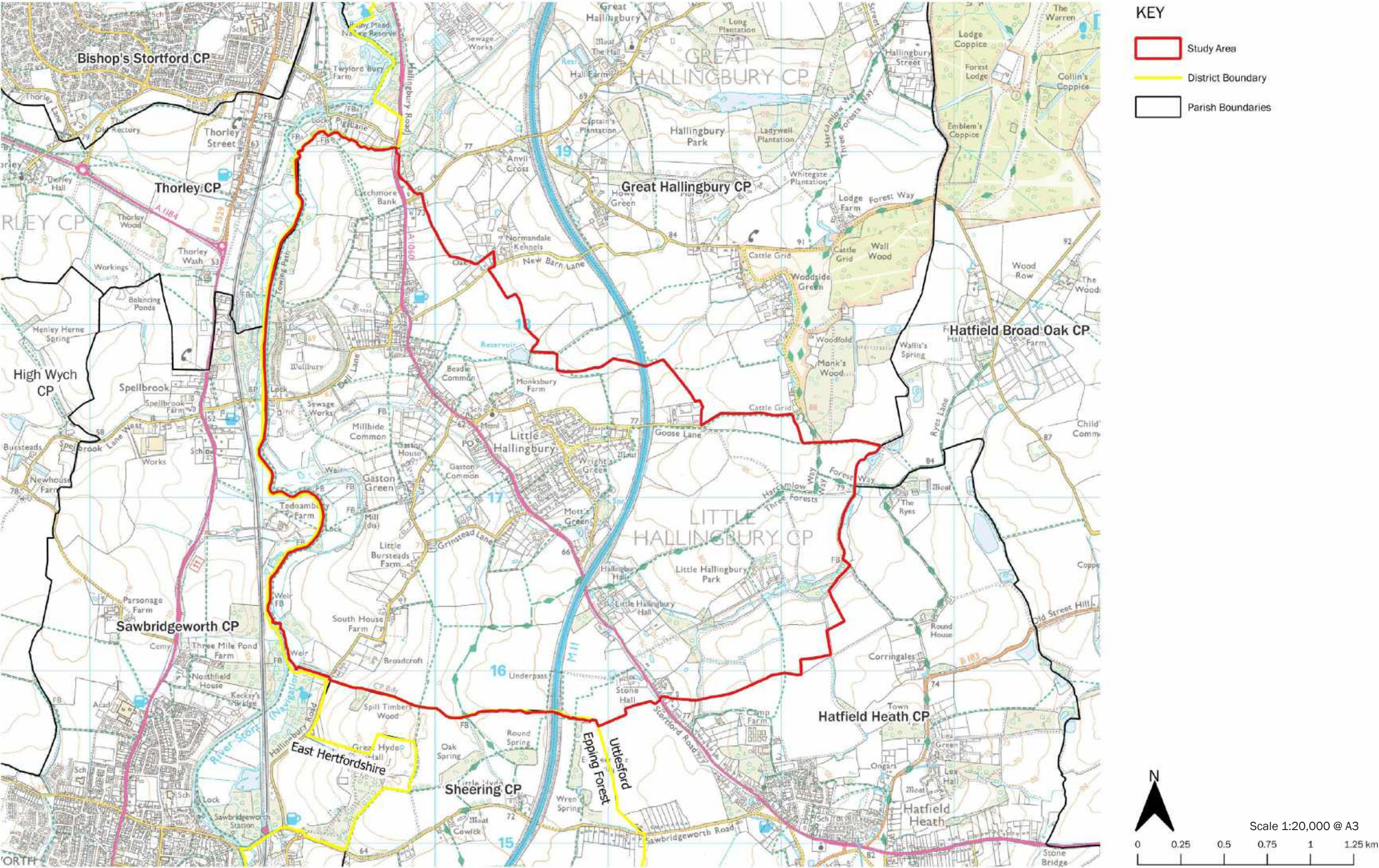
- 2.2.1 The assessment draws on the existing published landscape character assessment for Uttlesford District Council (produced by Chris Blandford Associates, 2006) and on the Uttlesford Historic Environment Characterisation Project (2009). Both documents are essential parts of the existing adopted local planning policy and have therefore been important in the development of this parish based study which seeks, where relevant, to further sub-divide the area into a finer grain of characterisation.
- 2.2.2 This study will provide a clear and concise evaluation of various discrete geographical areas / parcels of land which have a recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the area. The landscape’s biodiversity and agricultural values which contribute towards its special qualities will also be identified. These parish level landscape character areas will be analysed to determine their overall sensitivity.
- 2.2.3 The study is to assist Little Hallingbury Parish Council in preserving and enhancing the landscape on Little Hallingbury Parish to ensure that in future no unacceptable effects on the landscape result due to construction and the special qualities are maintained and where possible enhanced.

2.3 Approach and Methodology Overview

- 2.3.1 This study has been undertaken in line with Natural England’s best practice guidelines along with a focus on the experiences and perception of the local residents of their landscape and surroundings. A review of the elements that make up the character i.e. the physical nature of the landscape and its land use, the experience of living or working within the area or driving or walking around it has been considered. Important views, valued walks, local landmarks etc have all been assessed and the findings have been used to develop the landscape character areas.
- 2.3.2 The study takes into account the locations of ecological, heritage and recreational assets in the Parish but does not include detailed studies of these topics. A review of the existing Landscape Character Assessments and historic settlement character was undertaken as well as an assessment of landscape change using historic maps. A combination of desktop study,

- fieldwork and stakeholder consultation was used to identify parcels of land with common characteristics, hereafter referred to as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs), within the identified study area of Little Hallingbury Parish, as agreed with the Parish Council.
- 2.3.3 A range of landscape character and visual amenity criteria were identified and assessed and key views into the villages from the surrounding countryside were identified, in order to evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape, parcel by parcel. Parcels were rated as having Low, Medium or High overall sensitivity, based on the criteria and assumptions set out in Section 3 - Methodology for the study below.
- 2.3.4 The site work was undertaken during March and April, when trees and hedges were coming into leaf. Seasonal change will affect the appearance of much of the landscape, especially areas which are in arable production. The different annual and seasonal growing regimes result in an ever changing rural landscape ranging from ploughed fields, to colourful crops and the golden fields just prior to harvest.
- 2.3.5 This assessment was carried out by Landscape Architects at Liz Lakes Associates between February and April 2024.
- 2.4 Scope of the study
- 2.4.1 This study only considers criteria relating to landscape character and visual amenity. It is, therefore, recommended that this report is read in conjunction with reports by other disciplines, such as traffic management, hydrology, ecology and heritage.
- 2.4.2 General issues relating to the landscape setting of heritage assets within the Little Hallingbury Parish landscape, including key listed buildings and sensitive heritage areas are identified.
- 2.4.3 This assessment does not seek opportunities for future development throughout the Parish.
- 2.5 Local Planning Context
- 2.5.1 Uttlesford District Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan, which will eventually supersede its current Local Plan Review in its entirety. The Reg 18 Draft Local Plan has been consulted on at the end of 2023. The Local Plan is expected to be adopted in Spring of 2026. Whilst the Adopted Local Plan (2005) remains current, it is useful to review the Local Plan submitted for Regulation 18 to understand the vision of Uttlesford District for the 2021 - 2041 period.
- 2.6 Uttlesford Local Plan (Adopted 2005)
- 2.6.1 The Uttlesford District Local Plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the district and provides the basis for all planning decision within the District. The Local Plan was adopted in January 2005. In July 2007 the council made an application to save all policies within the Local Plan with the exception of those , relating to completed development sites in Takeley.
- 2.6.2 The Uttlesford District Local Plan sets out the overall objectives, vision and core policies and how the implementation and monitoring of policies shall be undertaken. The vision for the Local plan “...seeks to maintain and improve on Uttlesford’s positive attributes. It will preserve the quality of life in the towns and villages...It will protect the district’s environment, from inappropriate development, reduce and control noise and air pollution, reduce waste and increase recycling...It will seek to ensure that good, affordable housing is available to all residents...”
- 2.6.3 The Spatial Strategy sets out proposed growth locations within the District. These are focused on the Urban areas of Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet, the A120

Figure 1
Study Area



corridor, Selected Rural Settlements (Elsenham, Great Chesterford, Newport, Takeley and Thaxted). Other villages have tightly drawn development with “...limited potential within these boundaries on small previously development sites, including gardens of existing houses. Local affordable housing and community facility needs may be met on “exception sites” outside development limits.”

2.6.4 The Local Plan addressed proposed growth within the Metropolitan Green Belt noting that “A belt of countryside needs to be retained between Harlow, Bishop’s Stortford, Stansted Mountfitchet and Stansted Airport as part of the regional concept of containing the urban sprawl of London. Within the Green Belt development will only be permitted if it accords with national planning policy on green belts...Development permitted should preserve the openness of the Green Belt and its scale, design and siting should be such that the character of the countryside is not harmed.”

2.6.5 The spatial strategy sets out a number of policies to implement proposed growth of development in Uttlesford. Those of particular relevance to this study include:

- Policy S6 - Metropolitan Green Belt

“The area and boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt within Uttlesford are defined on the Proposals Map.

Infilling, limited development or redevelopment compatible with the character of the settlement and its setting will be permitted within the following villages, (sic) in areas which are excluded from the Green Belt:

- Hatfield Heath
- Leaden Roding
- Little Hallingbury and
- White Roding”

2.6.6 Within the Uttlesford District Local Plan are a series of General Policies that address local quality of life issues that have the potential to be relevant for any proposal. General Policies of relevance to this study include:

- Policy GEN2 - Design

“Development will not be permitted unless its design meets all the following criteria and has regard to adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and Supplementary Planning Document.

- a) It is compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings;
- b) It safeguards important environmental features in its setting enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impact of new buildings or structures where appropriate;
- c) It provides an environment, which meets the reasonable needs of all potential users;

- d) It helps to reduce the potential for crime;
- e) It helps to minimise water and energy consumption;
- f) It has regard to guidance on layout and design adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the development plan;
- g) It helps to reduce waste production and encourages recycling and reuse;
- h) It minimises the environmental impact of neighbouring properties by appropriate mitigating measures;
- i) It would not have a materially adverse effect on the reasonable occupation and enjoyment of a residential or other sensitive property, as a result of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, overbearing impact or overshadowing.”

- Policy GEN3 - Flood Protection

“Within the functional floodplain, buildings will not be permitted unless there is an exceptional need...Within areas of the floodplain beyond the settlement boundary, commercial industrial and new residential development will generally not be permitted...”

- Policy GEN7 - Nature Conservation

“Development that would have a harmful effect on wildlife or geological features will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the feature to nature conservation...Measures to mitigate and/or compensate for the potential impacts of development, secured by planning obligation or condition, will be required. The enhancement of biodiversity through the creation of appropriate new habitats will be sought.”

2.6.7

Policies within the Uttlesford District Local Plan for Environment, Built and Natural have the following objectives:

- “To safeguard the character of Uttlesford’s historic settlements.
- To conserve and enhance the historic buildings in Uttlesford and their setting.
- To protect the natural environment for its own sake, particularly for its biodiversity, and agricultural, cultural and visual qualities.
- To limit sensitive development in area subject to high levels of noise from aircraft of other sources, an avoid deterioration in the noise environment.
- To protect ground and surface water resource from contaminant and over abstraction.
- To protect users of residential properties in particular from long term exposure to poor ground level air quality.
- To improve the health of the community.”

2.6.8

Polices supporting these objectives and of relevance to this study include:

- Policy ENV2 - Development affecting Listed Buildings

“Development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings. Demolition of a listed building, or development proposals that adversely affect the setting, and alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted.”

- Policy ENV3 - Open Spaces and Trees

“The loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual trees specimens through development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value.”

- Policy ENV4 - Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance

“Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there will be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in situ.”

- Policy ENV7 - The Protection of the Natural Environment - Designated Sites

“Development proposals that adversely affect areas of nationally important conservation concern, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the particular importance of the nature conservation value of the site of reserve.

Development proposals likely to affect local areas of nature conservation significance, such as County Wildlife sites, ancient woodlands, wildlife habitat, sites of ecological interest and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites, will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the local significant of the site to the biodiversity of the District.”

- Policy ENV8 - Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation

“Development that may adversely affect these landscape elements:

- Hedgerows
- Linear tree belts
- Larger semi natural or ancient woodlands
- Semi-natural grasslands
- Green lanes and special verges
- Orchards
- Plantations
- Ponds

- Reservoirs
- River corridors
- Linear wetland features
- Networks or patterns of other locally important habitats

will only be permitted if the following criteria apply:

- a) *The need for the development outweighs the need to retain the elements for their importance to wild fauna and flora;*
- b) *Mitigation measures are provided that would compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality.”*

- Policy ENV9 - Historic Landscapes

“Development proposals likely to harm significant local historic landscapes, historic parks and gardens and protected lanes as defined on the proposals map will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the historic significance.”

2.6.9

With regard to Housing, the following policies are of relevance to this study:

- Policy H1 - Housing Development
- Policy H3 - New Houses within Development Limits
- Policy H9 - Affordable Housing
- Policy H11 - Affordable Housing on “Exception Sites”

2.6.10

With regard to Leisure and Cultural Provision, the following policies are of relevance to this study:

- Policy LC1 - Loss of Sports Fields and Recreation Facilities
- Policy LC3 - Community Facilities

2.6.11

With regard to Retailing and Services, the following policies are of relevance to this study:

- Policy RS2 - Town and Local Centres
- Policy RS3 - Retention of Retail and other Services in Rural Areas

2.7

Uttlesford Local Plan, Reg 18 (November 2023)

2.7.1

The New Local Plan for the Uttlesford District has been through the Regulation 18 consultation period at the end of 2023 and is expected to be adopted in Spring 2026. The intention for the New Local Plan is to replace the existing Adopted Local Plan 2005 setting out the Spatial Vision and Strategic Objective for addressing climate change and identifies the Spatial Strategy for meeting future development needs within the district and setting out design principles and development management policies for which planning applications shall be judged against.

2.7.2

Key objectives and challenges across the District as set out within the New Local Plan are;

- *“providing sufficient housing including affordable housing for people to rent and to part-purchase through shared ownership schemes;*
- *Providing specialist housing and social care infrastructure to meet the needs of an ageing population to redress the balance of dwelling sizes by increasing the number of smaller properties in accordance with the latest evidence;*
- *Improving access to a greater range of sports and cultural facilities particularly for young people;*
- *To ensure a balance of sustainable growth which protects countryside around the key settlements and the airport from encroachment by new development; and*
- *To develop and continue to sustain the creative and cultural economy in the district.”*

2.7.3

The New Local Plan subdivides the Strategic Objectives into three categories; Environmental; Economic; and Community / Social. Those of relevance to this Landscape Assessment are set out below.

Environmental

“S01: To plan for the climate and ecological emergency, mitigate the impacts from development, including reducing energy usage of new builds;

SO2: Protect high-quality and locally defined valued landscapes by ensuring new development conserves and enhances landscape assets and achieved high quality design standards;

S03: Protect and preserve the natural environment. Protect and maximise opportunities for biodiversity net gain and the enhancement of Uttlesford's natural capital assets, such as soils, woodlands, hedges, and ponds to capture and store carbon as well as providing for appropriate access for heath and recreational value with effective multifunctional Green Infrastructure. Restore the natural ecology of the district's chalk streams and rivers.

S04: *Protect water resources.*

S05: Protect the highest quality agricultural land whilst being mindful of needs for rural employment and diversification;

S06: Protect and enhance the historic environment, including protecting and enhancing heritage assets and archaeology”

Community/Social

“S010: Meet the identified housing needs and an appropriate contribution of affordable housing.”

2.7.4

The Spatial Strategy identifies the appropriate development locations, land and range of services and facilities required to maintain and develop the local economy as well as addressing climate change, supporting biodiversity net gain, achieving sustainable development and protecting the environment. The Spatial Strategy is underpinned by five strategic core policies;

- Core Policy 1: Addressing Climate Change
- Core Policy 2: Meeting Our Housing Needs
- Core Policy 3: Settlement Hierarchy
- Core Policy 4: Meeting Business and Employment Needs
- Core Policy 5: Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services

2.7.5

Little Hallingbury falls under the 'Rural Areas' within the Spatial Strategy where a series of bullet points are set out, as follows:

- *“Growth across the rest of the district will be more limited, focusing on meeting local community and business needs and helping to support the vitality of these more rural settlements;*
- *Proposals for new dwellings will be directed towards the larger and more sustainable villages that offer a wider range of services and are more well connected than the smaller villages;*
- *Development in the open countryside will not be permitted unless consistent with the exception policies in this Plan or within national policy;*
- *In the south of the District, the Green Belt will be maintained, with no new allocation proposed in the Green Belt.*
- *In relation to the housing requirements for the Larger Villages it is proposed that any Larger Villages located in the Green Belt would not be appropriate for allocations to be made.”*

2.7.6

Core Policy 3: Settlement Hierarchy classifies Little Hallingbury as a 'Larger Village' where larger villages are noted as *“defined settlements with a more limited range of employment, services and facilities. Unallocated development will be limited to providing for local needs and to support employment, services and facilities within local communities.”* Core Policy 3 goes on to state the type of acceptable development in Larger Villages stating *“Development outside the existing built areas of these settlements will only be permitted where it is allocated by the Local Plan 2041 or has been allocated within an adopted Neighbourhood Development Plan, or future parts of the Local Plan.”*

2.7.7

Core Policy 20: Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites states that “Development proposals for affordable housing within rural areas, to meet local needs only, will be permitted as an exception, subject to all the following criteria being met:

- i. a demonstratable local community need for affordable housing has been established*
- ii. The number, size and tenure of the dwellings are suitable to meet the identified need*
- iii. is of a scale appropriate to the size of the adjoining settlement*
- iv. The site of the development will not result in harm to the significance of any heritage assets*
- v. the proposal is designed to respect the characteristics of the local area, including the countryside setting, and*

vi. schools and health facilities with capacity, shops and other community facilities are within reasonable travelling distance.

2.7.8 The New Local Plan includes a series of Development Policies for development in the countryside, the Development Policies set out a series of criteria for proposals to be assessed against, those of relevance include:

- Development Policy 1: New Dwellings in the Countryside
- Development Policy 2: Replacement of a Dwelling in the Countryside
- Development Policy 3: Agricultural/Rural Worker’s Dwellings in the Countryside
- Development Policy 4: Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside
- Development Policy 5: Change of Use of Agricultural Land to Domestic Gardens

2.7.9 The New Local Plan includes a series of policies for Climate Change, Transport and the Environment. Those of relevance include:

- Core Policy 35: Chalk Streams Protection and Enhancement
- Core Policy 38: The Natural Environment
- Core Policy 39: Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Core Policy 40: Biodiversity
- Core Policy 41: Landscape Character where

“Development proposals will be expected to preserve the character and appearance of the landscape, the nature and physical appearance of ancient landscapes, or geological sites of importance through the restoration, management and enhancement of existing areas, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows.

Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, particularly in settlement edge locations, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- i. Cause an unacceptable visual intrusion into the open countryside
- ii. be inconsistent with local character
- iii. introduce disturbances to areas with a high level of tranquillity
- iv. cause coalescence between settlements
- v. harm views to distant landmarks and landscapes of interest
- vi. harm the setting of natural and built landmark features, and

vii. reduce the historic significance of the landscapes

All major development proposals must be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Smaller development proposals may also require an assessment to be submitted if deemed appropriate, having regard to the type, scale, location and design of the proposed development.”

2.7.10 Policies for Building Healthy and Sustainable Communities set out within the New Local Plan, of relevance to this study, amongst others include:

- Core Policy 52: Good Design Outcomes and Process
- Core Policy 53: Standards for New Residential Development
- Core Policy 62: The Historic Environment
- Core Policy 64: Development Affecting Listed Buildings
- Core Policy 65: Non-Designated Heritage Assets of Local Importance
- Core Policy 67: Open Space, Sport and Recreation



Grinstead Lane



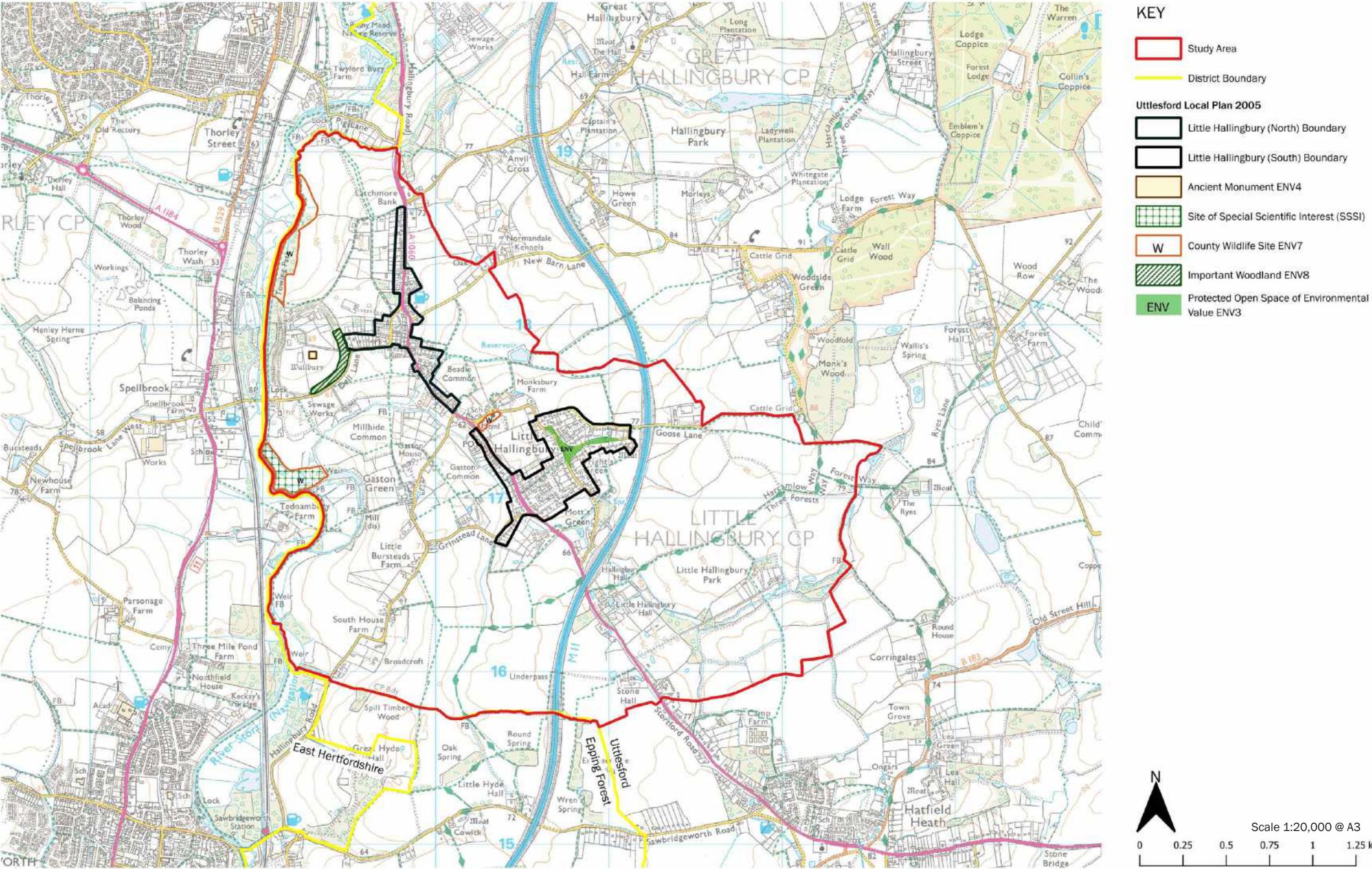
Looking towards the rear of properties at Gaston Green



Grinstead Lane



View from the Harcamlow Way, looking north west towards Little Hallingbury Village





View looking west towards Little Hallingbury Village from footpath FP1

3 METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

3.1 Relevant advisory publications

- 3.1.1 In undertaking this study regard was had to the following advisory publications:
- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002);
 - Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity, which forms part of ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland’ (the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002);
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013);
 - Evaluating the Impact of Housing Development on the Historic Environment (LUC, March 2014); and
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, October 2014).
- 3.1.2 The methodology for this LCA was based on the approach promoted in Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (referenced above). This paper explores thinking and recent practice on judging sensitivity. The recommended methodology developed for this study adopted the following premise from Topic Paper 6: whereby:
- Existing landscape visual
character sensitivity

+

Visual Sensitivity

=

Overall Landscape
Sensitivity
- 3.1.3 Overall landscape sensitivity is the term used to refer primarily to the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration. Landscape sensitivity is defined as embracing a combination of:
- the sensitivity of the landscape resource in terms of both its character as a whole, its quality and condition, the aesthetic aspects of its character, and also the sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape; and
 - the visual sensitivity of the landscape, assessed in terms of a combination of factors such as views, visibility, the number and nature of people perceiving the landscape and the scope to mitigate visual impact.
- 3.1.4 The methodology was further tailored to address the study area’s specific issues and requirements as outlined in the study brief.

