

# **Stutton Neighbourhood Plan**

## Parish Landscape Study: Character and Sensitivity Appraisal

Final version - December 2021



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Thanks to the NP Working Party for  
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OS mapping used is provided under  
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This report is also supported by a separate Important Views document.

# 1 Introduction



1. Stutton Parish Council appointed a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party and are in the process of preparing their Neighbourhood Plan. The Working Party commissioned this landscape assessment in December 2020 to assist them in the development of their Plan and with managing change in the future.
2. The aims of the assessment are:
  - To provide a parish character assessment as a framework for understanding and defining the character of the landscape around the settlement edges. It focuses on the rural fringes of the settlement as this is most likely where pressure for change and development will be felt.
  - To identify aspects of landscape and visual sensitivity in the different parts of the village fringes. The results of this will help avoid harm to its more sensitive areas. It will also support Site selection for potential site allocation within the Neighbourhood Plan.
  - To support appraisal of important views to help form policy around protecting particularly valued views within the village. An Important Views assessment forms a separate document.
3. This document will be useful to the parish and district councils in managing future applications for development, to landowners to understand the parameters which might limit changes in land use, and to householders or developers considering development.
4. The Village Design Guide (by AECOM) should also be used to arrive at appropriate design responses. The aim is to ensure Stutton retains its character and high quality sensitive design prevails in future.

## 2 Landscape History

### Introduction

1. Stutton is a rural parish in the district of Babergh about 8 miles south of Ipswich and 15 miles northeast of Colchester. In 2019 it was recorded as having 409 homes with a population of 812 in the 2011 census.
2. The parish occupies a roughly hexagonal-shaped area of gently sloping valleysides and interfluvial plateau, a sub-peninsula of the Shotley peninsula. Its boundaries are often formed of water courses; it adjoins the wide estuary of the River Stour to the south, and the Samford Valley to the west. To the northeast it meet the edges of Alton Water, the flooded valley of the Tattingstone Brook, now the largest body of inland water in Suffolk.
3. The combination of attractive valley topography and opportunities for views over open water are very much part of Stutton's identity and have shaped its historic development and character. It has a notable collection of grand properties, including Tudor houses, in sometimes extensive designed parklands, which took advantage of the highly scenic shores of the estuary. The combination of extensive parklands and estate farmlands are a strong component of the character of the landscape to the south of the village. There are many fine trees scattered around the parish, particularly oaks, and many footpaths from which to appreciate them.
4. The landscape setting is both sensitive and valued. The southern half of the parish is designated in the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which was extended in summer 2020. The northern half of the parish sits within the 'setting' of the AONB and is in the AONB Group's APA (Additional Project Area). The estuary and shoreline includes many habitats including beach, deciduous woodland, grazing, and intertidal mudflats. It provides wildlife habitats of international importance. It is a dynamic shoreline landscape with ongoing processes of flooding, siltation, and erosion. Mature shoreline trees lying prone across the beaches after cliff erosion is a distinctive local sight. Sounds of birds and lapping water and wind in the trees are part of the experience along the shore.
5. The settlement extends for about a mile along the B1080, which bisects the parish. The village has an overall strong linear form with settlement clustered either side of the B1080 which runs east-west, linking to Holbrook and Brantham respectively. The linear pattern also extends in short spurs northwards and southward along a grid-like arrangement narrow lanes that run perpendicular to the main road.

6. The settlement has two official clusters in terms of the Local Plan. The central main settlement cluster of Stutton is accompanied by a second cluster to the west, known as Upper Street. On the ground these clusters are separated by an undeveloped gap to the west of Bentley Lane. The village is also surrounded by a small number of scattered farms and, to the south, of course, its large manor houses.