3.2 Information sources

- 3.2.1 The study was informed by a combination of landscape baseline desktop study (including the collection, review and analysis of previous relevant studies/reports and readily available data sources), fieldwork and stakeholder consultation.
- 3.2.2 Existing national, regional and district landscape character assessments which encompass the site, as well as historic characterisation studies, were consulted as follows:
- Natural England’s National Character Area profiles (NCA86-South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland);
 - Essex Landscape Character Assessment (Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council, July 2002) / Essex Landscape Character Assessment, Final Report (Chris Blandford Associates, 2003);
 - Uttlesford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project 2009;
 - Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2023); and
 - Uttlesford District Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LUC 2023)
- 3.2.3 In addition, the following data sources were consulted:
- Local Plan (Adopted 2005);
 - Draft UDC Local Plan 2021-2041 Reg 18;
 - MAGIC website - for landscape and cultural heritage designations;
 - Essex County Council website - for landscape and cultural heritage designations and PRoWs;
 - ‘Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea)’ - Environment Agency online;
 - Historic England;
 - National Library of Scotland (www.maps.nls.uk) - Historical map archive
 - CPRE - for tranquillity, intrusion and dark skies; and
 - Google Earth.
- 3.2.4 Fieldwork was undertaken by Landscape Architects in February and March 2024.

3.3	Identification of the study area
3.3.1	Figure 1 - Study Area indicates the extent of the study area as defined by the Parish Boundary. This corresponds to the agreed neighbourhood plan area for Little Hallingbury.
3.4	Landscape context
3.4.1	Landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity designations for the study area were identified via MAGIC and the Government data sources and Essex County Council’s website and mapped using GIS, as part of the appraisal of landscape context.
3.4.2	A review of existing National, Regional, County and District Landscape Character Assessments was undertaken to provide an overview and context to the project.
3.5	Visual context
3.5.1	Following fieldwork, a series of representative viewpoints were selected and photographed, from publicly accessible locations including roadways, bridleways and footpaths within the study area. The fieldwork confirmed: • important views into and out of the parish; • views to and from the village of Little Hallingbury; • any landmark landscape features; and • sensitive routes/corridors and their corresponding sensitivity to change.
3.5.2	These views were chosen to capture landscape character and adequately illustrate visual amenity from a range of locations, for a range of receptor groups at long, medium and short distance. All photographs were taken with a digital camera, a Canon EOS 6D Mark II (a Full Frame Sensor camera) with a 50mm Focal Length prime lens. These views are included within the report and provide comprehensive coverage across the study area.
3.5.3	The camera was set at a heights of 160cm to 170cm above the ground to represent eye-level. Photographs were stitched together using commercial software to form panoramic views. Photos were taken during bright and clear weather conditions.
3.6	Identification of Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs)
3.6.1	According to An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, October 2014), “ <i>Landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing the variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive</i> ”.
3.6.2	A combination of landscape baseline desktop study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation (Section 3.2 ‘Information sources’ above refers) was used to divide the landscape within Little Hallingbury into 9 No. parcels of land with common characteristics, hereafter referred to as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs). The areas were defined initially by desktop research, and then adjusted and refined subsequently in the light of findings in the field and through consultation, as necessary.

3.6.3	The drawing of boundary lines between parcels was a necessary part of the process, but did not always mean that parcels were dramatically different to each other either side of the line, as it is more typical for change to be of a gradual transitional nature. However, in some instances, the boundary lines for parcels do mark more of a watershed of character, where the balance of the defining elements has shifted from one landscape character to another. For practical purposes, boundaries were aligned where possible on landscape features or elements that could be identified on the ground. Analysis was typically at the field level grain/scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.
3.6.4	The existing landscape and visual characteristics selected to inform the identification of the LPLCAs were those considered to be of most relevance to this study. The criteria reflected natural, cultural and aesthetic factors as well as judgments on landscape quality and condition, as follows:

Existing landscape character criteria

Natural Factors	Land-form and topography Hydrology and drainage Extent and pattern of semi-natural vegetation
Cultural Factors	Physical relationship of landscape with existing villages Settlement pattern/buildings within the landscape Land-use and vegetation cover Field boundaries and enclosure pattern Time-depth
Aesthetic Factors	Landscape scale Enclosure Landscape complexity Public access (physical) Tranquility
Landscape Quality/Condition	Landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity designations Intactness Condition/ state of repair of individual elements Strength of landscape character Contribution of landscape to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place

Existing visual amenity criteria

General Visibility	Degree of openness of the landscape to public views: e.g. screening/enclosure/openness/inter-visibility
Specific Visibility	Visual relationship of landscape with existing villages Visual influence of landscape on the wider landscape Presence of key view(s)/sight line(s) to the village or other landmark features Visual contribution of landscape to the setting of Little Hallingbury Village/Listed Buildings/Registered Parks and Gardens
Public Access (visual)	Views from Roadway, Bridleway, By-way, Footpath Types of views (e.g. channeled/enclosed/expansive/panoramic) Overall evaluation of significance/value of views

- 3.6.5

The field survey work was carried out by Landscape Architects who used a standard Proforma LPLCA Field Survey Sheet - Template (Appendix B: Proformas refers), which incorporated the above factors, to record data in a consistent manner. The Proforma included various options which could be circled – and subsequently highlighted in green– where they applied to the particular parcel under consideration. Representative photographs were taken to capture the existing landscape character.
- 3.6.6

Following the fieldwork the parcels were reviewed, mapped and the field survey notes written up to provide a general commentary to describe and assess the key characteristics, distinctive features and landscape elements, as well as an indication of the ‘strength of character’ and ‘condition’ of each parcel.
- 3.6.7

A Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs) map was then produced at a scale of 1:20,000 for Little Hallingbury, together with supporting information comprising a representative photograph and a description for each LPLCA of its:

 - Key landscape characteristics;
 - Key visual characteristics;
 - Key landscape planning and land management issues;
 - Landscape character sensitivity to change;
 - Visual sensitivity to change;
 - Overall landscape sensitivity to change (evaluation of the sensitivity of a parcel in broad strategic terms), where “Existing Landscape Character Sensitivity + Visual Sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity” (Topic Paper 6);
 - Opportunities for mitigation;
 - Proposed landscape strategy objectives;
 - Suggested landscape planning guidelines;
 - Suggested land management guidelines; and
 - Known presence of allocated land/approved planning applications.

3.7 Assessment of Overall Sensitivity

- 3.7.1

As part of the field survey, the Character Areas were assessed for their landscape and visual sensitivity, based on the pre-defined set of criteria described above, combined with professional judgment. Their sensitivity is defined as High, Medium and Low.
- 3.7.2

Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity are combined to provide an overall Sensitivity for each Local Character Area as illustrated in the table below.

Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	High	High	High
	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
	Low	Low	Medium	High
		Low	Medium	High
	Visual Sensitivity			

3.8 Mitigation and recommendations

- 3.8.1

Information concerning opportunities for mitigation was gathered on site and ‘Proposed general landscape strategy objectives’, together with ‘Suggested landscape planning guidelines’ and ‘Suggested land management guidelines’ specific to each LPLCA were then produced to inform change. Recommendations were in keeping with, and intended to reinforce/enhance, local landscape character and visual amenity.



View across Wrights Green



View looking east from Wrights Green Lane

4 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

4.1 Historic settlement character

- 4.1.1 The historic rural settlement pattern within the Little Hallingbury Parish is dispersed along the A1060 with small hamlets sited at Motts Green, Wrights Green and Gaston Green. Beyond the hamlets were a series of farms, manors and halls spread along road junctions and triangular greens within the undulating countryside.
- 4.1.2 Within Little Hallingbury Parish, the roads are twisting and occasionally partially sunken and often lined by hedgerows.
- 4.1.3 Little Hallingbury Parish is drained by the River Stort, with associated tributaries that have formed small valleys and gradual slopes. Former and present enclosed meadow pasture was contained within the valley bottoms. A tow path (now public footpath) follows the route of the River Stort from Bishops Stortford to Hoddesdon.
- 4.1.4 Little Hallingbury Village has grown significantly since the 1880s where ribbon development extends along the A1060 which passes through the village. Presently there are two areas of the village (Little Hallingbury (North) and Little Hallingbury (South) as defined by the Uttlesford District Local Plan) where development has extended and connected the former greens. There is no distinct separation between these areas.
- 4.1.5 Little Hallingbury Parish contains approximately 60 Historic England listed buildings in total, providing the area with a rich historical context as illustrated on Figure 9. The majority of these listed buildings are Grade II with the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Hallingbury Mill and Gaston House being Grade II*. The listed buildings are scattered through out the village and the Parish, although they tend to be focused around Gaston Green, Motts Green, Wrights Green, St Mary’s Church, The George Inn and Little Hallingbury Hall.
- 4.1.6 The Church of St Mary the Virgin is a quaint church in the slightly elevated heart of the village initially a wooden church built by the Saxons between 1035 and 1050 it was mentioned within the Domesday book compiled in 1085. The church is now composed of flint rubble walls with some tile and Roman brick. Over the years the church has undergone a series of extensions and alterations.
- 4.1.7 Gaston House is an early 18th Century Georgian House, and consists of three stories with a red brick facade. Gaston house sits within 6 acres of small scale parkland. Previous residents of Gaston House include Emily Wilding Davison (1872 - 1913), who was part of the suffragette movement in the early 20th Century.
- 4.1.8 At the western edge of the Parish is ‘Wallbury Camp’, a Historic England scheduled monument. The monument includes the earthwork remains of an Iron Age bivallate hillfort.
- 4.1.9 There is a collection of listed buildings within the southeast of the Parish associated with Little Hallingbury Hall and Little Hallingbury Park.
- 4.1.10 Many of the farmsteads include listed buildings which occur as clusters of buildings in the landscape and include barns, stables, cartlodges and/or outbuildings surrounding a main house.
- 4.1.11 Many of the cottages are Grade II Listed buildings built between the late 15th and early 19th

Centuries. The majority are one storey with attics. Most of the cottages are timber-framed and plastered with red tiled roofs, although some have thatched or slate roofs.

- 4.1.12 The majority of listed houses within Little Hallingbury Village parcel date between the late 14th and mid-19th Centuries, often two storey. The majority are timber-framed and plastered with red tiled roofs, although some are roughcast rendered and/or roofed with slate. Many properties have C19 Tudor Revival ornamental detailing.
- 4.1.13 The field scape is largely comprised of pre-18th and 19th Century irregular sinuous field enclosure, likely to be of medieval origin, to the north-east and south of Little Hallingbury Parish. Large mature isolated trees are common features denoting lost historic field boundaries within the landscape in the east of the Parish, creating large scale agricultural fields. Small swathes of woodland are present around Little Hallingbury Hall in the east of the Parish and Wallbury in the west of the Parish, although neither of these are classified as ancient woodland. Ancient Woodland at Monks Wood adjoins the eastern edge of the Parish (refer to Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

4.2 Landscape Change within Little Hallingbury Parish

4.2.1 An analysis of historic maps (refer to Figures 3.1 and 3.2) was undertaken to show the extent of landscape change within the project area. The four maps show the progression of changes in terms of loss of features (highlighted in orange) and new features (highlighted in blue) as compared to the historic map of 1885.

Map 1 - 1885 - 1900

4.2.2 The 1885 -1900 map shows the rural parish of Little Hallingbury with the dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets surrounding Motts Green, Wrights Green and Gaston Green. The map also shows Wallbury in the same form on the western edge of the Parish and the irregular field pattern. The road network remains largely unchanged with the (now) A1060 passing through the Parish along the same alignment. The 1885 map forms the baseline condition for the analysis of change.

Map 2 - 1937 - 1961

4.2.3 The 1937 - 1961 map shows very few changes within the study area in terms of settlement pattern. The subdivision of fields is visible.

Map 3 - 1949 -1973

4.2.4 The comparison of the 1949 - 1973 map with the 1937 -1961 map generally shows minimal change to the landscape within the study area. However, an increase of development along the A1060 and garden boundaries are visible.

Map 4 – Current OS Map

4.2.5 The comparison of the current map with the 1949 - 1973 map shows the greatest level of change to the landscape. There has been a significant increase in development throughout the village, including infilling between Goose Lane and Wrights Green Lane, additional development at Grinstead Lane and at the junction of Dell Lane with the A1060. There have been minimal changes to the local road network throughout the Parish. The greatest change is the construction of the M11 which is elevated on embankments for the majority of the route as it passes through the Parish.

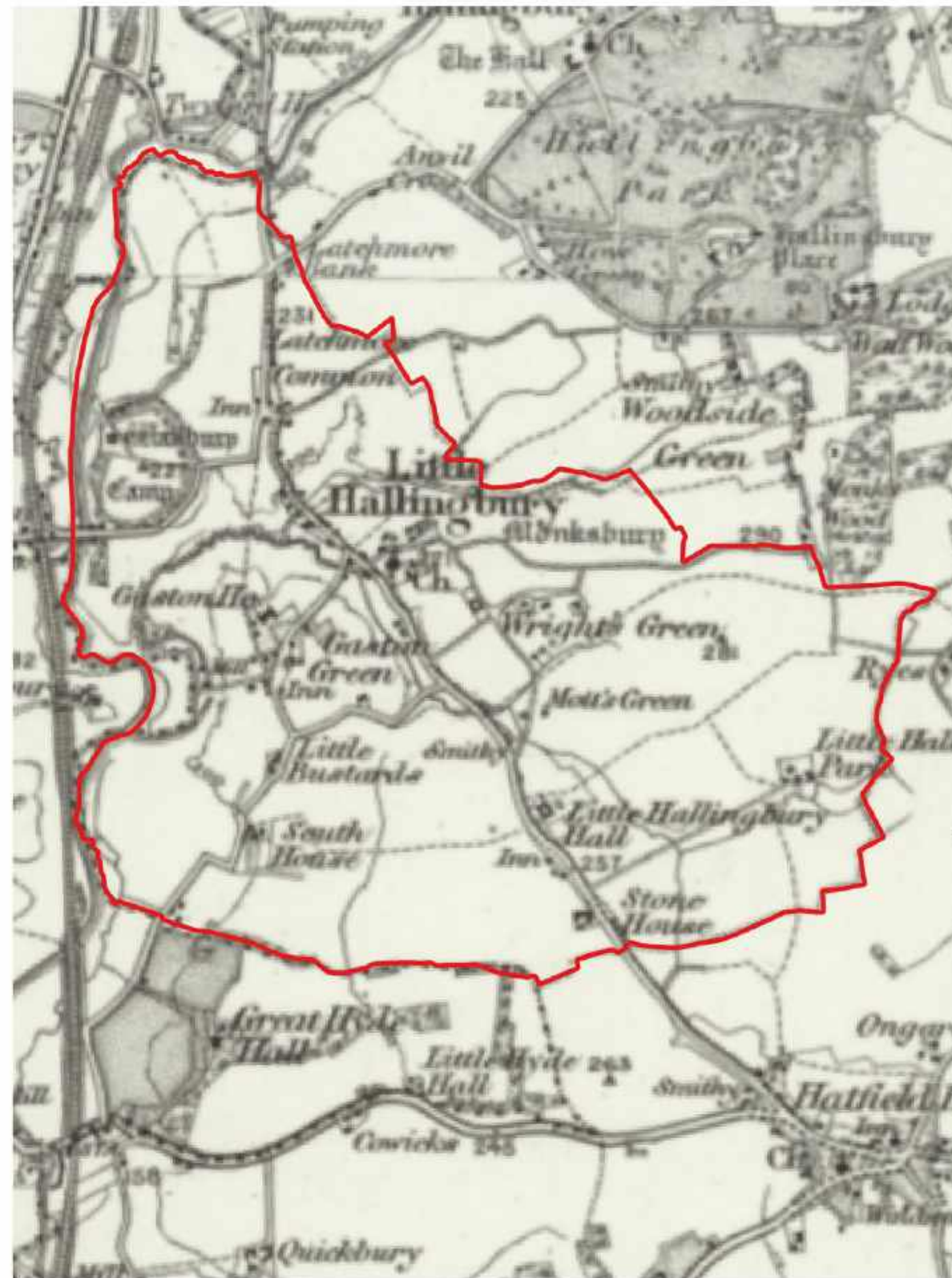
4.2.6 The losses in the landscape relate to the removal of hedgerows and field amalgamation as a result of more intensive agricultural practices of production during the 20th century. There are few areas where the ancient field pattern has remained largely unchanged. In addition, there has been a greater amount of enclosure within and surrounding the areas of built form within the Parish. Equestrian developments have also become apparent in the south eastern part of the Parish.



Residential properties on Pondfields Close



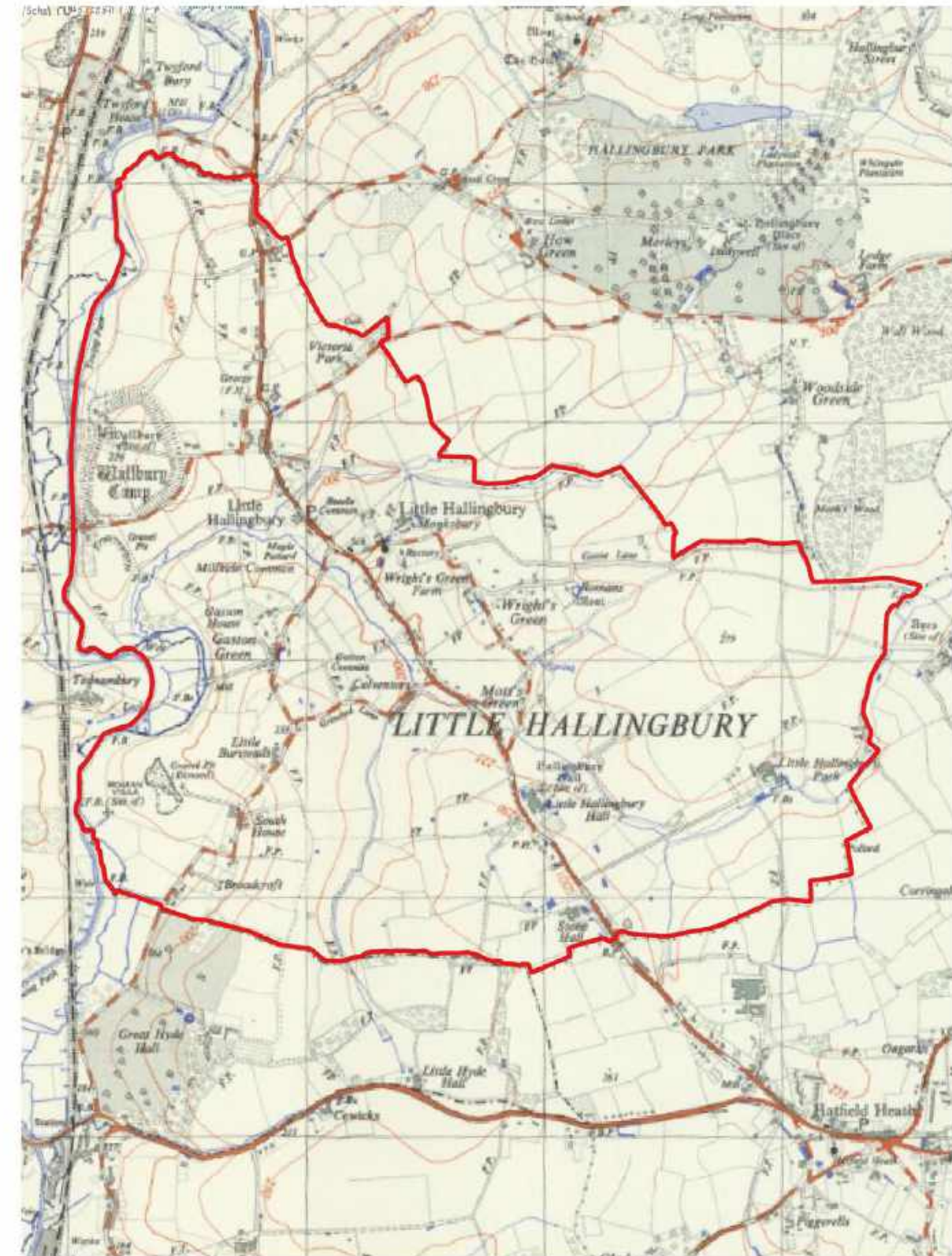
Residential properties on Dell Lane



KEY



Study Area



KEY



Study Area

1885-1900

1937-61



Scale 1:25,000 @ A3

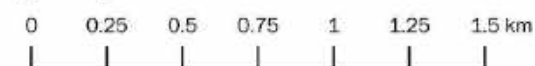
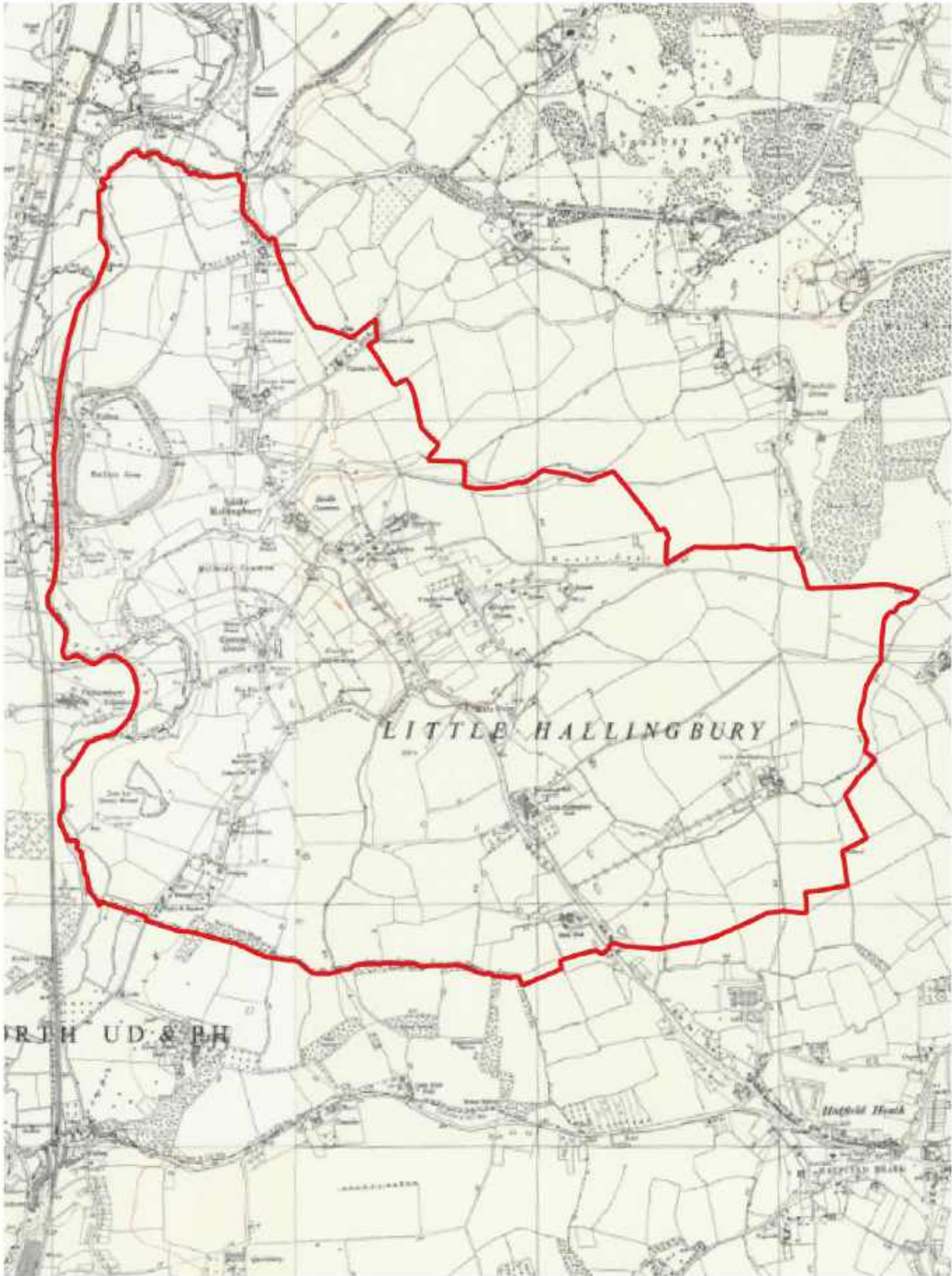


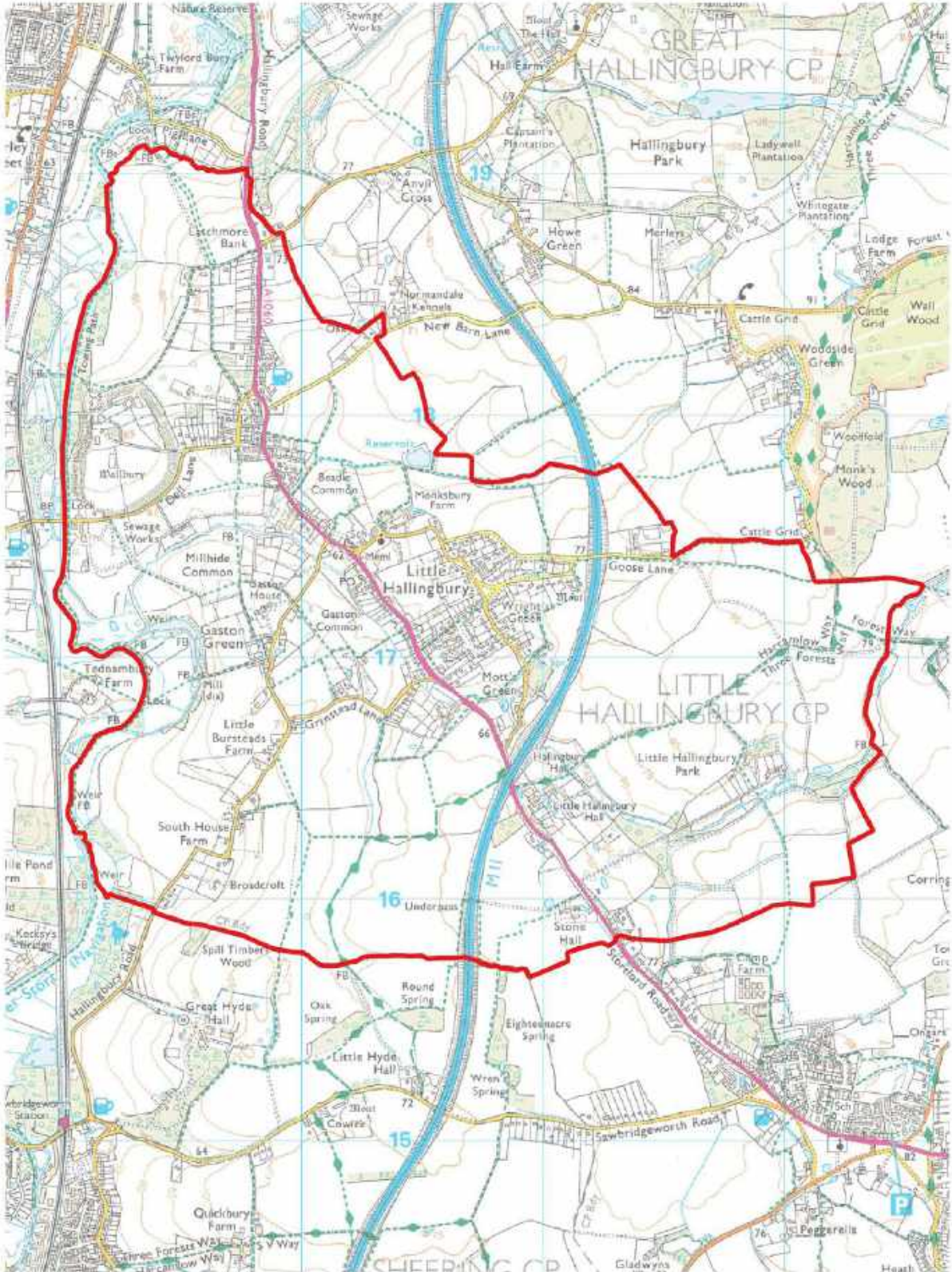
Figure 3.2
Historic Map Comparison



1949-73

KEY

 Study Area



Current OS Map (2024)

KEY

 Study Area



Scale 1:25,000 @ A3

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 1.5 km

LIZ LAKE
ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

4.3 **Settlement Expansion and Current Pattern**

4.3.1 As can be seen from the analysis of landscape change, Little Hallingbury has seen an increased level of development infilling between areas of built form dating back to the 1800's. The settlement continues to take on the form of a linear settlement with expansion having occurred at both the northern and southern edges of the village, loosely following the A1060.

4.3.2 Gaston Green, Little Hallingbury Hall and Little Hallingbury Park have undergone minimal changes in terms of new built form and define key heritage areas within the Parish. Despite the changes in settlement pattern and the introduction of new built form, Motts Green, Wrights Green and Church Green make up three key heritage areas in the southern extents of the Little Hallingbury Village. Development has extended west towards the edge of Wallbury, another key heritage area in the northern extent of the Village.

4.3.3 In terms of development, there remains a strong sense of historic integrity surrounding the key heritage areas. There has been some change to boundary treatments of existing properties including the introduction of large gates and boundary treatments completely enclosing some properties, with varying boundary treatments occurring more within the southern extents of the village. New developments have occurred in the northern extents of the village, in some cases blocking views across the rolling countryside.



Gaston Green



Hallingbury Mill



View looking south west along footpath 22

5 GREEN BELT CONTEXT

5.1	Green Belt Context
5.1.1	The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. National policies for the Green Belt are set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and identifies the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out below; • to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; • to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; • to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; • to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and • to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
5.1.2	With regard to developing land in the Green Belt the NPPF makes it clear that <i>“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”</i> and sets out a series of exceptions to development within the Green Belt (paragraph 154) which includes; • <i>“buildings for agriculture and forestry;</i> • <i>The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;</i> • <i>the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;</i> • <i>the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;</i> • <i>limited infilling in villages;</i> • <i>limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and</i> • <i>limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:</i> • <i>not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing</i>

	<i>development; or</i>
	• <i>not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”</i>
5.1.3	Arup undertook a Green Belt Review for Uttlesford District Council in March 2016 which assessed the whole of the Green Belt within Uttlesford to ascertain; • <i>“Whether all the land designated fulfils clear Green Belt purposes;</i> • <i>The degree of significance attached to various parts of the Green Belt in strategic terms; and</i> • <i>The extent to which some development in the Green Belt could promote sustainable patterns of development without compromising its overall purpose.”</i>
5.1.4	The Review was then updated by an addendum in September 2023, prepared by LUC with the intention of updating the Council’s existing Green Belt evidence base in preparation for informing Uttlesford’s new Local Plan. The addendum builds upon the work produced in 2016 which considered all but one of the 31 identified Green Belt parcels made a strong contribution to at least one Green Belt purpose and therefore were deemed to make an overall strong contribution to the Green Belt. The one parcel which was an exception is Parcel 5 and located to the south of Stansted Mountfitchet, not within or adjacent to the study area.
5.1.5	The addendum reviewed development in the Green Belt from 2016 to 2023 and identifies two small sites within the study area (5 dwellings east of Latchmore Bank (UTT/19/1896/OP) and 4 dwellings west of Latchmore Bank (UTT/22/1049/FUL)). The addendum deems that <i>“none of the permitted developments are considered significant enough to materially affect the judgements set out in the original assessment.”</i>
5.1.6	The addendum identifies a series of opportunities to enhance the uses of the District’s Green Belt land. Those of relevance to this landscape assessment include: • “Enhancement of the Harcamlow Way a 277km long-distance walking route (LDWR) traversing much of the District. The southwestern most portion of the route, west of the M11, lies within the Green Belt south of Little Hallingbury. Notable opportunities include: – <i>Address barriers to movement under the M11, including improved route surfacing, active travel links, signage, wayfinding, resting and points of interest;</i> – <i>Join-up and strengthen existing nature networks by providing green links and pocket parks, and a way of signposting through the landscape using the Harcamlow Way as a recreational spine.”</i>

5.1.7 The paragraphs below summarise the findings of The Uttlesford Green Belt Review 2016 and subsequent addendum. The Review divides the Green Belt within the District into a series of sub areas. Those within the Little Hallingbury Parish and the study area, include General Areas 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 along with small portions of areas 17 and 18 (General Areas are shown at Figure 4 on page 25). Built form in Little Hallingbury within the Development Limits is excluded from the Green Belt.

5.1.8 The Uttlesford Green Belt Review scored each General Area against the five purposes of the Green Belt with a score of 1 - 5 which assessed the contribution the General Areas make to the Green Belt.

Overall Strength of General Area against criterion	Score	Equivalent Wording
	1	Meets Criterion Weakly or Very Weakly
	2	Meets Criterion Relatively Weakly
	3	Meets Criterion
	4	Meets Criterion Relatively Strongly
	5	Meets Criterion Strongly or Very Strongly

5.1.9 The following sections set out the assessments within the Uttlesford Green Belt Review document for the General Areas of relevance to this study. The Uttlesford Green Belt Review assesses purposes 1 to 3 of the five Green Belt purposes.

General Area 12

5.1.10 General Area 12 is located on the parcel of land between the south eastern edge of Bishop's Stortford and the M11. The southern most tip of the General Area 12 extends into the study area, between Latchmore Bank and Church Road and comprises a handful of large residential dwellings and their associated gardens.

5.1.11 For purpose 1, General Area 12 is assessed as moderately contributing to purpose 1 of the Green Belt.

5.1.12 For purpose 2, the Green Belt Review identifies opportunities for some development in the north western corner of the General Area without causing coalescence between Little Hallingbury and Bishop's Stortford. General Area 12 is assessed as moderately contributing to purpose 2 of the Green Belt.

5.1.13 General Area 12 is described as having a largely rural character overall with long distance views across the fields. Built form is distributed across the General Area. The General Area is identified as strongly contributing to purpose 3 of the Green Belt.

General Area 13

5.1.14 General Area 13 covers an area of land between the western edge of the settlement of Little Hallingbury extending to the River Stort. The southern boundary of the General Area follows the line of a small tributary of the River Stort to the north of Gaston Green.

5.1.15 For purpose 1, General Area 13 is assessed as moderately contributing to this purpose of the Green Belt and identifies the importance of General Area 13 from preventing sprawl from Bishop's Stortford.

5.1.16 For purpose 2, General Area 13 is described as forming part of the wider gap between the non Green Belt settlements of Bishop's Stortford and Little Hallingbury. The scale of the gap is important to restrict the merging of these settlements. General Area 13 also plays an important role in restricting further ribbon development along the A1060 which would cause coalescence

between Little Hallingbury and Wrights Green. General Area 13 is considered to contribute very strongly to purpose 2 of the Green Belt.

5.1.17 Purpose 3 identifies the mixed character of built form scattered throughout General Area 13 including, sewage works, residential development and commercial properties. Built form is set within the agricultural landscape and the nature reserves and local wildlife sites. Although the sense of openness of General Area 13 is somewhat diminished by the presence of existing built form the area retains a largely rural character. General Area 13 is considered to strongly contribute to purpose 3 of the Green Belt.

General Area 14

5.1.18 General Area 14 covers an area of land between the eastern edge of the settlement of Little Hallingbury extending eastwards beyond the study area into the parish of Great Hallingbury to meet the M11.

5.1.19 For purpose 1, General Area 14 is deemed to very weakly contribute to this Green Belt purpose as it is not located at the edge of a distinct large built up area.

5.1.20 General Area 14 is considered to very strongly contribute to purpose 2 of the Green Belt due to the role the area plays in the wider gap between the non Green Belt settlements of Bishop's Stortford and Little Hallingbury. The Green Belt assessment notes that development in the north and east of the area is possible without causing coalescence. General Area 14 also plays an important role in restricting further ribbon development along the A1060 which would cause coalescence between Little Hallingbury and Wrights Green. General Area 14 is considered to contribute very strongly to purpose 2 of the Green Belt.

5.1.21 For purpose 3, General Area 14 is considered to very strongly contribute to this Green Belt purpose due to its strong and predominantly unspoilt rural character despite the presence of built form on the eastern edge of Little Hallingbury.

General Area 15

5.1.22 General Area 15 covers the area of land between the south western settlement edge of Little Hallingbury and extends to the south west beyond the study area boundary to Sawbridgeworth Road.

5.1.23 For purpose 1, General Area 15 is deemed to make a moderate contribution to this Green Belt purpose due to the permanent prominent features of Station Road / Hatfield Heath Road which form consistent boundaries to the General Area. General Area 15 serves as an additional barrier to sprawl from Sawbridgeworth.

5.1.24 For purpose 2, General Area 15 forms part of the wider gap between the non Green Belt settlements of Sawbridgeworth / Lower Sheering and Wrights Green / Little Hallingbury. General Area 15 is considered to contribute moderately to this Green Belt purpose.

5.1.25 Purpose 3, General Area 15 is considered to strongly contribute to this Green Belt purpose with a general level of openness through the area with open field, arable farming, small wooded areas and small watercourses. Development is limited within the General Area and consists of ribbon development along Hallingbury Road / Sawbridgeworth Road and at Gaston Green. General Area 15 possesses a largely rural character.

General Area 16

5.1.26 General Area 16 is located on the western edge of the study area an comprises an island within the River Stort bound on all sides by the river.

- 5.1.27 For purpose 1, General Area 16 is deemed to make no contribution to the Green Belt since it is not located at the edge of any distinct large built up area.
- 5.1.28 For purpose 2, General Area 16 makes a weak contribution to the Green Belt since it forms a small part of the less essential gap between the non Green Belt settlements of Sawbridgeworth and Little Hallingbury.
- 5.1.29 General Area 16 is considered to very strongly contribute to purpose 3 of the Green Belt with the only built form being the Old Mill buildings and associated structures within the parcel. General Area 16 retains an open and strong unspoilt rural character.

General Area 17

- 5.1.30 General Area 17 is located to the north of Hatfield Heath. Only the northern part of this area, south of the M11, falls within the study area.
- 5.1.31 For purpose 1, General Area 17 is deemed to make no contribution to the Green Belt since it is not located at the edge of any distinct large built up area.
- 5.1.32 For purpose 2, the General Area forms part of the wider gap between the non Green Belt settlements of Wrights Green and Hatfield Heath. The scale of this gap is important to restrict the merging of settlements. The General Area is considered to moderately contribute to this Green Belt purpose.
- 5.1.33 General Area 17 is considered to strongly contribute to purpose 3 of the Green Belt despite the presence of built form at Little Hallingbury Equestrian centre and on the northern edge of Hatfield Heath.

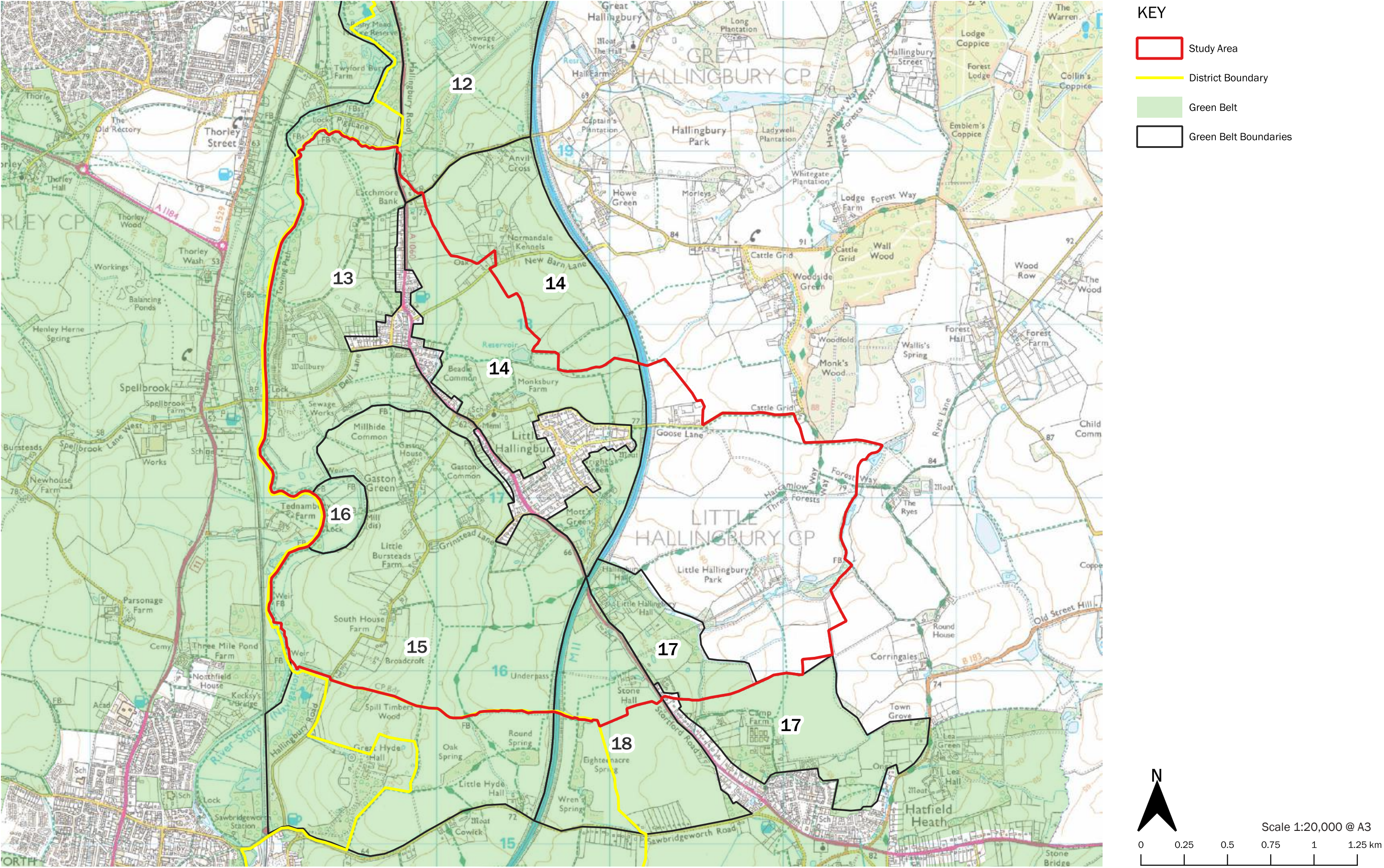
General Area 18

- 5.1.34 General Area 18 is located to the west of Hatfield Heath and to the south of the M11. The northern part of the General Area is located within the study area.
- 5.1.35 For purpose 1, General Area 18 is deemed to make no contribution to the Green Belt since it is not located at the edge of any distinct large built up area.
- 5.1.36 For purpose 2, the General Area forms part of the wider gap between the non Green Belt settlements of Wrights Green and Hatfield Heath. The scale of this gap is important to restrict the merging of settlements. The General Area is considered to moderately contribute to this Green Belt purpose.
- 5.1.37 For purpose 3, General Area 18 is largely flat and of rural land use, dominated by farming fields. Long views are afforded from the General Area, although interrupted on occasions by the elevated M11. Development in the area comprises an isolated farm house in the north of the parcel and ribbon development along the A1060. General Area 18 is deemed to strongly contribute to this Green Belt purpose.



View looking south east from footpath 10

Figure 4
Green Belt





View looking along the River Stort from footpath 38

6 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

6.1 General landscape character of Little Hallingbury Parish

- 6.1.1
- The rural landscape of the Little Hallingbury Parish comprises a gently undulating landscape which slopes in a general westerly direction towards the River Stort. Small valley formations are apparent as tributaries drain towards the River Stort.
- 6.1.2
- Field boundaries across the parish comprise mature hedgerows with trees which when combined with the undulating landscape combine to form a wooded back drop to expansive views across the arable countryside and create a rural setting to Little Hallingbury Village. Tranquillity of the village is reduced slightly by the audible vehicle movements along the M11, and planes taking off and landing at Stansted Airport. Key characteristics which contribute towards the landscape’s special qualities include the:
- Rural village character, with some areas of considerable time-depth;
 - Extensive network of lanes and pathways providing good connections between Little Hallingbury and adjoining Parishes. Including the pedestrian connections to Hatfield Forest and the Harcamlow Way;
 - Visual amenity value, with attractive panoramic views across the countryside as well as more intimate enclosed views within the valley sides. Views of attractive heritage areas are experienced in close proximity (i.e. Gaston Green, St Mary’s Church and Wrights Green etc.);
 - Biodiversity value; and
 - Agricultural value

6.2 Land - Use Classification and Vegetation

- 6.2.1
- The landscape within the Little Hallingbury Parish is predominantly agricultural and in arable production with some areas of pastoral fields and paddocks around the settlement edge. The land around the northern, eastern and southern edge of the study area is classed Grade 2 ‘Very Good’ Agricultural Land (as classified by Natural England), while the western part of the study area and the majority of the settlement is classed as Grade 3 ‘Good to Moderate’ Agricultural Land. There is a very small area of Grade 4 ‘Poor’ Agricultural Land in the south western corner of the study area, adjacent to the River Stort weir (Agricultural Land Classifications are shown on Figure 6, page 29).
- 6.2.2
- Areas of rough wet meadow and grazing marsh occupy the floodplain associated with the River Stort, on the western edge of the study area. Vegetation along the River Stort is composed of strong wet woodland and riparian vegetation. Valley sides sloping towards the watercourse are in arable production.
- 6.2.3
- Small swathes of woodland are associated with Wallbury in the west and Little Hallingbury Park in the south. Woodlands are not a common feature within the Parish, however, ancient

woodland at Monks Wood adjoins the eastern corner of the Parish. Key hedgerow and tree species, amongst others, within the Parish include oak, ash, hornbeam, poplar and willow.