### Topography and hydrology

7. The centre of the parish, where the settlement is located, is fairly flat plateau. The highest points are around 33m AOD along the route of the Bentley Road in the northeast of the parish. Land falls significantly to the south, reaching almost to sea level at the estuary shoreline. It also falls to the west, into the valley of the Stutton Brook (known as the Samford valley) which takes a meandering course to the estuary. The brook has eroded some relatively steep slopes leading to some scenic views across rolling countryside on the western edges of the parish. A series of streams and drains drain into the Stutton Brook, and directly into the Stour, adding further diversity to the topography along the valley edges.
8. Land also falls gently towards the edge of the reservoir to the north - the edge of the old Tattingstone Brook valley. Alton Water was formed in the valley of the Tattingstone Brook to provide for rising water demand in and round Ipswich. Construction began in



Aerial view of the sailing centre at Alton Water

Photo: Joh Feilding

## 2 Landscape History continued:-

1974 and the 20m high dam across the valley, on the edge of Stutton parish, was built from local London clay. The resulting 600 acre man-made lake took 13 years to fill from water pumped from the River Gipping, as well as the natural aquifers that supplied the Tattlingstone Brook.

9. The flooded valley had been sparsely populated but held some historic buildings, notably Alton Hall, 17th century manor house, the 16th century Tattlingstone Hall Farm, and the Alton Watermill, which was built at the turn of the 19th century. Alton Mill was dismantled and moved to the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket where it still stands
10. Today, Alton Water is a commercial leisure enterprise as a Water Park offering sailing, a cafe, bike hire and, lately, a campsite. It also provides a substantial public amenity with footpaths, picnic areas, wildlife reserves and hides, attracting thousands of visitors annually. Residents of Stutton consider the centre to be a much valued local amenity but are also wary of the impact of expansion of its visitor facilities. However, parking, so often a problem in rural 'honey pot' sites, is plentiful at the centre although the recent addition of a barrier and charges has actually resulted in increased roadside parking on Holbrook Road and Alton Hall Lane. Stutton's other businesses such as the shop and its two pubs no doubt benefit from the influx of visitors, particularly in the warmer months.
11. The circular route around Alton Water also connect into a good network of footpaths

that criss-cross the parish. These link down to the estuary at either end of the parish creating a further highly scenic circular walk option. Stutton is particularly well served by footpaths with high visual amenity value.

### Geology and soils

12. The area has complex geology where deeply buried chalk bedrock is covered by glacial deposits. The area is underlain by Red Crag Formation - sands overlain by superficial deposits. The sub-soils of crag, clay, sand and gravels have long been exploited. There are strata of alluvial clay on the valleyside which were ideal for brick-making in past centuries and brickyards were found along the north bank of the Stour Estuary. 'Septaria', a crumbly, concretionary clay used for render, and flint were also available locally and provided vernacular building materials. There is a geological SSSI along the shoreline where interglacial deposits can be seen in the low cliffs west of Stutton Ness. Mammalian fossil remains have been found here including lion, straight tusked elephant, horse, giant deer and bison.
13. The surface layer soils are a mix of loams - deep well drained fine loam, coarse loam and sandy soils, locally flinty and in places over gravel. The fertile, light soils on the peninsula are well known for their high quality and agricultural value. There are some areas which overlie clay which are less well draining and which can be seasonally waterlogged. These are more likely to be indicated by the presence of pastures.