- 6.2.4
- Within the Little Hallingbury Parish, fields are often large scale with mature tree lines and ditches which denote field boundaries. The maturity of the isolated trees indicates previous hedgerow boundaries which have since been lost.

6.3 Topography and Hydrology

- 6.3.1
- The Parish of Little Hallingbury is located to the immediate east of the River Stort. The landscape of the parish is gently undulating with land generally falling in a westerly direction towards the River. The River Stort lies within a well-defined valley and has a number of small tributaries that meander across the Parish. Small valley formations are apparent which correspond to the alignment of the tributaries (refer to Figure 7 Topography on page 30.)
- 6.3.2
- The lowest lying land is along the western edge of the Parish, following the course of the River Stort. The highest ground lies in the eastern corner of Little Hallingbury Parish and provides views in a westerly direction across the landscape. The southern edge of the settlement is screened by substantial structural vegetation on the M11 embankments.
- 6.3.3
- Flood zone data, taken from the Government website by the Environment Agency (last updated in 2021) shows that, the Parish of Little Hallingbury is at risk of flooding on the land adjacent to the River Stort and along its main tributary approaching from the east. These areas lie within Flood Zones 2 and 3. Flood Zone 2 has a medium probability of flooding and Flood Zone 3 has a high probability of flooding. However these zones areas are predominantly occupied by agricultural land. The flood zones of the main tributary extends into back gardens of properties on the A1060, however, the River Stort flood zone predominantly follows the western edge of the study area (refer to Figure 8 Hydrology on page 31).



Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way (public footpath 37), looking south towards Little Hallingbury Park

Figure 5
Aerial Photograph

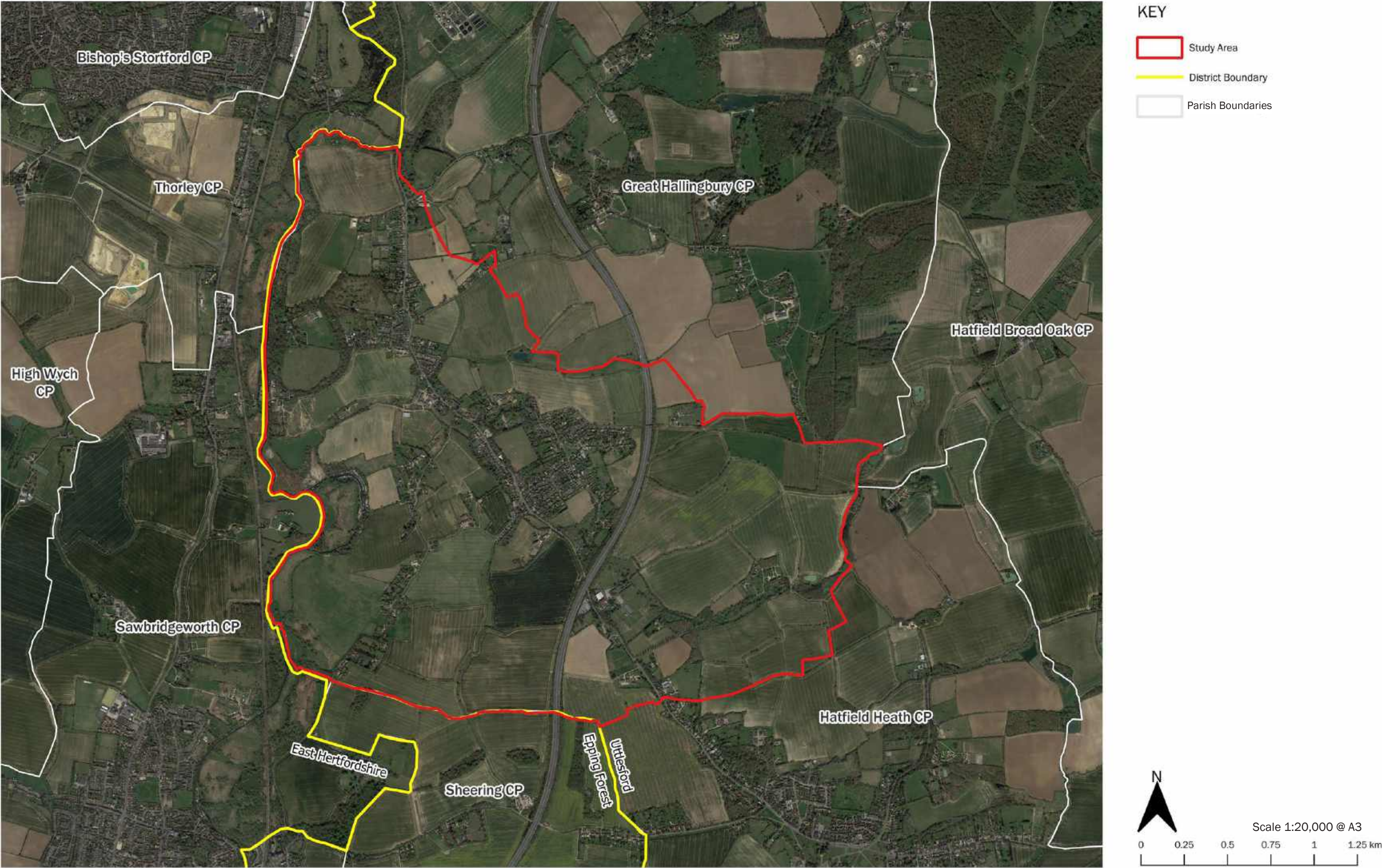


Figure 6
Agricultural Land Classification

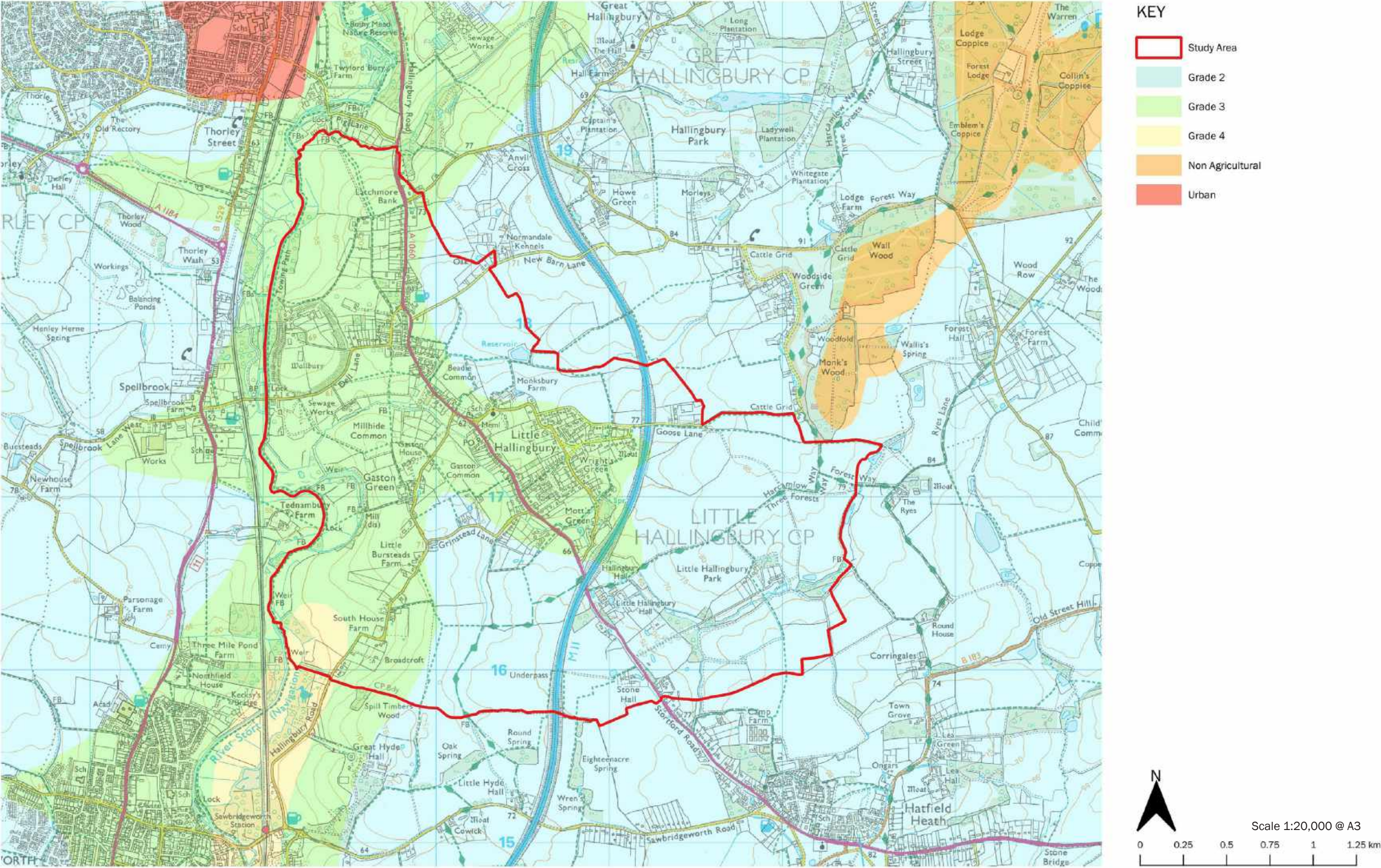


Figure 7
Topography

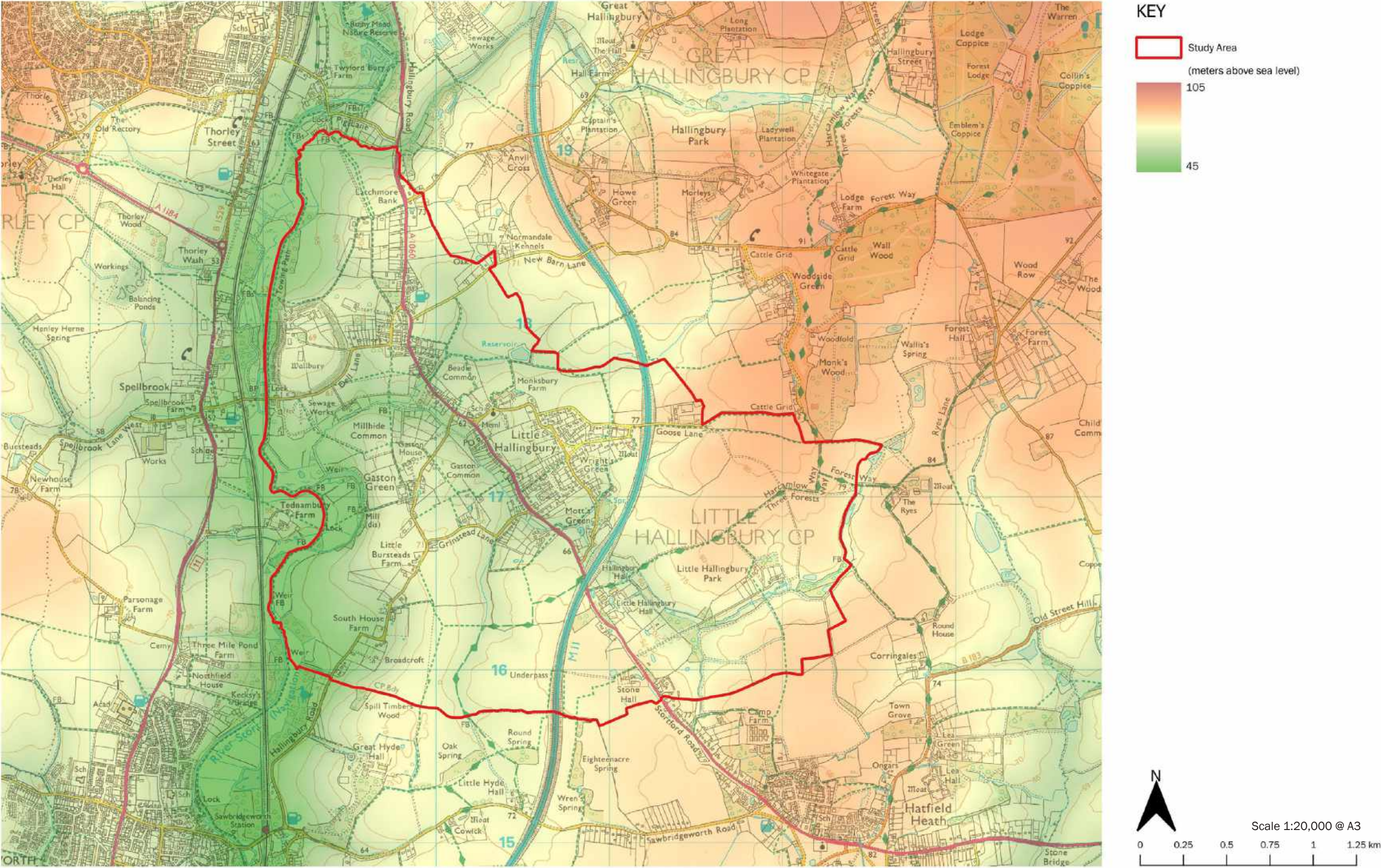
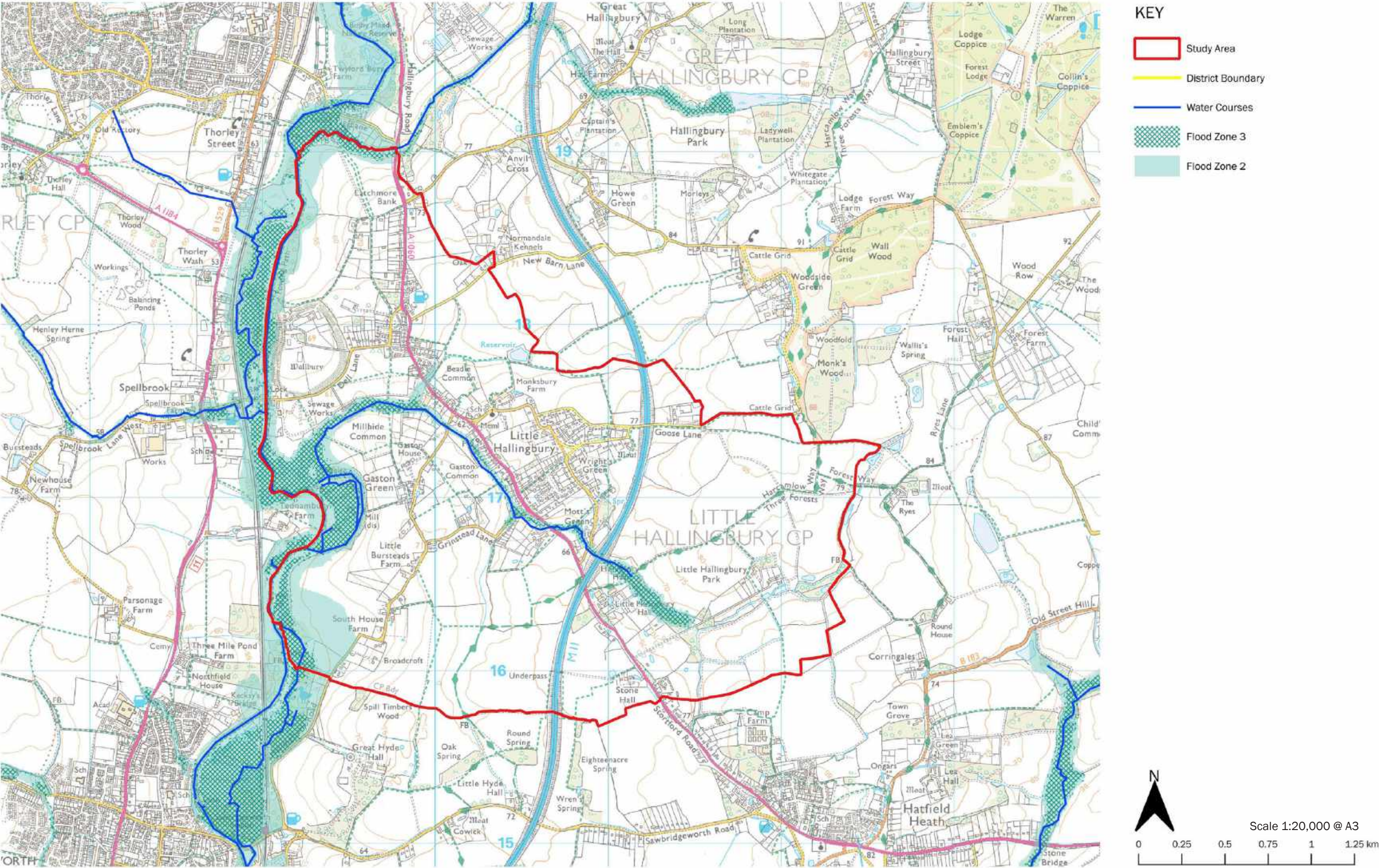


Figure 8
Hydrology and Flood Mapping



6.4 **Landscape, cultural, heritage and biodiversity designations**

6.4.1 There are a number of landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity designations within the Parish of Little Hallingbury, refer to Figures 9 - 13.

Conservation Areas

6.4.2 There are no Conservation Areas within the study area.

Registered Parks and Gardens

6.4.3 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the study area.

Listed Buildings

6.4.4 There are approximately 60 individually Listed Buildings within the Little Hallingbury Parish. Policy ENV2 within the adopted Uttlesford Local Plan relates to development affecting Listed Buildings.

6.4.5 As described in Chapter 4, the historic settlement pattern within Little Hallingbury Parish survives with numerous greens, dispersed farmsteads and halls. Listed Buildings are scattered throughout the parish, although do appear focused around Motts Green, Wrights Green, Gaston Green and the church and churchyard.

6.4.6 The Church of St Mary the Virgin (Grade II*) is of particular interest and has been extended and restored since the 13th Century. Surrounding the church are a number of other Grade II Listed Buildings including; The Rectory, Old Brick Maltings, Maltings Farm and Maltings Cottages. Gaston House is also of particular interest with its small scale parkland grounds. There are also a number of Grade II listings surrounding Gaston House and Gaston Green.

In addition Hallingbury Mill is located on the western side of the Parish. Hallingbury Mill is a Grade II* Listed fully restored watermill, built in 1874.

Scheduled Monuments

6.4.7 Wallbury Camp is the only Scheduled Monument within the Parish of Little Hallingbury. It is located on the western edge of the study area and comprises the earthwork remains of an Iron Age bivallate hillfort. The Scheduled Monument is surrounded by a ring of undesignated woodland, which is visible on Historic Maps dating back to 1885.



Gaston House (GII*)



Hallingbury Mill (GII*)

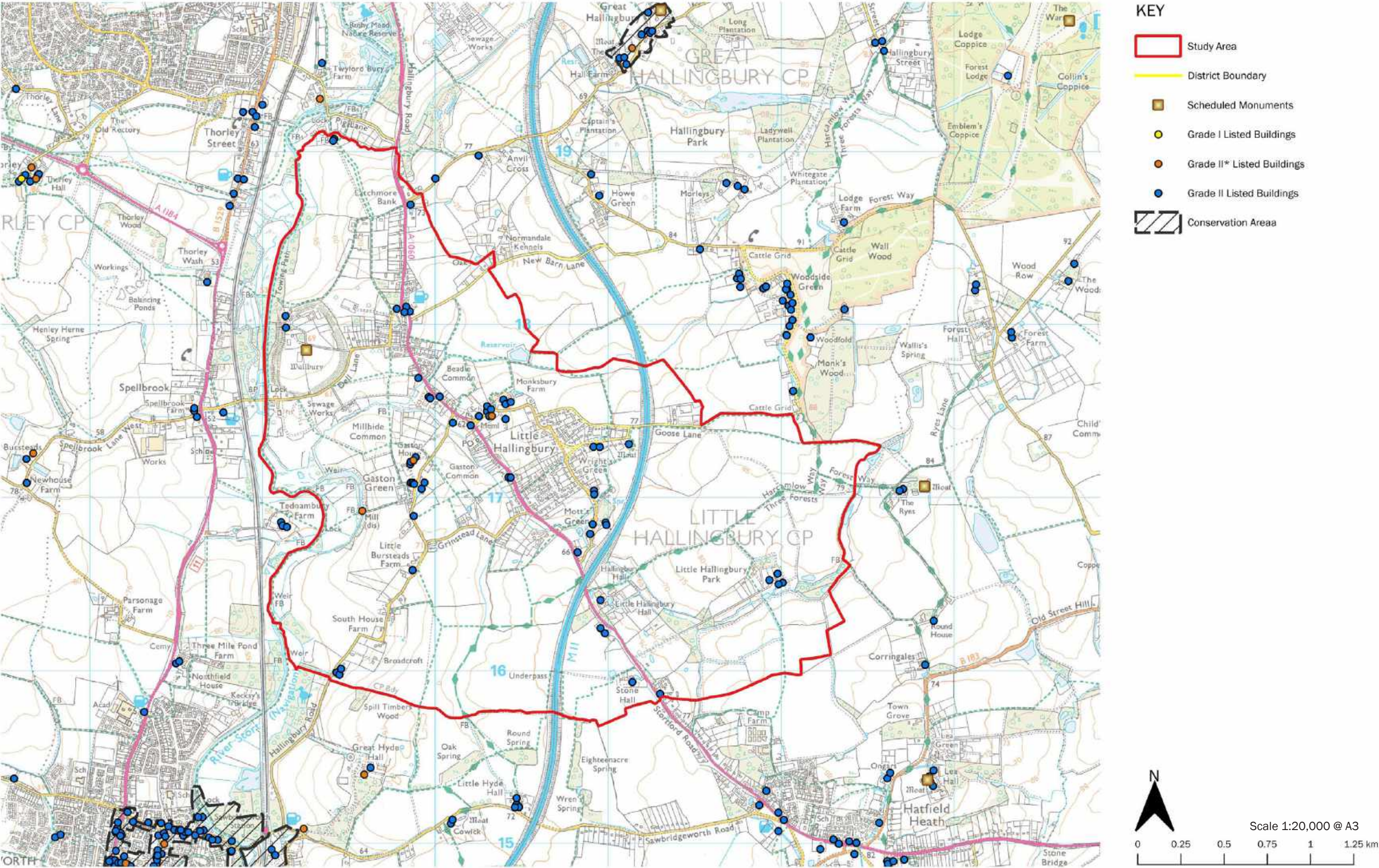


Church of St Mary the Virgin (GII*)



Malting Farm (GII)

Figure 9
Heritage Assets



Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

6.4.8 Little Hallingbury Marsh is located on the western edge of the study area covering approximately 4.45 hectares (ha) of land on the banks of the River Stort, to the south of the sewage works. The SSSI is composed of an area of unimproved wet grassland and fen. Species found within the SSSI are uncommon and declining in Essex, species of particular interest and importance, amongst others, include; *Juncus subnodulosus* (blunt-flowered rush), *Valeriana dioica* (Marsh valerian), *Galium uliginosum* (fen bedstraw). In addition to the important species, the SSSI also hosts overwintering birds and forms a significant part of the regionally important network of feeding and roosting sites for birds along the Stort Valley.

Chalk Rivers

6.4.9 The River Stort originates as a chalk stream in the valleys of the Chilterns, and falls into the catchment of The Lea as one of its six tributaries. It consists of the lower Stort, which has been made navigable by turning the original river into a canal, and the upper Stort, the original River in its channel.

6.4.10 Little Hallingbury falls into the lower Stort, which is mainly characterized by its wide flood plains crossed by ditches and backwater streams. Wetland nature reserves such as the Thorley Marsh can be found at north east of the parish, where areas of sedges, reedbeds, carr and wet grassland are protected. Areas of the lower Stort experiences regular flooding, which attracts a wide range of waterbirds and waders during winter. The Little Hallingbury Brook flows into the lower part of the valley which often bring excessive surface run-off, plastic rubbish, nutrient rich water from sewage works and resulting in pollution to run-off from agricultural land.

6.4.11 Meanwhile, the geology of the upper Stort changed from boulder clay and gravel to chalk, gravel bed and riffles can also be found in this stretch, and it generally has good water quality to support wildlife such as trout.

Local Wildlife Sites

6.4.12 There are three Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within the Parish of Little Hallingbury. Two of which are located on the western edge of the study area; Wallbury Plantation and Marsh (Ufd47) and Hallingbury Mill Pastures (Ufd54), both LWS are part of a series of important wetland sites within the River Stort floodplain. The third LWS is Little Hallingbury Churchyard (Ufd65) which has a preserved section of rare chalky clay grassland.

Landscape Designations

6.4.13 There are no international, national or local designated landscapes within the study are.

Time depth

6.5.1 In general terms the landscape to the south and south east of the study area is relatively undeveloped and remnant of the historic land uses and field patterns, despite field boundaries lost since the 1950’s. Historic land use to the north of the Parish remains reasonably intact although the rapid expansion of Bishops Stortford is visible from areas in the north of the Parish. Over time development has extended along the A1060 connecting the dispersed historic settlement pattern, with development extending eastwards linking Motts Green and Wrights Green.

Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and Access

6.6.1 There Is a comprehensive network of public footpaths and bridleways which pass through the Parish providing the local community with ample opportunities for access to the countryside. .

- 6.6.2 The most notable PRoWs within the Parish include:
- Public footpaths Little Hallingbury 38, 39 and 41: following the banks of the River Stort
 - Public footpath Little Hallingbury 20: crossing in a north to south direction from Dell Lane to Gaston Green
 - Public footpaths 10 and 43: travelling in a east west direction following the alignment of Goose Lane (10) or just to the south of Goose Lane (43), connecting Wrights Green and Monks Wood
 - The Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way (public footpaths Little Hallingbury 14 and bridleways Little Hallingbury 15, 13 and 27)



Little Hallingbury Marsh



Little Hallingbury Churchyard (Local Wildlife Site)

Figure 10
Statutory Designations

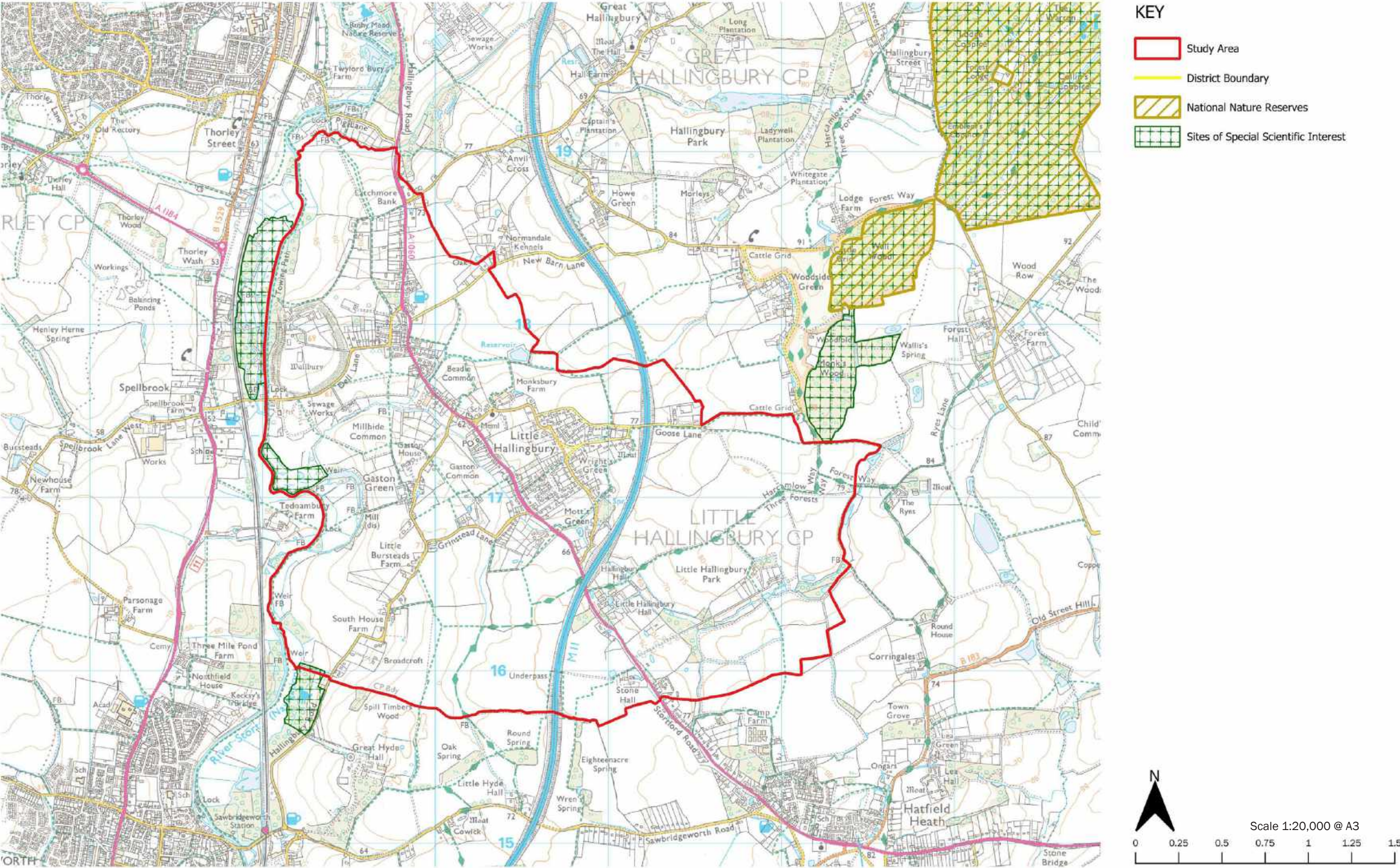


Figure 11
Environmental Designations

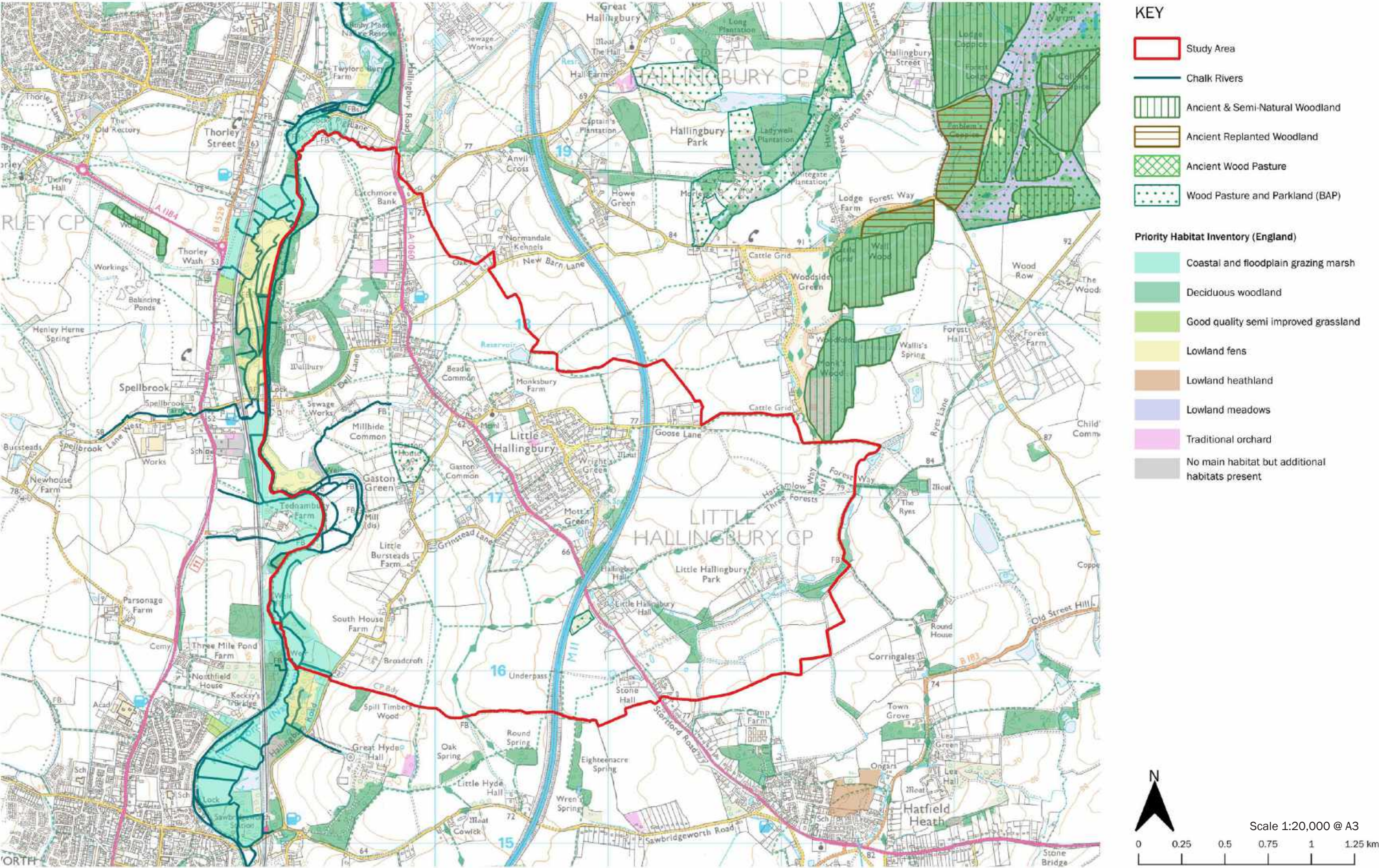


Figure 12
Public Rights of Way

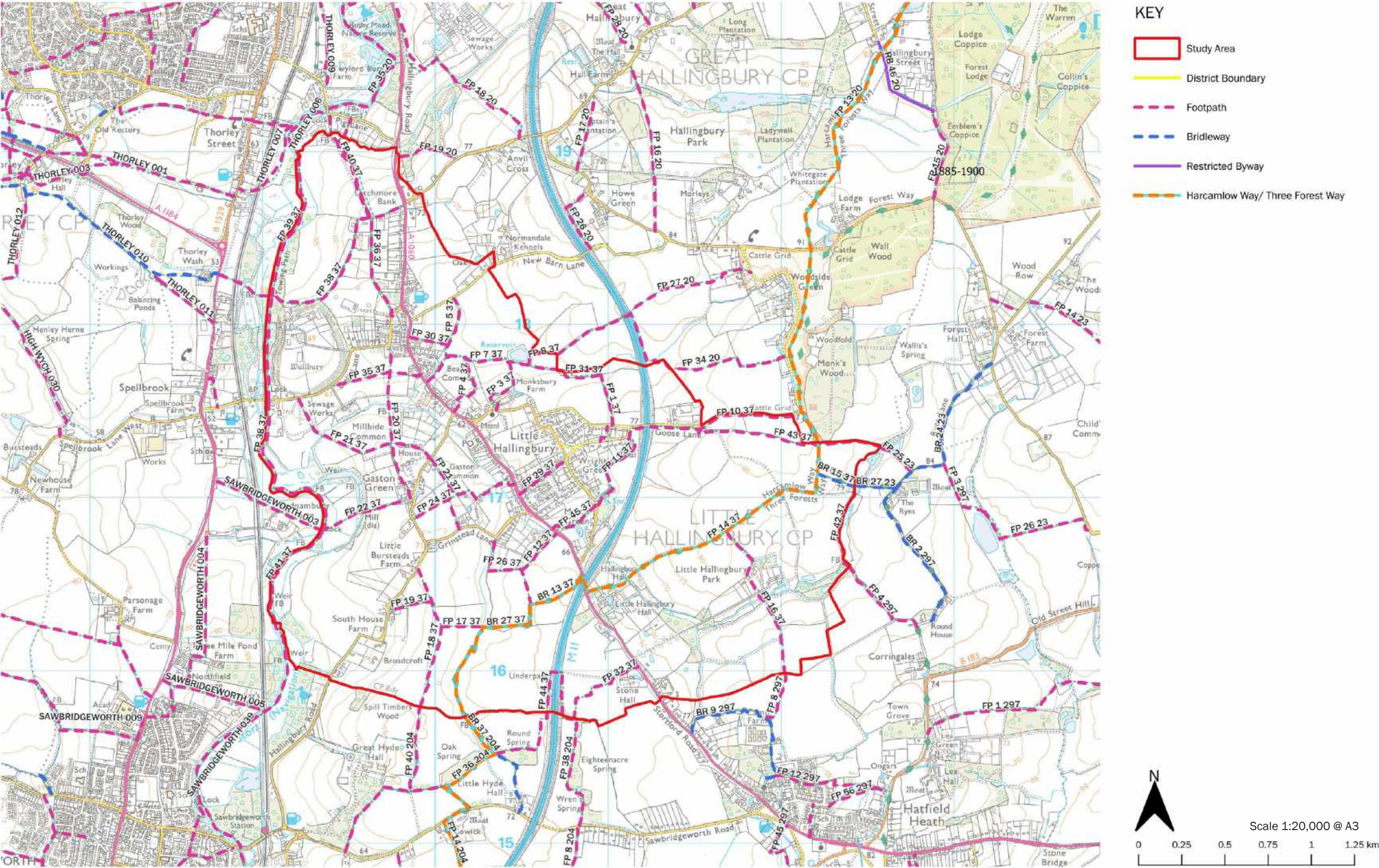
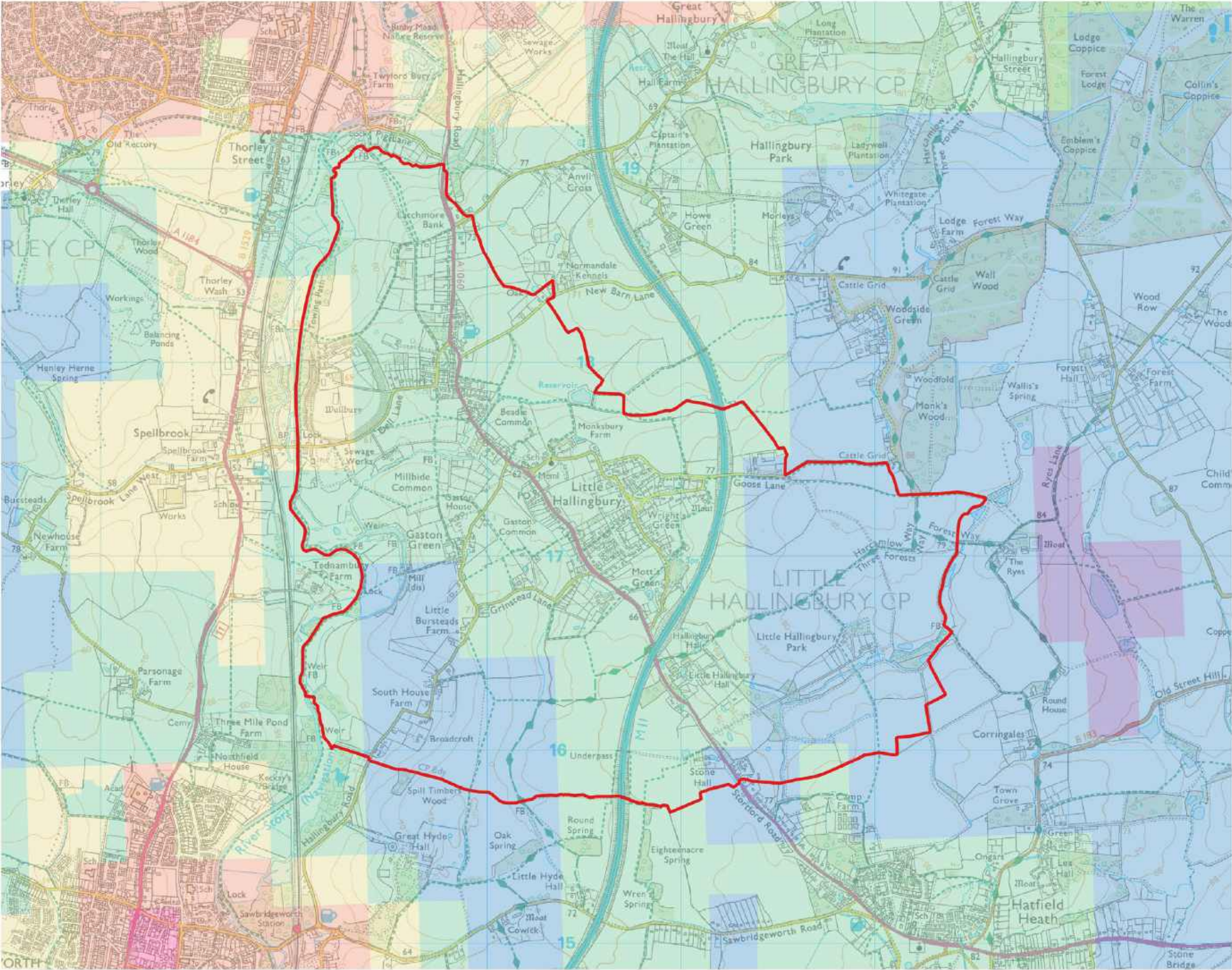


Figure 13
Light Pollution and Dark Skies Mapping



KEY

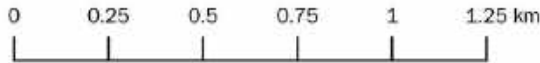
Study Area

(NanoWatts / cm² / sr)

- 0.25-0.5 (darkest)
- 0.5-1
- 1-2
- 2-4
- 4-8
- 8-16 (brightest)



Scale 1:20,000 @ A3



6.7 **Tranquillity**

- 6.7.1

Despite the M11 motorway passing through the eastern part of the Parish and the audible noise from aeroplanes taking off and landing at Stansted Airport, Little Hallingbury is still considered to be a relatively tranquil Parish. There are approximately 1660 residents who live within the Parish who have good walking connections to the gently undulating arable countryside and riverside walk.
- 6.7.2

The dark skies map produced by the Campaign to Protect Rural England shows the majority of the study area has little light pollution, even where the M11 passes through the parish. However, the western edge of the study area close to Wallbury Camp is influenced by light spill from Spellbrook and the southern edge of Bishops Stortford.

6.8 **Strength of Landscape Character**

- 6.8.1

The landscape character is representative of English lowland countryside character with dispersed rural settlements. The strength of character generally increases with distance from Bishop’s Stortford with the eastern part of the Parish being the strongest in rural countryside character, despite the M11.



Public footpath 38/39/41 along the banks of the River Stort



Public footpath 3 looking north east

6.9 **Existing Landscape Character Assessments**

- 6.9.1

Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) are the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. LCA documents identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas.
- 6.9.2

There are four published LCA documents undertaken at varying scales which encompass the project area. These are summarised in Table 1 and are shown in Figures 13 - 17.

National: National Character Area Profiles, Natural England, 2012		
NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland		
Regional: East of England Landscape Typology, Landscape East, 2010		
LCT: Valley Meadowlands	LCT: Settled Chalk Valleys	LCT: Wooded Plateau Farmlands
County: Essex Landscape Character Assessment, 2003		
LCT: B Glacial Till Plateau		LCT: C Cam Valley
LCA: B1 Central Essex Farmlands		LCA: C2 Stort Valley
District: Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment, 2023		
LCT: A River Valley		LCT: B Farmland Plateau
LCA: A2 Stort River Valley		LCA: B7 Hatfield Forest

Table 1: Hierarchy of Existing Landscape Chatacter Types and Landscape Character Areas



Public footpath 21 looking north

National Level - National Character Area Profiles	
6.9.3	In the 1990’s, English Nature and the Countryside Commission jointly produced the Character Map of England - a single map that identified and described 159 Joint Character Areas (JCAs) covering the whole of England. Each distinct area was defined following consideration of its landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activities. The boundaries of the areas followed natural rather than administrative boundaries. The various volumes of the JCA Map were published between 1998 and 2000.
6.9.4	More recently, Natural England has undertaken a review of the JCAs in order to fulfil, in part, responsibilities set out in the Natural Environment White Paper 2011, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention 2007, creating National Character Area (NCA) profiles which are based on the original JCA profiles. These are guidance documents that can assist communities in decision-making by informing them about the places that they live in.
NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands	
6.9.5	Little Hallingbury Parish falls within NCA 86: The South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands. NCA 86 is a broadly flat, chalky boulder clay plateau, dissected by an undulating river valley topography that is particularly marked in upper valley reaches, which are much smaller in scale. Land use is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture in the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular, despite rationalization, due to remnants of Ancient Countryside.
6.9.6	A settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and small villages across the top of the valley slopes highlights a strong sense of history, often times spread around ‘tyes’ (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. Traditional timber-frame, color-wash render, pargeting and steeply pitched pegtile roofs are often seen in settlements, with some refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks. The historic navigation locks and navigation mills found around the river Stort, as well as historic barns and impressive churches are also clearly visible as part of the area’s landscape development throughout time.
6.9.7	Winding, narrow, sunken lanes bounded by strong hedgerows, wide verges deep ditches along the local road network, together with the strong historic character from the settlements and a dense network of open fields, meadows, hedges and woods in Little Hallingbury within this NCA presents a well preserved, archetypal, lowland pastoral English countryside.
6.9.8	NCA profile 86 includes the following landscape opportunities: • <i>“Protect the pastoral river valley landscape from further fragmentation by resisting inappropriate use and development, promoting traditional management practices, protecting existing pasture from conversion to arable use (especially those containing archaeological features), and seeking opportunities to create more permanent grassland.</i> • <i>Conserving and appropriately managing the area’s sense of place within the built environment and using this understanding, and the area’s traditional settlement patterns, to plan for and inspire new development.</i> • <i>Conserving traditional building features that are distinctive to the area, including pargeting, straw thatch, flint-knapped churches, weatherboarded post windmills and the</i>

traditional riverside features such as water mills, which have a strong visual impact in the landscape.