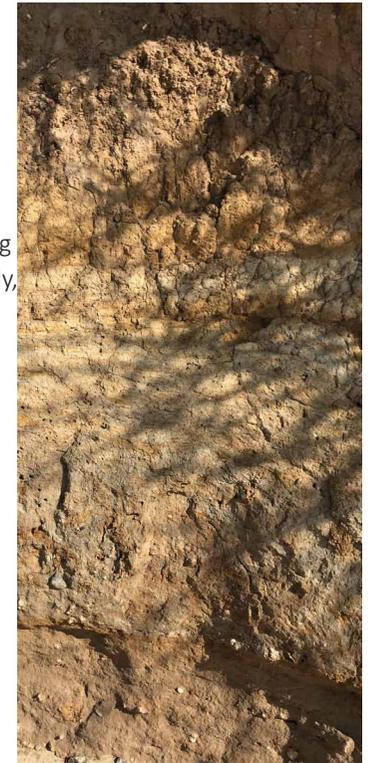


Photo: Andrew Hill



*The shores of the reservoir offers scenic walks to its many visitors*

## Wildlife

14. The River Stour estuary is a 'Ramsar' site (an internationally important wetland wildlife habitat), a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) it is an extremely important, protected environment for both resident and migratory birds. Birds such as oystercatchers, dunlins, black-tailed godwits and dark-bellied brent geese are often seen and heard along the shoreline.
15. Alton Water is also valued for its bird habitat for species such as Common Tern in summer and as a refuge/roost for wildfowl during winter months. In the north of the parish Argent Manor Wood is an ancient woodland, listed in the Suffolk Heritage Explorer (Monument record STU 035). Along with Alton Water, it is a County Wildlife Site.

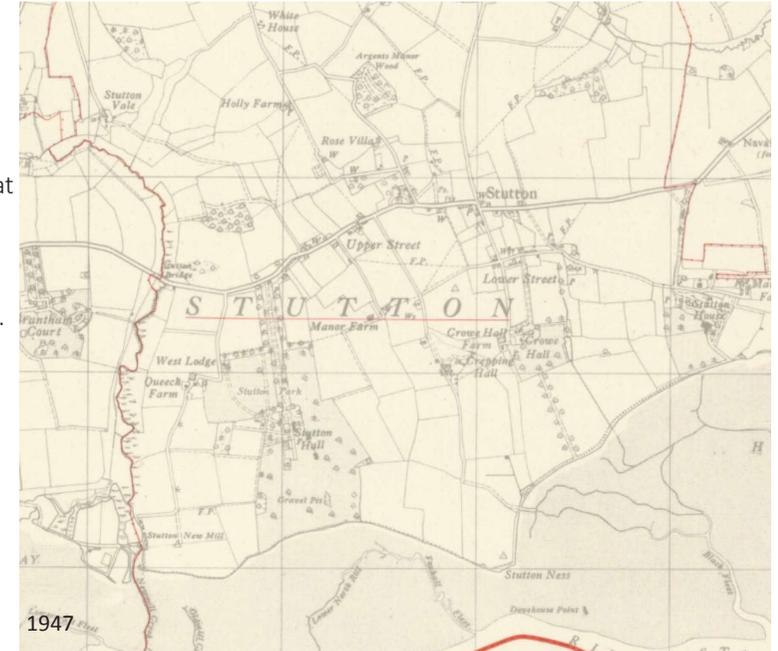
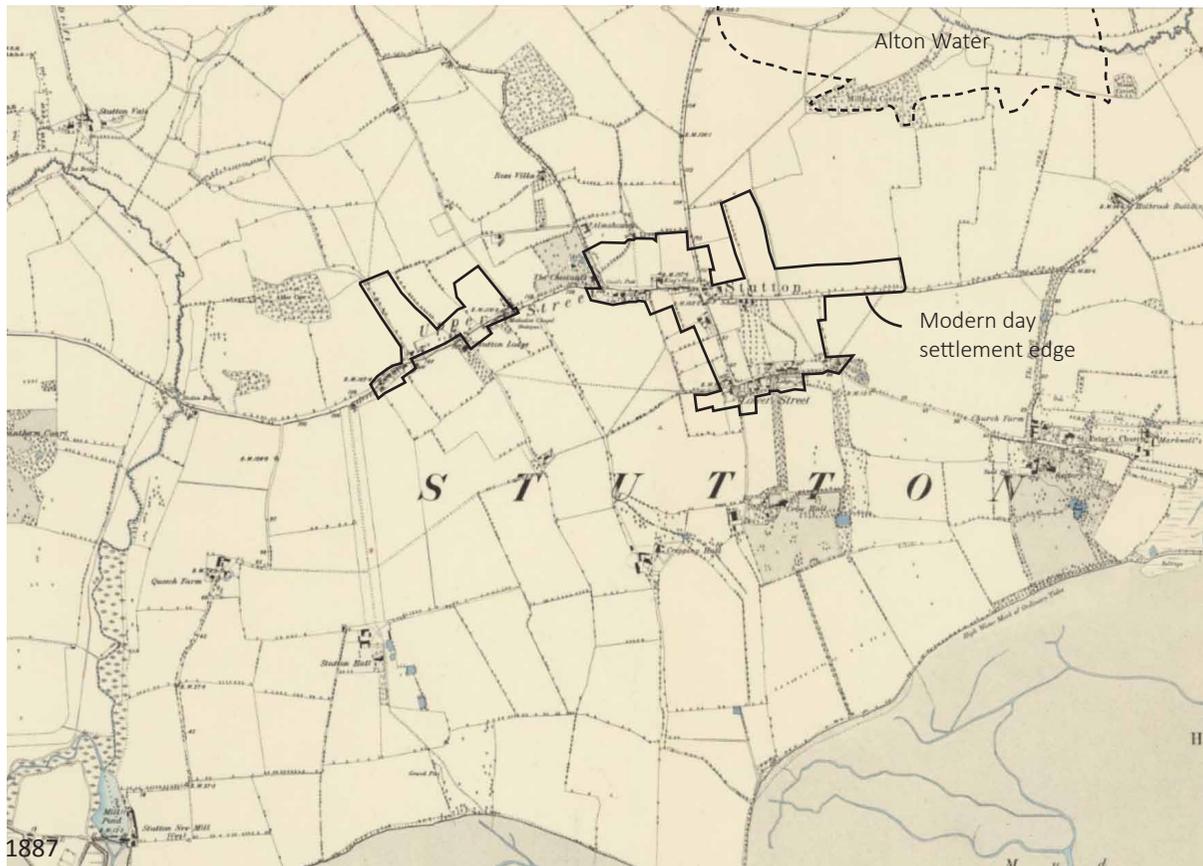
The estuary shoreline features a rich mosaic of habitats including oak woodlands, marshy edged ponds, cliffs, meadows, and shingle beach. They offer a richly scenic experience.