- *Promoting the use of traditional building materials in building restoration or new development where this would be appropriate, to enhance the local character.*
- *Ensuring that high-quality green infrastructure is considered in all newbuild projects, encouraging developers and planners to consider this aspect at the outset of scheme design with the aim of promoting space for wildlife and outdoor recreation.*

Regional Level: Landscape East Character Typologies

Landscape East is a Landscape Information System developed by Countryside in 2009 to assist with the landscape planting and management of both rural and urban areas in the East of England.

The East of England Landscape Character Typology (LCT) was established in 2010 to supplement the historical and environmental databases with local landscape character assessments and specialist local knowledge.

The East of England Landscape framework allows for cooperation between various administrative authorities and a more general understanding of landscape character, which can then be concentrated into smaller-scale character areas at a more local level.

LCT Valley Meadowlands

The western edge of the Little Hallingbury Parish, along the river Stort, falls within the Valley Meadowlands LCT.

Key characteristics of LCT Valley Meadowlands include:

- *“Flat, low lying valley floors supporting a pastoral land use, associated with notable watercourses/rivers;*
- *Generally unsettled, with occasional areas of carr woodland and gravel extraction lakes, or ancient meres.”*

The area is primarily a pastoral landscape, historically a grazing landscape, and has been enclosed into a mosaic of riverine meadows throughout time. In some areas, large areas of valley floor have been removed by sand/gravel extraction and are now functioning as reservoirs. The area is generally unsettled, with occasional mill buildings.

Perceptions of the landscape are that of tranquil, rural meadowlands with views confined by valley floor woodlands. Coupled with the presence of water, it gives a sense of intimacy and remoteness.

LCT Settled Chalk Valleys

Most settled areas in the parish, generally located in the central and north west of Little Hallingbury, falls within the Settled Chalk Valleys LCT. This also includes the valley west of Sawbridgeworth Road towards the southern edge of the parish.

- 6.9.17

Key characteristics of LCT Wooded Plateau Farmlands include:

 - *“Settled, chalk valley landscapes, distinguished by their soft, rounded and sometimes steeply sloping topography.;*
 - *a good balance of woodland and farmland, with distinctive vernacular style villages and associated parklands.”*
- 6.9.18

The area is predominately arable with some pasture around settlements. A mixed land use can be seen with majority of fieldscapes created from the enclosure of former common fields, and a nucleated pattern of historic villages and estate farms along the bottom of the valley, with clusters of roadside dwellings in the lower parts of some valleys.
- 6.9.19

Perceptions of the area are of a peaceful, rural landscape due to the harmonious balance of farmlands, woodlands and clusters of settlement with views framed from down and across valleys, affording a sense of tranquillity.

LCT Wooded Plateau Farmlands
- 6.9.20

The remainder of the parish towards eastern edge of Little Hallingbury, mostly east of the M11, falls within the Wooded Plateau Farmlands LCT. With areas at north of the parish, near Latchmore Bank Farmhouse, part of this LCT as well.
- 6.9.21

Key characteristics of LCT Wooded Plateau Farmlands include:

 - *“A settled, early enclosed landscape with frequent ancient woods;*
 - *a rolling, in places undulating glacial plateau, dissected by numerous shallow valleys”*
- 6.9.22

The area is primarily in arable production with an irregular pattern of medium to large sized fields. The area also consists of mixture of scattered farmsteads, hamlets and occasional larger villages. There is a sinuous pattern of roads and lanes with small to medium-sized greens with mostly brick buildings occur around them. There is also a strong vernacular tradition of timber framed buildings with tiled roofs.
- 6.9.23

Despite its settled character, this landscape is deeply rural and tranquil often giving a sense of remoteness and continuity. This is lost in some locations close to larger settlements, roads and pylons.



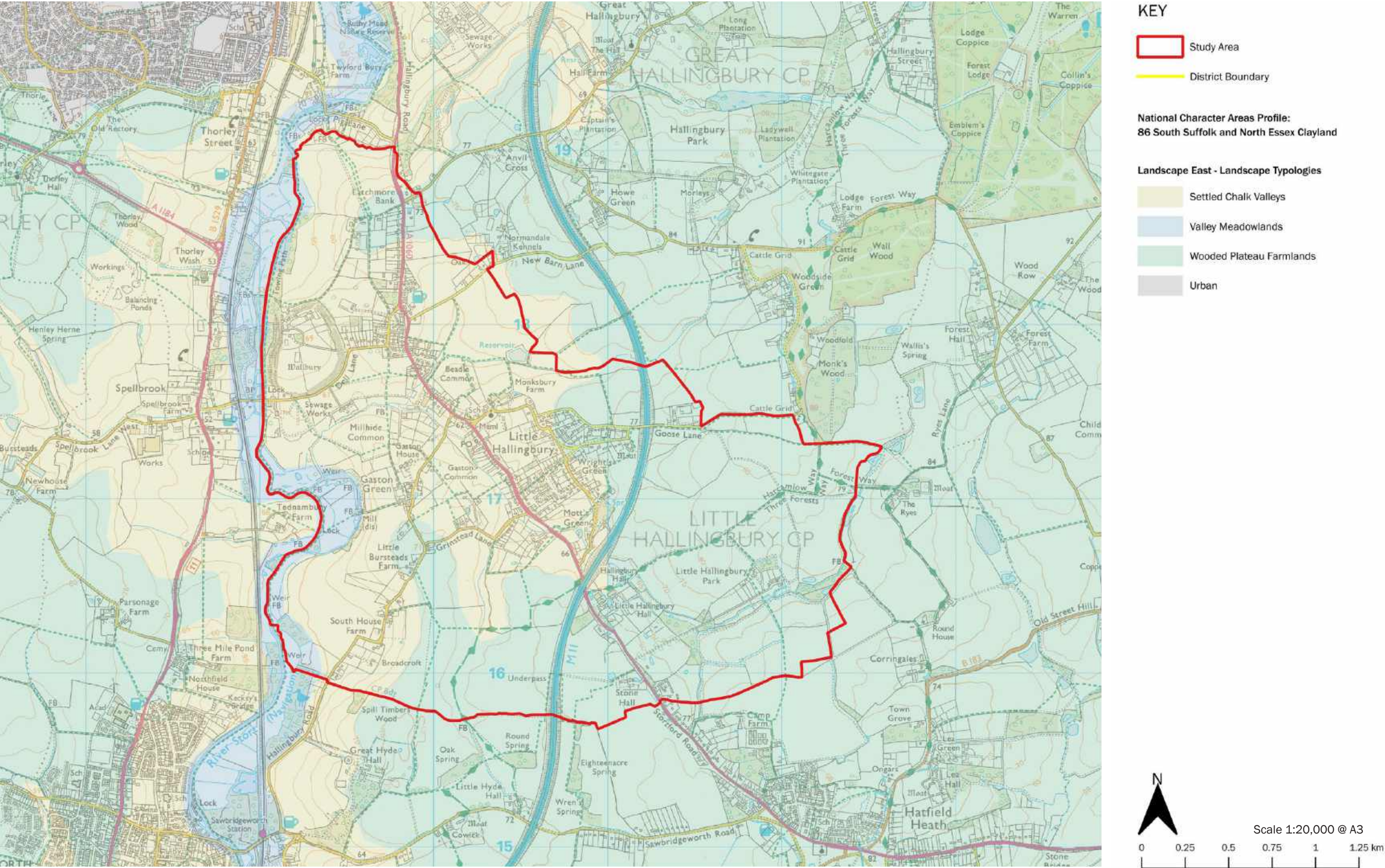
Footpath 24 looking towards Little Bursteads



Harcamlow Way/ Three Forest Way looking north west



Grinstead Lane looking north



County Level: Essex Landscape Character Assessment	
6.9.24	The Essex Landscape Character Assessment was produced in 2003 by Chris Blandford Associates on behalf of Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council. The study sought to identify the distinctive character areas across the Essex landscape, defined at the 1:50,000 scale, which can then be evaluated for their sensitivity to change <i>“guiding necessary development to landscapes where the type and degree of change can be best accommodated”</i> .
6.9.25	The Essex LCA identified seven Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which were refined to classify thirty five Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), two of which fall within the study area. - LCT Glacial Till Plateau (B); LCA Central Essex Farmlands (B1): Along the north eastern edge of the study area, and parts of the south of the study area near the M11 and Lower Road - LCT Cam Valley (C); LCA Stort Valley (C2): The remains if the study area, dominantly the west of Lower Road in the study area, stretching across the M11 to include the farmlands near Little Hallingbury Park LCT Glacial Till Plateau (B) 6.9.26 This typology is a gently undulating, glacial boulder clay plateau dissected by major river valleys which dominated the north and the west of the county. It is part of the extensive claylands that stretches from north Essex to south Suffolk and beyond. It is predominantly arable with an irregular field pattern. Strong hedgerows and woodland blocks in the area are visually linked to form wooded skyline, with major species being hawthorn, blackthorn, ash and field maple. A selection historic buildings, such as timber-framed and colour-rendered houses and historic barns are generally scattered in farmstead, hamlets and large villages across the area. LCA Central Essex Farmlands (B1) 6.9.27 This LCA is of gently undulating arable farmland with medium sized, irregular fields bounded by thick, intermittent hedgerow trees of oak, ash, and hornbeam. The scatter of small sized woodlands, copses and mixed plantation creates an illusion of a wooded horizon in long views. There is a disperse pattern of settlement characterized by isolated hamlets and farmsteads, often trailing along lanes. From the road corridors such as along the M11, narrow strips of green and moated farmsteads can also be found as distinctive features for the area. 6.9.28 Key characteristics of LCA B1 include: <i>“Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches.</i> <i>Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.</i> <i>Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and ponds.</i> <i>A concentration of isolated moated farmsteads.</i> <i>Network of narrow, winding lanes.</i>
6.9.29	The condition of the hedgerows and woodlands are generally moderate. In some parts of the area, hedgerows have appeared to be very fragmented or have been lost. Sand and gravel workings have also caused localised erosion of character. Small settlements have a good condition overall, however, large visually intrusive modern sheds and/or conifer planting have put some farmsteads out of character.
6.9.30	The Past, Present and Future Trends for Change for LCA B1 include: <i>“The landscape was subject to early enclosure and then evolved gradually.</i> <i>Significant change has occurred since the Second World War with rationalisation of field pattern and loss of hedgerows associated with agricultural intensification. This is now considered to have peaked.</i> <i>Future trends for change may include increasing urban and transportation developments especially associated with the major road corridors. This may include pressure related directly or indirectly to Stansted Airport expansion and potential growth area in RPG9.</i> <i>The main influence on the landscape will probably continue to be agricultural. Pressures could include larger farm buildings, irrigation reservoirs, forestry and various recreational uses near urban areas. Equally changes in the agricultural subsidy regime could bring opportunities for conservation and restoration of hedgerow pattern, and improved management of woodlands.”</i> LCT Cam Valley (C) 6.9.31 This typology is significant to the county’s general topography, character, and identity. With river valleys dissecting the boulder clay plateau, they are steeper and deeper in the north and becomes shallower as the rivers flow into the Thames or into the North Sea. Upper valleys typically reveal underlying gravel and sand deposits on either side, while parts of the valley are extensively modified by gravel pits, reservoirs, artificial wetlands, river realignments and canals. Organic field shapes can be found, with small rural settlements associated with intimate tree-lined valleys contrasting with more developed ones near major valley floodplains, both reflecting the historical use of accessing into the county. ‘Tunnelled’ views through deciduous woodland to the valley bottom because of the high ground of the plateau provided a distinctive character in this area. LCA Stort Valley (C2) 6.9.32 Although the river course of the Stort is strongly meandering, its valley is narrow and shallow for majority of its length, especially near Bishop Stortford near its source, and only opens out as it reaches north west of Harlow. Medium-large sized arable fields provides a sense of enclosure with its thick hedgerows, small woods and tree belts, which contrasts with the pasture and wetland vegetation found along the river course and the unenclosed meadows on valley floor. Settlements are generally small villages and dispersed hamlets on valley sides, with occasional larger villages expanded by modern development. Buildings have a strong historic vernacular of colour-washed plaster and pegtile roofs, some half timber and brick, and a few other landscape features such as churches, windmills, small estates and parklands, and a few sand and gravel pits.

6.9.33 Key characteristics of LCA C2 include:

- *“Shallow and narrow valley with moderately sloping arable valley sides.*
- *Fairly enclosed character due to the frequency of hedgerows/hedgerow trees, small woods/copses and riverside trees.*
- *Small pastures and large floodplain meadows on the valley floor.*
- *Numerous small estates and parklands.*
- *Substantially undeveloped character.”*

6.9.34 The condition of the hedgerows and woodlands in the farmland is moderate to good, as is the condition of the settlements, with few villages showing signs of poor-quality modern development. There are localised areas of abandoned or overgrazed pastures and light industrial sheds on the valley floor of the northern edge of Harlow being visually intrusive.

6.9.35 The Past, Present and Future Trends for Change for LCA B1 include:

- *“Traditional use of the valley floor for grazing meadows and the valleysides for arable farming by the farms and small estates had a strong influence in the development of present day character.*
- *Given the proximity of major road and rail routes, there may be further pressure for major urban development. Due to the small scale enclosed character of the valley, with its strong tree cover, any such development would be very difficult to absorb.”*



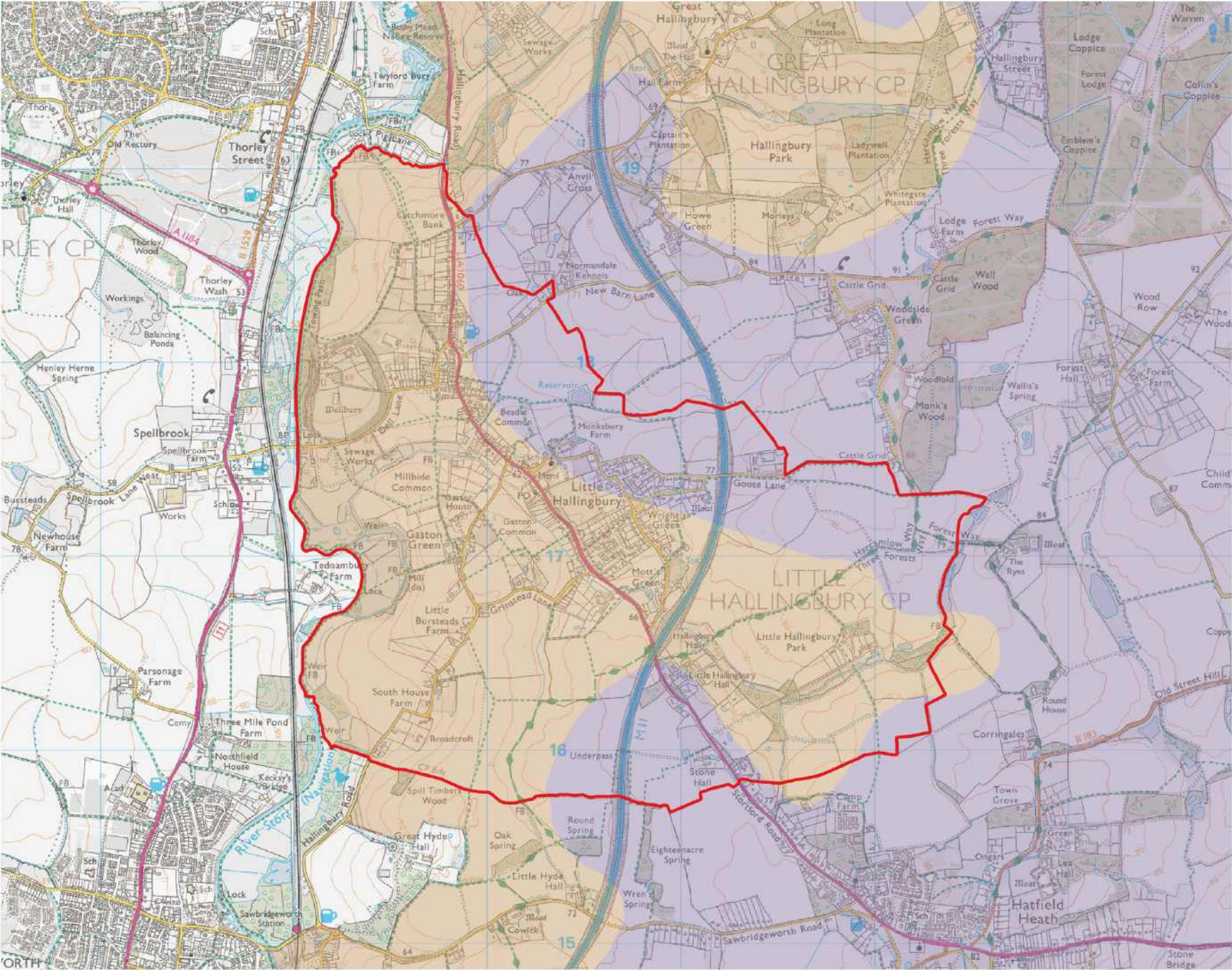
Footpath 38 looking north along the banks of River Stort



Footpath 39 looking north along the banks of River Stort



Footpath 3 looking north across arable fields



KEY

 Study Area

Essex Landscape Character Assessment

 B1: Central Essex Farmland

 C2: Stort Valley

 Scale 1:20,000 @ A3

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 km

	District Level: Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment
6.9.36	The Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment was prepared in October 2023 and prepared by LUC Consultants and updates the 2006 landscape assessment. The landscape character assessment identified three generic landscape character types (LCTs) across the Uttlesford District. The majority of the Little Hallingbury Parish falls within the River Valley (A) LCT with a small slither on the eastern edge of the study area falling within the Farmland Plateau (B) LCT.
	LCT A River Valley
6.9.37	Key Characteristics of the River Valley LCT include: • “U-shaped or shallow landform which dissect boulder clay or chalky till plateau; • Main rive valley served by several tributaries; • Flat or gently undulating valley floor; • Contrast between intimate and wooded character on the valley floor and open character on the valley sides; • Settlement concentrated on the valley sides”
	LCT B Farmland Plateau
6.9.38	Key Characteristics of the Farmland Plateau LCT include: • “Elevated gently rolling boulder clay/chalky till plateau landscape, incised by river valleys; • Medium- to large-scale enclosed predominantly arable fields; • Well wooded in places, with several areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland; • Network of winding lanes and minor roads.”
6.9.39	The LCTs are subdivided into local landscape character areas (LCAs). The study area falls within the following LCA’s: • A2 Stort River Valley; and • B7 Hatfield Forest
	LCA A2 Stort River Valley
6.9.40	LCA A2: Stort River Valley is described as “gently sloping valley landscape drained by the River Stort. The area is rural in character and dominated by arable farmland. Settlement and transport links are concentrated in the south where the proximity of Bishop Stortford to the west of the district boundary, and Stansted Airport to the east exert an influence on the landscape.”
6.9.41	Key Characteristics of LCA A2: Stort River Valley of relevance include: • “A shallow river valley drained by the upper course of the River Stort;

	• The landform is gently rolling with occasional steep river valley slopes; • A landscape dominated by intensive arable agriculture...; • A small- to medium-scale regular field pattern. Fields are well-enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees, tree belts, and woodland blocks; • The riverbanks are well-vegetated with shrubs and trees, creating an intimate character; • Deciduous woodland, unimproved grassland and wetland habitats along the Stort, often designated as Local Wildlife Sites, provide variety within the intensively farmed landscape; • Little Hallingbury Marsh (SSSI) along the Stort is important for local biodiversity; • The historic field pattern is dominated by pre-18th century irregular fields, linear greens and former common fields. Estate parklands are also scattered across the area; • Historic villages, many designated as Conservation Areas, scattered farmstead, moated sites and halls reflect the River Stort’s historic importance as a site for settlement and industry; • A well-settled landscape, with settlement concentrated in the south around Stansted Mountfitchet and Birchanger.; • The valley provides an important transportation route. The railway, M11 and busy trunk roads cross the south. These contrast with small, often sunken lanes with species-rich verges in the north; • A good network of footpaths includes the promoted route of the Harcamlow Way, Three Forests Way and Flitch Way; • Continuous views are afforded down the valley from higher ground. Elsewhere the landscape is more enclosed by woodland and hedgerows. • The river is often hidden by vegetation within the landscape, with views only possible from properties on its banks, at bridging points or fords;”
6.9.42	Key landscape qualities and sensitivities identified for LCA A2, of relevance, include: • “Ancient and semi-natural woodland, grassland and wetland habitats scattered across the farmed landscape; • The intimate character of the valley floor, with small linear fields of arable farmland, fringed by wet pasture and unimproved wet grassland; • The settlement pattern of historic villages, often located around greens, farmsteads,

	moats and halls that reflect the historic importance of the River Stort;				– Changes in cropping and land uses as a response to climate impacting the character of farmland; – Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape; – Loss of mature trees within parkland landscapes due to increased storms.”
6.9.43	Pressures and forces for change identified for LCA A2 amongst others, include; • Twisting, sometimes tree-lines, lanes, often of ancient origin; • Recreation values of promoted public rights of way providing access within the landscape; • The semi-enclosed character of the valley due to hedgerows, tree belts and woodlands that frame views across and out of the area.”	6.9.44			The landscape guideline for LCA A2 is “The overall strategy for Stort River Valley LCA is to enhance the rural character of the farmed landscape with its historic villages. Seek to conserve the inter-valley and cross-valley views and strengthen landscape patterns by integrating urban fringe elements, conserving semi-natural habitats and restoring hedgerows and tree cover.”
	• “Intensification has also led to past loss of hedgerows and decline on hedgerow management;				LCA B7 Hatfield Forest
	• Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by fences;	6.9.45			LCA B7: Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau is described as “gently undulating plateau farmland. Hatfield Forest, an important area of ancient woodland, is a distinguishing characteristics of this landscape.”
	• Potential for pollution of the river, marshland and ditches from fertilizer and pesticide run off from the surrounding valley sides and farmland plateau;	6.9.46			Key characteristics of LCA B7, of relevance include; • “Outside the forest, intensively farmed arable fields are dominant with a regular field pattern, in which hedgerows have been reduced of replaced by ditches; • ...occasional small woodlands create structure within the arable fields; • Pockets of priority habitat deciduous woodland are found on the edge of the settlements to the south; • To the south [of Hatfield Forest] field patterns are typically post-enclosure; • Historic farmsteads and cottages are scattered across the character area; • Strong recreation with Hatfield Forest which has Open Access, and along the promoted routes the Harcamlow Way and Three Forests Way; • An enclosed character within the forest, with a more open character to the south; • Outside the forest, proximity to Stansted Airport disrupts tranquillity.”
	• Development pressure on the edge of existing settlements, including Stansted Mountfitchet and Bishop’s Stortford, which may be detrimental to rural landscape character;				
	• Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive;				
	• Visual intrusion of road traffic in the floodplain landscape, particularly where the M11 and A1060 cross the area;				
	• The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to: – Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features; – Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests / pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows; – Loss of woodland / trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations; – Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed;	6.9.47			Key landscape qualities and sensitivities identified for LCA B7 of relevance, include; • Dispersed settlement pattern of historic farmsteads, wooded village greens and twisting, often sunken rural lanes; • Enclosed and intimate character within Hatfield Forest, which contrasts with the more open character of the southern arable fields.”
		6.9.48			Pressures and forces for change identified for LCA B7 amongst others, include; • “Expansion of horse grazing close to settlement with fields subdivided into paddocks by

fences;

- Potential for erection of new farm buildings on the higher ground, which may be visually intrusive;
- The landscape is susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including higher average temperatures and drier summers, wetter winters, more frequent winter storms and flooding leading to:
 - Changes to seasonal flooding and flash floods, and an increasing demand for flood defence activity. This could create more physical habitat degradation and introduce potentially detracting features;
 - Changes in woodland / tree species composition due to the spread of pests / pathogens, (particularly phytophthora pathogens and ash die back), including a loss of mature and veteran trees. This could also impact native hedgerows;
 - Loss of woodland / trees due to wind-throw and of dieback in drought prone locations;
 - Spread of non-native and invasive species such as giant hogweed;
 - Changes in cropping and land uses as a response to climate impacting the character of farmland;
 - Drought conditions leading to crop failures, and reduced productivity changing the character of the farmed landscape;
 - Loss of mature trees within parkland landscapes due to increased storms.”

6.9.49

The landscape guideline for LCA B7 is “to conserve and enhance the ancient and ecologically important Hatfield Forest. Protect the relatively undeveloped and tranquil character of the area. In the south seek to integrate new development and strengthen landscape pattern through reinforcing hedgerow boundaries and connecting ancient woodlands.”



Footpath 3 looking over the M11

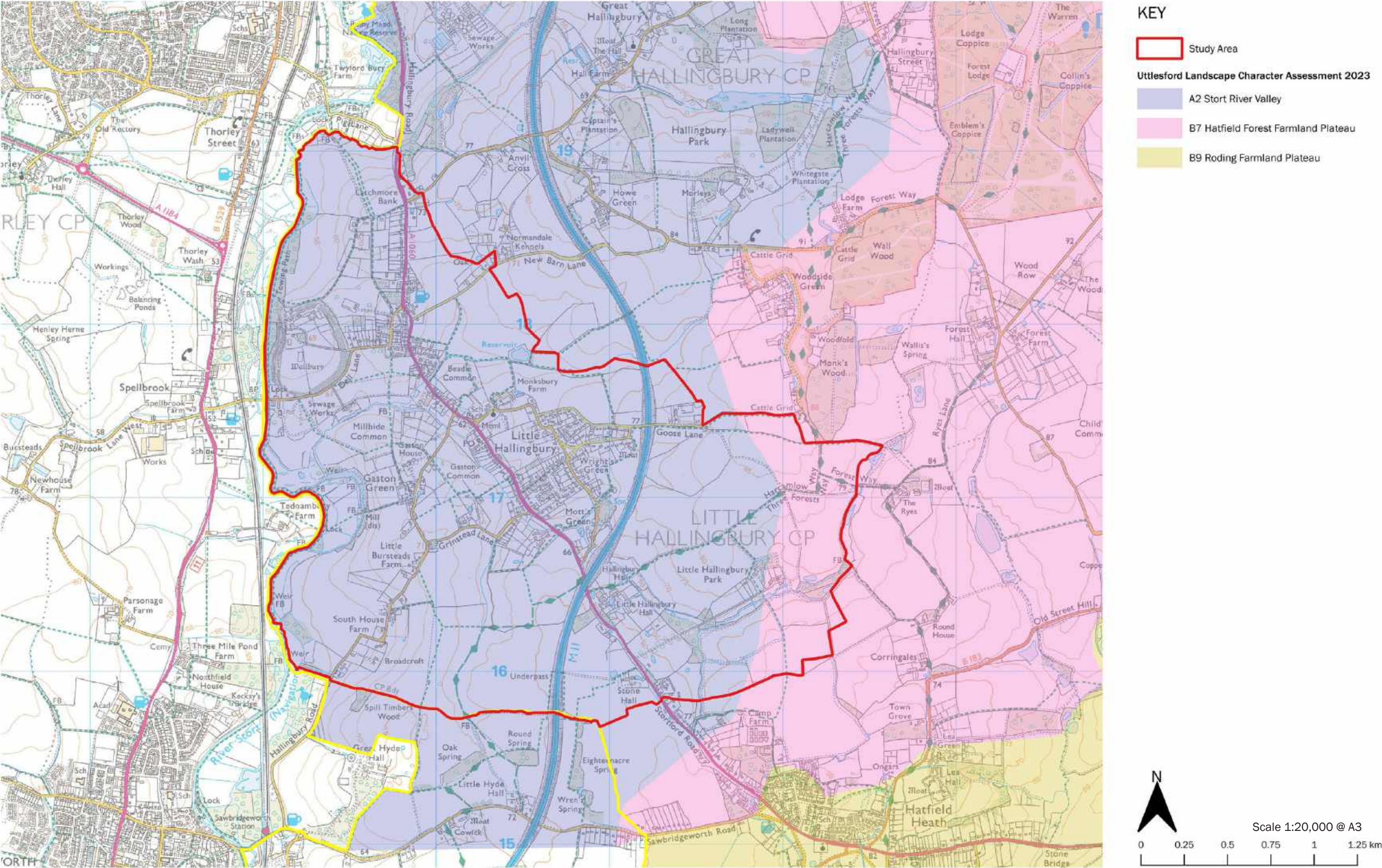


Goose Lane looking over the M11



Footpath 20 looking south across arable fields

Figure 16
District Landscape Character Assessment



6.10 Landscape Sensitivity

6.10.1 A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment was prepared in October 2023 by LUC to review the Landscape Sensitivity Assessments (2021-2022) in light of the updated Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment. The landscape sensitivity assessment considers the relative landscape sensitivities of different landscape areas to potential future residential and employment developments where the exact locations, layout, design or mitigation are unknown. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment was split into three phases;

- Phase 1: Towns and key villages
- Phase 2: Potential new settlement locations; and
- Phase 3: Allocations around other villages

6.10.2 The study areas for the landscape sensitivity assessment have been focused on the settlement fringes of 10 towns and villages across the District. The village of Little Hallingbury did not appear in either Phase 1, 2 or 3 of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. Hatfield Heath to the south east of the Parish and study area was identified in Phase 1. The land in the periphery of the village was subdivided into three parcels HH1, HH2 and HH3. HH3 encompasses the north western edge of Hatfield Heath and with the northern part of the parcel (up to the M11) falling within the Study Area for this Landscape Assessment.

6.10.3 The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment assesses each parcel against six criterion;

- Physical character
- Natural character
- Sense of time depth
- Character and setting of settlement
- Visual character
- Perceptual and scenic qualities

6.10.4 For physical character the assessment noted the “flat to very gently undulating landscape... falling towards a tributary of the River Stort in the north’ and ‘Fields are medium to large scale with an open character” and deemed to be of lower sensitivity

6.10.5 Natural character is identified as “Priority habitat deciduous woodland blocks at Camp Farm and Little Hallingbury Hall...” and “hedgerow border the arable fields and roadsides, with some remnant hedgerow trees” and viewed to be of moderate sensitivity

6.10.6 Sense of time depth describes “Grade II listed buildings line Stortford Road, including at Stone Hall...The barn north-east of Little Hallingbury Hall is Grade II listed and there are archaeological sites at Little Hallingbury Hall” these are of moderate sensitivity. Additionally, “modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns” which is viewed as lower sensitivity.

6.10.7 Character and setting of settlement notes that “The open arable fields of the parcel provide a rural setting to Hatfield Heath, particularly between Sawbridgeworth Road and the B183 Sheering Road. The parcel also provides some separation between Hatfield Heath and Sheering to the south-west” deemed to be moderate sensitivity. The assessment also identifies

“20th century ribbon development along Sawbridgeworth Road and Stortford Road are not well integrated with the surrounding landscape” and seen as lower sensitivity.

6.10.8 Visual character identifies “The parcel has a largely open character, with woodland and trees providing a wooded backdrop to views. The skyline is undeveloped.” seen as higher sensitivity where as “Roadside vegetation on the eastern edge of Sawbridgeworth Road and on Stortford Road creates some enclosure and prevents views of the settlement edge” which is deemed as moderate sensitivity.

6.10.9 Perceptual and scenic quality noted within the assessment are “some light pollution from Hatfield Heath but darker skies away from the settlement edge. Limited public rights of way cross the parcel, providing access to the wider countryside” and “A moderately rural landscape, with human influences within the parcel limited to the road network and the M11 to the north-west” which are noted as moderate sensitivity.

6.10.10 The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment identifies parcel HH3 as being overall of **moderate** sensitivity to residential, mixed use and sports facility development.



View from A1060 approaching Little Hallingbury



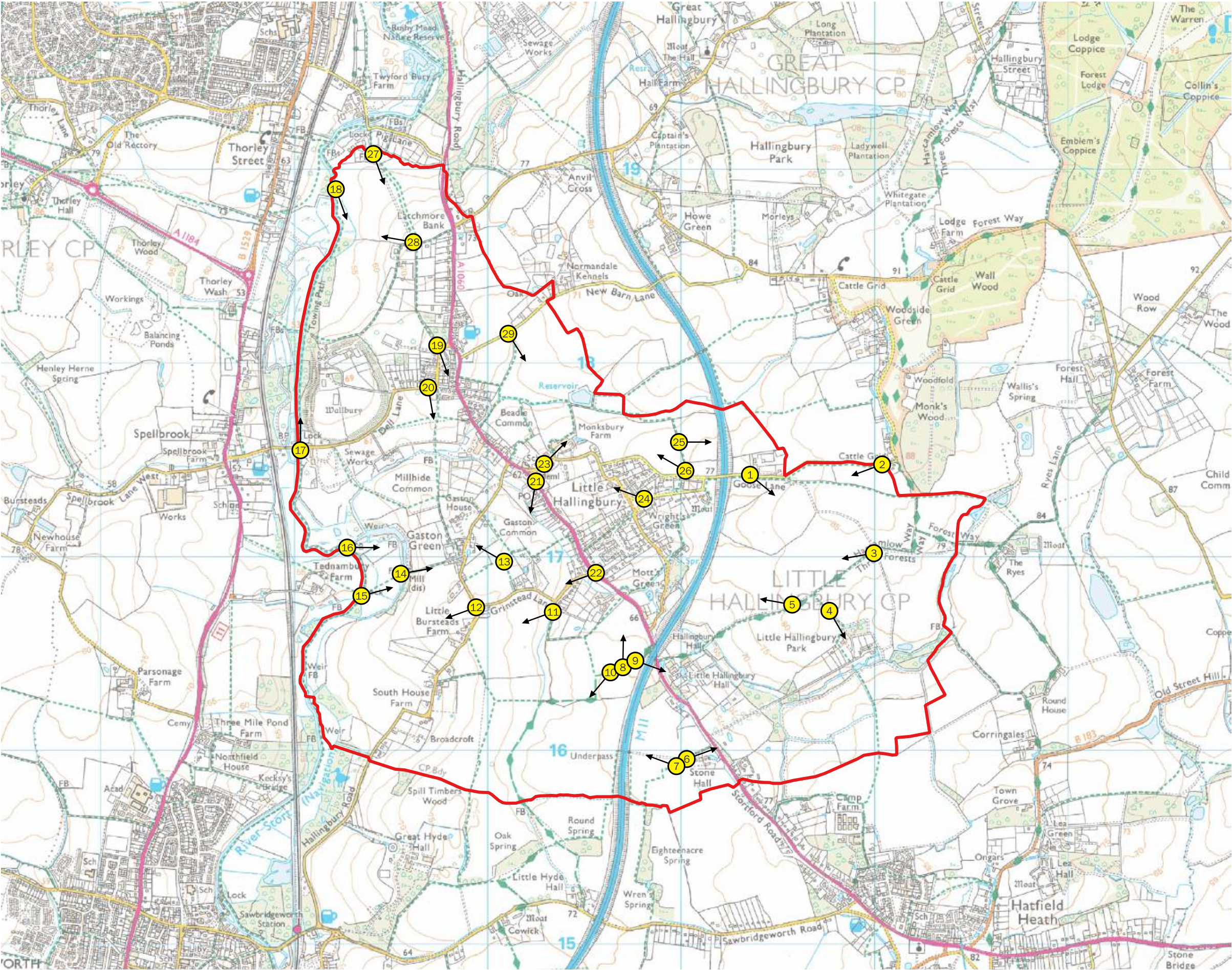
View from A1060 approaching Little Hallingbury, adjacent to Hallingbury Park entrance



7	VISUAL CONTEXT
7.1	General visual amenity
7.1.1	Views of the landscape within the Little Hallingbury Parish are afforded from a mixture of rural country roads, the well-used A1060 (Stortford Road) and from the extensive public rights of way network which criss-crosses the predominantly arable landscape. In some cases public rights of way closely follow the field boundaries of the route of the River Stort and its tributaries. Views are generally a mixture of open and relatively expansive arable farmland to farmland with a greater sense of enclosure where historic field boundaries remain intact. Panoramic views across to neighbouring parishes are appreciated from a number of locations within the Study Area, these views often have wooded horizon lines particularly when looking to the north, towards Hatfield Forest. Views along the River Stort corridor are much more intimate where enclosure is provided by the wet woodland and riparian vegetation on the valley floor.
7.1.2	The landscape surrounding the Parish provides a valuable rural setting to the village of Little Hallingbury. The rolling topography, that generally slopes westwards towards the River Stort, conceals the settlement from the wider landscape. Woodland outside of the Parish also provides an element of containment to the Parish and the village of Little Hallingbury. There are limited views of Little Hallingbury Church and other sensitive heritage assets in the Parish.
7.1.3	To the north along the A1060, the landscape is influenced by the market town of Bishop’s Stortford and development taking place on the towns southern edge. The eastern part of the Parish is influenced by the M11, although raised on a well vegetated embankment, it is a prominent feature in the landscape which divides the Parish. Development at Hatfield Heath to the south of the study area extends slightly into the Parish boundary. As a result of these developments, there are limited opportunities for views of the wider rural landscape from the A1060.
7.1.4	The tributaries of the River Stort meander through the Parish creating small valley formations. In some instances the valleys have an intimate feel with woodland along their course. In other areas the tributaries pass through the arable landscape in ditch formations with limited vegetation.
7.1.5	The landscape in the east of the study area is generally higher in elevation although views of the settlement are limited by the well vegetated M11 embankment.

7.2	Visual analysis
7.2.1	The visual context of the landscape within the Little Hallingbury Parish has been analysed and a number of key views are noted at Figure 17 on page 53. These views have been chosen to represent the visual character of the landscape. All views are taken from publicly accessible locations i.e. roads and the Public Right of Way network.
7.2.2	Views are divided into the following groups and described below: • Views across the wooded tributary farmland in the south east of the Parish • Views across the sloping farmland in the south and south west of the Parish • Views within the River Stort Valley • Views towards and within the village envelope of Little Hallingbury • Views across the sloping farmland to the north and east

Figure 17
Key Views for Landscape Character

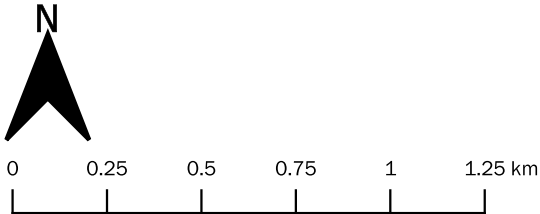


KEY

Study Area

1

 Photo Location



- 7.3

Views across the wooded tributary farmland in the south east of the Parish
- 7.3.1

Within the south eastern part of the study area of Little Hallingbury Parish, there are limited opportunities for views of the settlement edge of Little Hallingbury. There are some glimpsed views of built form at Little Hallingbury Hall settled at the base of the small valley feature surrounded by woodland vegetation. Views of built form on Goose Lane are also possible from the wooded tributary farmland. The well vegetated M11 embankment screens views of the main settlement, although there is the occasional glimpse of vehicle movements along the M11 where there are gaps in the vegetation.
- 7.3.2

The Harcamlow Way and Three Forests Way (long distance walking routes) is the main footpath link crossing the landscape to the south east of the Site which provides the visual public access through the wooded tributary farmland. The Harcamlow Way and Three Forests Way follows field boundaries with varying levels boundary vegetation changing the visual experience as users move across the landscape.
- 7.3.3

Other public rights of way in the area connect to the long distance walking routes, public footpath FP 16 connects the long distance walking routes to Hatfield Heath (outside the study area) passing through built form at Hallingbury Park and across the tributary of the River Stort. Views in this area are much more intimate and enclosed by woodland vegetation along the tributary.



VP 1 - View looking east along Goose Lane



VP 2 - View from footpath 10 looking south west across arable fields



VP 3 - View from Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way looking west across arable fields



VP 4 - View from footpath 16 looking south east towards residential properties at Little Hallingbury Park



VP 5 - View from Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way looking west towards the Little Hallingbury settlement edge

7.4 **Views across the sloping farmland in the south and south west of the Parish**

- 7.4.1 Within the southern and south western part of the study area of Little Hallingbury Parish views look across the sloping farmland towards the well vegetated River Stort. Upper portions of residential properties within the village are visible when looking northwards from elevated parts of the sloping farmland along with the church spire in Little Hallingbury. Other built form at Gaston Green and along Sawbridgeworth Road are also visible at various points in the landscape. Where varying levels of vegetation is scattered throughout the village, built form appears to be nestled within a heavily vegetated village.
- 7.4.2 A network of public rights of way criss-cross the landscape to the south and south west of the Site crossing through larger arable fields and travelling along the field boundaries. The visual experience differs along the public rights of way. In some instances where public rights of way follow field boundaries, hedgerows prevent views across the landscape. The M11, its infrastructure and vehicles moving along the M11 is visible when in close proximity.
- 7.4.3 In views towards the village from public footpaths FP 17 and 26, equestrian development on the southern edge of the village is prominent in the foreground of views. For views from bridleways 13 and 27, the church spire is just visible between the wooded backdrop of the village. Long distance views of the edges of Sawbridgeworth and Bishop’s Stortford are possible across the sloping farmland to the south west and north west.



VP 6 - View from footpath 32 looking east towards Stone Hall

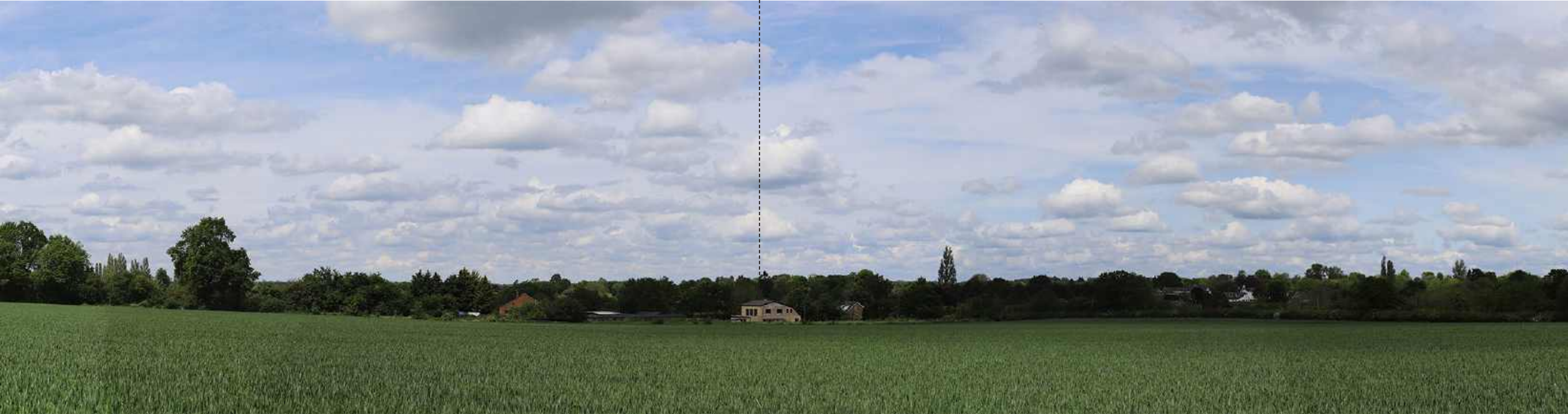
Vehicles moving along elevated M11

Stone Hall



VP 7 - View from footpath 32 looking north west towards the M11

Development off A1060



VP 8 - View from Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way looking south west towards the Little Hallingbury settlement edge



VP 9 - View from Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way looking south east towards the M11



VP 10 - View from Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way looking south west across arable fields



VP 11 - View looking west from a local walking route across arable fields



VP 12 - View from junction of Sawbridgeworth Road and Grinstead Lane looking west.

Residential properties in Gaston Green



VP 13 - View from footpath 24 looking west towards Gaston Green

7.5 Views within the River Stort Valley

- 7.5.1 The River Stort runs along the western edge of the study area and the Parish boundary of Little Hallingbury. It provides links along the waterway from Bishop's Stortford to Sawbridgeworth. There are several tributaries connecting to the River Stort which have influenced the surrounding landscape.
- 7.5.2 The Stort River Valley is lined with woodland and riparian vegetation which contains views to within the immediate vicinity. Due to the low-lying topography and enclosing vegetation, views into the River Stort Valley are limited.
- 7.5.3 Public footpaths FP 38, 39 and 41 follows the route for the river along the old Tow Path. From this route there are views of Gll* Hallingbury Mill and various locks along the River. Whilst built form in the village envelope is not visible, there are views of built form, across the river to the west.
- 7.5.4 Dell Lane passes over the River Stort as one of the routes into Little Hallingbury from the west. The road is narrow on a gentle bridge with low brick walls on either side, allowing for appreciation of the waterway. Built form on Dell Lane where it crosses the river reduces the tranquillity in this area.



VP 14 - View from footpath 22 looking north west towards Hallingbury Mill



VP 15 - View from footpath 41 looking north east along the banks of River Stort



VP 16 - View from footpath 38 looking north along the banks of River Stort

Aqualign Studio swimming pool



VP 17 - View from footpath 38 looking north along the banks of River Stort



VP 18 - View from footpath 39 looking south along the banks of River Stort

- 7.6

Views towards and within the village envelope of Little Hallingbury
- 7.6.1

The village envelope of Little Hallingbury contains the majority of housing and services within the village, such as Little Hallingbury Village Hall and St Mary the Virgin, Little Hallingbury, Church. St Mary the Virgin Church is hidden within the settlement, views are only possible of the church when in close proximity. Some views of the church spire are possible from the wider landscape.
- 7.6.2

Within the village, there are various housing typologies. In the southern extents of the village, around Wrights Green, the visual experience is much more suburban where residential properties have large landscaped driveways and front gardens with gates at driveway entrance. Residential properties in the northern extents of the village tend to be of similar design. Whereas, residential properties in the centre of the village, tend to front directly onto the A1060, with much smaller front gardens composed of grassland and maintained hedgerows or low walls providing some separation between the highway and private spaces.
- 7.6.3

There are a number of opportunities for views of the settlement edge of Little Hallingbury from the network of public rights of way that criss-cross the landscape to the immediate south and west of the village.



VP 19 - View looking south along Dell Lane



VP 20 - View from footpath 20 looking south across arable fields from the settlement edge



VP 21 - View from A1060 looking south towards the Little Hallingbury Village Hall

Properties along Grinstead Lane



VP 22 - View looking west along Grinstead Lane

Maltings Cottages

Maltings Farm

Monksbury Farm



VP 23 - View from Wrights Green Lane looking north west towards Maltings Farm



VP 24 - View looking west from Wrights Green Lane

7.7 **Views across the sloping farmland to the north and north east**

- 7.7.1 Views across the sloping farmland within the north and north east of the study area look across the westerly sloping farmland to the settlement edge. Built form within the village appear within a wooded backdrop to the village. Residential properties on Goose Lane, overlooking the arable farmland, are prominent in the landscape. Hedgerows along field boundaries assist with assimilating these properties into the landscape.
- 7.7.2 Views looking in a north easterly direction from this area look across the gently undulating landscape beyond the Study Area. There is limited built form in to the north east of this area, although, the M11, associated infrastructure and vehicles moving along the transport route are readily visible within the landscape.

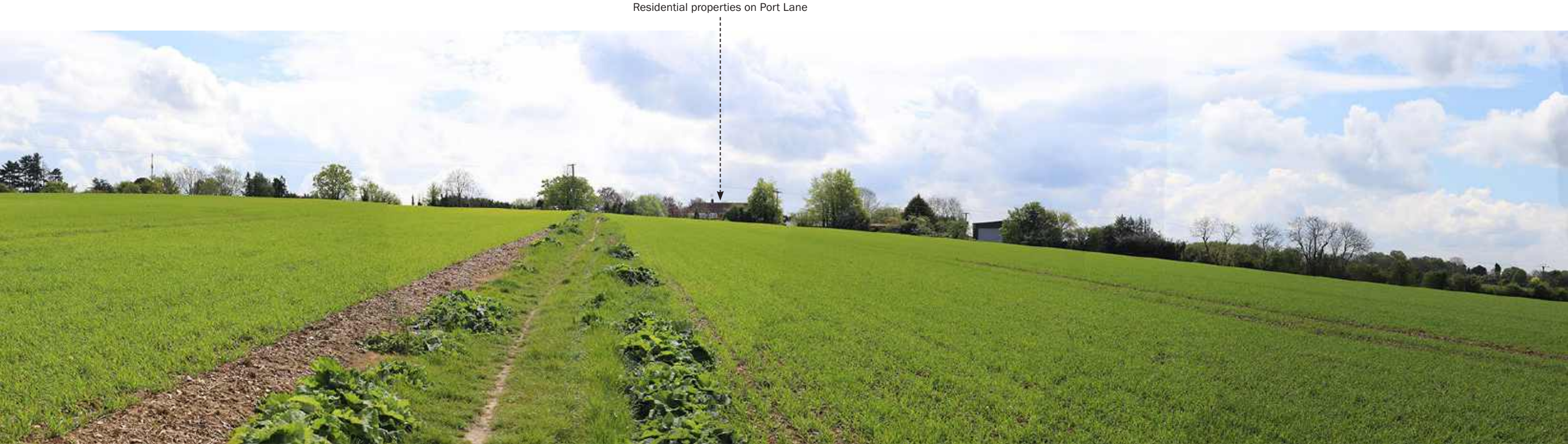
The M11 behind vegetation



VP 25 - View from footpath 1 looking east towards the M11



VP 26 - View from Goose Lane looking west



VP 27- View from footpath 40 looking south across arable fields towards the settlement edge of Little Hallingbury

New commercial development on the edge of Bishop's Stortford



VP 28- View from footpath looking north across arable fields to the built edge of Bishop's Stortford

Residential properties on Hatch Green



VP 29 - View from footpath 5 looking south east across arable fields to the settlement edge of Little Hallingbury



View looking south across pond at Gaston Green

8 IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL PARISH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS (LPLCAS)

8.1 Identification of LPLCAS

8.1.1 A combination of landscape baseline desktop study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation (Section 3.2 ‘Information sources’ above refers) was used to divide the landscape of Little Hallingbury into 9no. broad parcels of land with common characteristics, hereafter referred to as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs).

8.1.2 The parcels were defined initially by desktop research, and then adjusted and refined subsequently in the light of findings in the field and through consultation, as necessary. Analysis is typically at the field level grain/scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.

8.2 Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs)

8.2.1 This study has identified 9no. LPLCAs within the Little Hallingbury Parish;

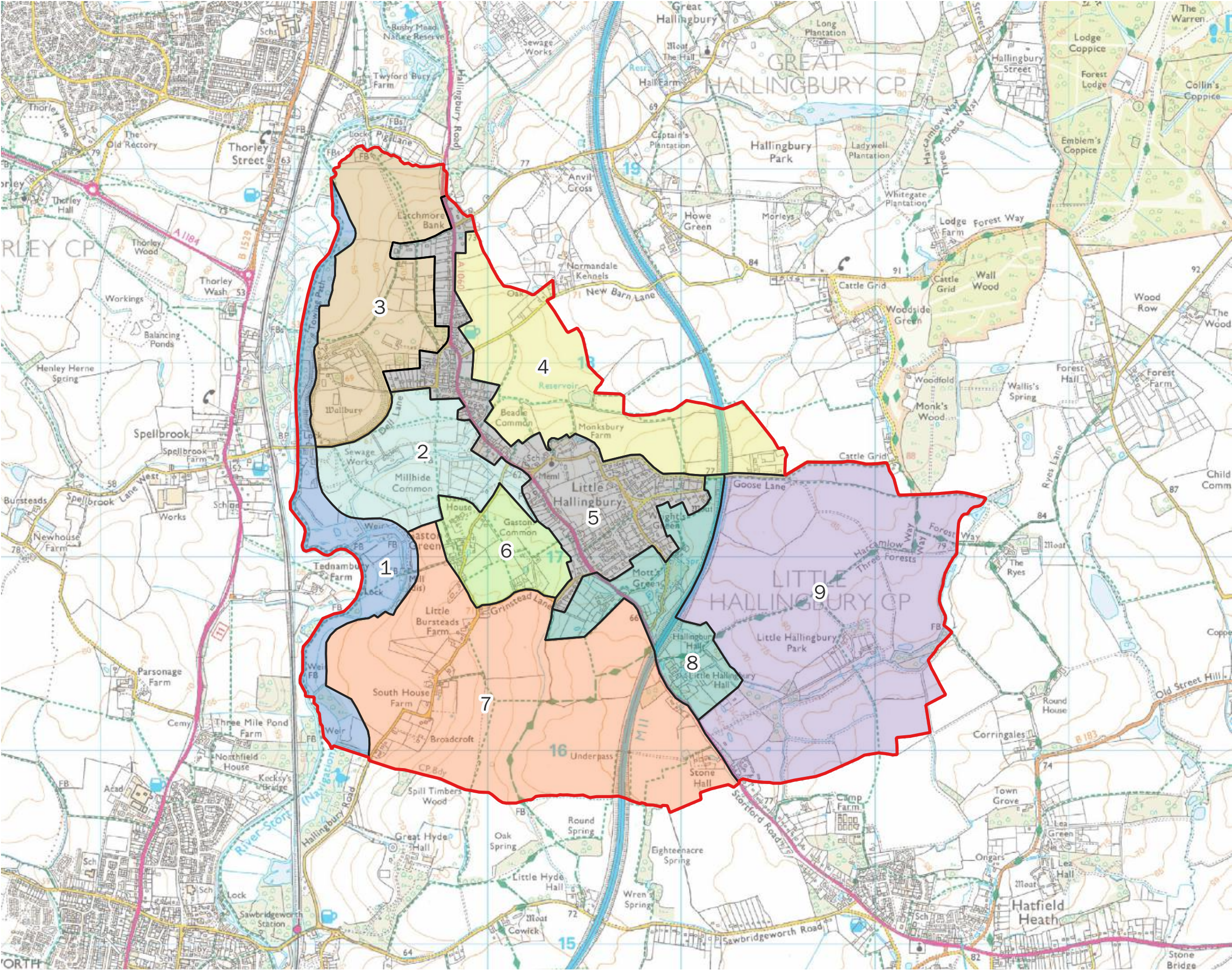
- LPLCA no 1 - River Stort Valley
- LPLCA no 2 - River Stort Tributary Farmland
- LPLCA no 3 - Latchmore Bank Sloping Farmland
- LPLCA no 4 - Beadle Sloping Farmland
- LPLCA no 5 - Little Hallingbury Village
- LPLCA no 6 - Gaston Green Estate Farmland
- LPLCA no 7 - River Stort Tributary Sloping Farmland
- LPLCA no 8 - Little Hallingbury Hall & Motts Green Pasture
- LPLCA no 9 - Little Hallingbury Park Wooded Tributary Farmland

8.3 LPLCA Analysis

8.3.1 A range of landscape and visual criteria were identified and assessed in order to evaluate both the landscape and visual sensitivity of the landscape, parcel by parcel (refer to **Appendix B - Proformas**). These were combined to provide an overall landscape sensitivity where “Existing Landscape Character Sensitivity + Visual Sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity” and are defined as high, medium or low (Section 3.1.2 ‘Assessment of Overall Sensitivity refers).

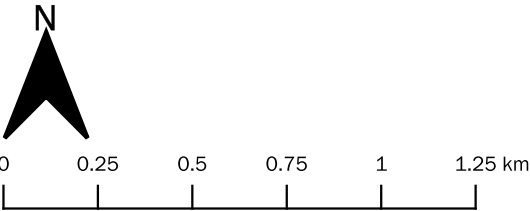


Figure 18
Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs)



KEY

- Study Area
- 1 River Stort Valley
- 2 River Stort Tributary Farmland
- 3 Latchmore Bank Sloping Farmland
- 4 Beadle Sloping Farmland
- 5 Little Hallingbury Village
- 6 Gaston Green Estate Farmland
- 7 River Stort Tributary Sloping Farmland
- 8 Little Hallingbury Hall & Motts Green Pasture
- 9 Little Hallingbury Park Wooded Tributary Farmland





9

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

9.1

Landscape sensitivity

9.1.1

The overall landscape for each LPLCA is shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A and are depicted in **Figure 19 - Landscape Sensitivity** and summarised below:

High overall landscape sensitivity

9.1.2

Evaluation of the landscape and visual factors revealed that the following parcels have a High overall landscape sensitivity:

LPLCA no 1 - River Stort Valley

LPLCA no 3 - Latchmore Bank Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 4 - Beadle Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 5 - Little Hallingbury Village

LPLCA no 6 - Gaston Green Estate Farmland

LPLCA no 7 - River Stort Tributary Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 9 - Little Hallingbury Park Wooded Tributary Farmland

Medium overall landscape sensitivity

9.1.3

Evaluation of the landscape and visual factors revealed that the following parcels have a Medium overall landscape sensitivity:

LPLCA no 2 - River Stort Tributary Farmland

LPLCA no 8 - Little Hallingbury Hall & Motts Green Pasture

Low overall landscape sensitivity

9.1.4

Evaluation of the landscape and visual factors revealed that there were no parcels within the study area of a Low landscape sensitivity.

9.2

Landscape strategy objectives

9.2.1

The assessment of Landscape Sensitivity shows that the majority of Little Hallingbury Parish has an overall High sensitivity which reflects its rural landscape character and historic integrity. Two areas have been assessed as Medium Sensitivity, LPLCA 2 where approximately 50% is given over to equestrian development and LPLCA 8 where the M11 passes through the Parish on an embankment. These areas have a weaker landscape condition and weaker time depth. Tranquility is also reduced due to the audibility of the M11 in LPLCA 8.

9.2.2

General landscape strategy objectives which relate to the overall landscape sensitivity of each LPLCA are to conserve, enhance or restore the landscape through effective planning and positive land management measures, as follows:

High overall landscape sensitivity

Conserve - seek to protect and enhance the positive landscape features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

Medium overall landscape sensitivity

Enhance - seek to improve and enhance the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features are absent or landscape characteristics are weak.

Low overall landscape sensitivity

Restore - seek opportunities to restore or create new landscapes for multiple benefits of nature conservation, recreation and landscape interests in areas where landscape character has been degraded or lost.

9.3

Suggested land management guidelines

9.3.1

The land management suggestions for each LPLCA are based on consideration of both the inherent characteristics of the landscape and the general concerns regarding the challenges to the condition of those characteristics in the landscape today.

9.3.2

Suggested land management guidelines (LPLCA specific) are shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A.

General land management guideline - applicable to all areas

- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedgerows within the Study Area;
- Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattered where appropriate to local landscape character, and strengthen through planting where gappy and depleted;
- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of pasture and meadows;
- Use traditional management practices where possible;
- Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats;
- Narrow, single track roads could be designated as Quiet Lanes





View looking south west from Grinstead Lane

10 LANDSCAPE PLANNING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

10.1	Background
10.1.1	This chapter is intended to assess whether any future residential development(s) can be appropriately absorbed into the landscape with the Little Hallingbury Parish, and, if so, where, at what scale and with what associated mitigation measures, to ensure that no unacceptable effects on the landscape result and its special qualities are maintained and, where opportunities exist, enhanced.
10.1.2	Within the Little Hallingbury Parish there is potential development pressure as follows: - Limited development, within the defined village envelope of Little Hallingbury, development outside the existing built areas of the village will only be permitted where it is allocated by the Local Plan. Where there is a presumption for unallocated development to be limited to providing local needs for the community. - Core Policy 3: Settlement Hierarchy - Development of equestrian fields adjoining the village envelope.
10.2	Landscape Planning Issues
10.2.1	The potential to alleviate the effects of any potential built development on each parcel was considered, based on the ability of the landscape to provide effective mitigation across the short - medium - long term. The consideration of mitigation was undertaken as part of the fieldwork, and is based on factors such as scale, enclosure, pattern, type and maturity of vegetation, movement and visibility of each parcel.
10.2.2	Specific landscape planning and management issues for each LPLCA are shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A and are summarised below for the development pressure identified above:

	Limited development, within the defined village envelope of Little Hallingbury
10.2.3	Consider the visual impact of small scale residential development and development within the curtilage of properties within the village envelope on: - The setting of Listed Buildings within the village envelope of Little Hallingbury; - Rural views from public rights of way, particularly views out of the village envelope across the rural countryside of the Little Hallingbury Parish and adjacent Parish landscapes.
	Development of equestrian fields adjoining the village envelope
10.2.4	There are a number of equestrian fields adjoining the village envelope of Little Hallingbury. Although there is a presumption against development and the New Local Plan for the Uttlesford District states that there is no requirement for housing in the village of Little Hallingbury as the Village is in Green Belt, however there could be a risk of future conversion of equestrian paddocks to residential and commercial purposes. Therefore considerations should include: - The potential for coalescence (perceived or physical) with Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and Hatfield Heath - The visual impact of new development upon the rural countryside adjoining the Parish - The potential loss of small pastoral fields - The setting of Listed Buildings within the countryside and on the village edges - Rural view from public rights of way, particularly views out of the village envelope across the rural countryside of the Little Hallingbury Parish and adjacent Parish landscapes - The pressure of increased traffic on rural lanes



View looking north from public footpath 40

10.3 **Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines**

10.3.1 Suggested landscape planning guidelines (LPLCA specific) are shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A and are summarised below:

General landscape planning guidelines - applicable to all areas

- Conserve and protect the rural and undeveloped character of the landscape within the Little Hallingbury Parish
- Conserve the nucleated character of Gaston Green by discouraging new development or development within the curtilage of properties
- Explore possible opportunities to improve existing visually poor urban edges
- Provide traditional locally sensitive boundary treatments, to integrate potential future development into the local context
- Protect views across the rural landscape from the village
- Conserve and enhance the historic field patterns and existing hedgerows
- Protect small pastoral fields, paddocks and meadows. Avoid conversion of equestrian paddocks to residential or commercial development
- Consider cumulative effects of developments on landscape character and visual amenity
- Consider potential coalescence (perceived and physical) with Bishop’s Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and Hatfield Heath
- Incorporate green infrastructure that provides opportunities for wildlife, public access and climate change adaption which screens intrusive urban influence (especially on the periphery of settlements), with the use of substantial and appropriate landscaping, such as native woodland planting, earthworks and green roofs.



View looking north east from public footpath 21



View looking east along Pondfields Close



View looking east along Wrights Green Lane



PRIVATE
No public
right of
way

PRIVATE
No public
right of
way

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.0.1 Little Hallingbury is a Parish situated within the Uttlesford District of Essex. It lies to the south east of Bishop's Stortford and includes the village of Little Hallingbury. Little Hallingbury Parish council is currently working on the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 11.0.2 Development within the Little Hallingbury Parish is restricted by policies within the Uttlesford District Local Plan (2005). Uttlesford District is in the process of preparing a New Local Plan where the Regulation 18 consultation period closed at the end of 2023. The Regulation 18 Draft restricts development within the Little Hallingbury Parish through the Core and Development Policies.
- 11.0.3 Little Hallingbury Parish Council commissioned Liz Lake Associates to undertake a locally based Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and landscape sensitivity assessment, of the landscape of the Little Hallingbury Parish, which forms the project area for the Neighbourhood Plan. The boundary of the study area is contiguous with the parish boundary and is shown on Figure 1 - Study Area.
- 11.0.4 The rural landscape of the Little Hallingbury Parish generally slopes in a westerly direction towards the River Stort on the western edge of the Parish with some gentle undulations and comprises a series of small valley formations with tributaries of the River Stort found at the base of these formations. It is a predominantly agricultural landscape with fields varying in shape and size. Often larger scale fields are found to the south and south east of the village. Smaller fields are located closer to the settlement edges. Fields are bound by hedgerow with hedgerow trees, where the historic field pattern has been lost, there is evidence of remnant hedgerow trees. There is limited woodland within the parish. Where woodland is present it follows the banks of the River Stort in the northern part of the Parish and lines the route of a tributary crossing through the landscape in the south of the village near Little Hallingbury Hall. Although there is limited woodland cover within the Parish, the settlement is often seen against a wooded backdrop or within a wooded setting where woodland in the wider landscape knits together. Key characteristics which contribute towards the landscape's special qualities include its:
- Undeveloped rural character, with some areas of considerable time-depth; historic field patterns, extensive public rights of way network, and mature trees and hedgerows which all provide a strong sense of place, integrity and historic and cultural value;
 - Visual amenity value, with attractive panoramic views across the countryside as well as more intimate, enclosed views within the River Stort Valley. Closer-range views of the edge of Little Hallingbury village and listed buildings;
 - Biodiversity value; and
 - Agricultural value
- 11.0.5 The assessment draws on the existing published landscape character assessment for Uttlesford District Council and on the Uttlesford Historic Environment Characterisation Project (see sections below for further detail). Both documents are essential parts of the existing,

adopted local planning policy and have therefore been important in the development of this parish based study which seeks, where relevant, to further sub-divide the area into a finer grain of characterisation.

- 11.0.6 This study provides a clear and concise evaluation of various discrete geographical areas/parcels of land which have a recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the area. The landscape's biodiversity and agricultural values which contribute towards its special qualities have also been identified. These parish level landscape character areas have been analysed to determine their overall sensitivity.
- 11.0.7 The results of this assessment are to form part of the evidence base that Little Hallingbury Parish Council will use when compiling its Neighbourhood Development Plan. The study is intended to assist the Parish Council in making informed decisions to ensure that no unacceptable effects on the landscape result due to construction in future and its special qualities are maintained and where possible, enhanced.
- 11.0.8 A combination of landscape baseline desktop study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation (Section 3.2 'Information sources' above refers) was used to divide the landscape of Little Hallingbury into 9no. broad parcels of land with common characteristics, referred to as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs).
- 11.0.9 The parcels were defined initially by desktop research, and then adjusted and refined subsequently in the light of findings in the field and through consultation, as necessary. Analysis is typically at the field level grain/scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.
- 11.0.10 This study has identified 9 Local Parish landscape Character Areas within Little Hallingbury Parish:
- LPLCA no 1: River Stort Valley
 - LPLCA no 2: River Stort Tributary Farmland
 - LPLCA no 3: Latchmore Bank Sloping Farmland
 - LPLCA no 4: Beadle Sloping Farmland
 - LPLCA no 5: Little Hallingbury Village
 - LPLCA no 6: Gaston Green Estate Farmland
 - LPLCA no 7: River Stort Tributary Sloping Farmland
 - LPLCA no 8: Little Hallingbury Hall & Motts Green Pasture
 - LPLCA no 9: Little Hallingbury Park Wooded Tributary Farmland
- 11.0.11 Descriptions of each Local Parish Landscape Character Areas are provided in Appendix A.
- 11.0.12 In conclusion, the landscape and visual character of Little Hallingbury has been assessed to have a High overall landscape sensitivity in most areas where a policy of enhancing and reinforcing the rural and undeveloped character of the landscape is required.
- 11.0.13 In LPLCAs 2 and 8, every opportunity should be taken to restore and replace lost landscape features and field patterns to strengthen the contribution to local landscape character.



View looking east along Wrights Green Lane

11 GLOSSARY

Assets	Elements that are considered to be of valuable resource and contributes positively to in the landscape.	Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/ or human factors.	Stakeholders	The whole constituency of individuals and groups who have an interest in a subject or place.
Baseline studies	Work done to determine and describe the environment conditions against which any future changes can be measured or predicted and assessed	Landscape change	A key driver of changes in the natural environment by human and/ or natural factors such as climate, biodiversity, construction, agriculture.	Time depth	Historical layering – the idea of landscape as a ‘palimpsest’, a much written-over manuscript.
Characterisation	The process of identifying areas of similar landscape character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.	Landscape character	A distinct, recognisable consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.	Tranquillity	A state of calm and quietude associated with peace, considered to be a significant asset of landscape.
Characteristics	Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a contribution to distinctive landscape character.	Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type	Visual Amenity	The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.
Consultation	A process of undergoing formal consulting by a competent authority on the scope of the Assessment.	Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)	The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use settlement pattern and perception and aesthetic attributes.	Visual receptors	Individuals and/ or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.
Elements	Individual parts which make up the landscape, such as, for example, trees, hedges and buildings.	Landscape Character Types (LCTs)	Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas I different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they have broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.		
Enhancement	Proposals that seek to improve the landscape resource and the visual amenity of the wider setting, over and above its baseline conditions.	Landscape (quality) condition	A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.		
Features	Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements in the landscape, such as tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines OR a particular aspect of the project proposal	Landscape receptors	Defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by development.		
Geographical Information System (GIS)	A system that captures, stores, analyses, manages and presents data linked to location. It links spatial information to a digital database.	Landscape value	The relative value that is attracted to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.		
Green Belt	A policy, and land-use zone designation used in land-use planning to retain areas of largely undeveloped, wild, or agricultural land surrounding or neighbouring urban areas.	Mitigation	Measures to avoid, minimize, rectify, eliminate impacts over time, and compensating for remaining unavoidable impacts as a result of development		
Heritage	The historic environment and especially valued assets and qualities such as historic buildings, and cultural traditions.	Perceptual/ scenic qualities	The physical state of the landscape interpreted by the combination of our sensory (that we receive through our senses) and cognition (our knowledge and understanding gained from many sources and experiences).		
Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)	The identification and interpretation of the historic dimension of the present-day landscape or townscape within a given area.	Sensitivity	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.		
Land use	What the land is used for, based on broad categories of functional land cover, such as urban and industrial use and the different types of agriculture and forestry.	Scope	The identification of the issues to be addressed by the Assessment. It is a method of ensuring that the Assessment focuses on the important issues and avoids those that are less significant.		



View looking west at Wrights Green