## 2 Landscape history continued:-

### Historic Stutton

16. The village has an unusual form which reflects its early origins. Historic maps show how much Stutton changed over the 20th century - both its settlement and rural setting. From a scattering of houses along the main roads and lanes in 1887, the village grew within a hundred years to the settlement seen today. The maps show a number of orchards in the village which are no longer present. A very apparent change to the rural setting was the conversion (or restoration) of agricultural land into parkland and woodland. The Stutton Hall estate particularly undertook a great deal of woodland planting in the 1920s after reclaiming its tenanted farmland. The visual experience consequently changed substantially - the village used to experience much more open views towards the estuary, now interrupted by tree cover. Some degree of field amalgamation has taken place but, on the whole, the 19th century field patterns are still largely intact today. The creation of Alton Water in the 1970s is the other major apparent landscape change.



## 2 Landscape history continued:-

17. Settlement on the peninsula was early with easy access to settlers from the water. Records show the first agriculturists were here by around 4000BC. Springs above the Stutton shore and the good soils would have encouraged habitation and the wooded shores would have provided timber for building. The peninsula has traces of Iron age, Roman and later coaxial field systems, and plenty of archaeological evidence shows a long history of habitation in the area.
18. The name Stutton apparently derives from Old English ‘stut’ or Old Scandinavian ‘stutr’ and could mean either ‘farmstead or village infested by gnats’, or ‘where bullocks are kept’. The village began life to the east of the main settlement on the sides of the estuary valley where the church still sits, overlooking Holbrook Bay. This area is known as Stutton Green and the hamlet here comprises a farm, some large houses and St Peter’s church. The present church building dates from the 15th Century although there was a building here at Domesday. The ancient survey lists several manors, half a church, a mill, three salthouses and two beehives. Quarhams (next to the church) is thought to be the oldest existing building in the village.
19. The main settlement was moved inland, about a mile to the west, reputedly after an



*Approach to the church from Markwells*

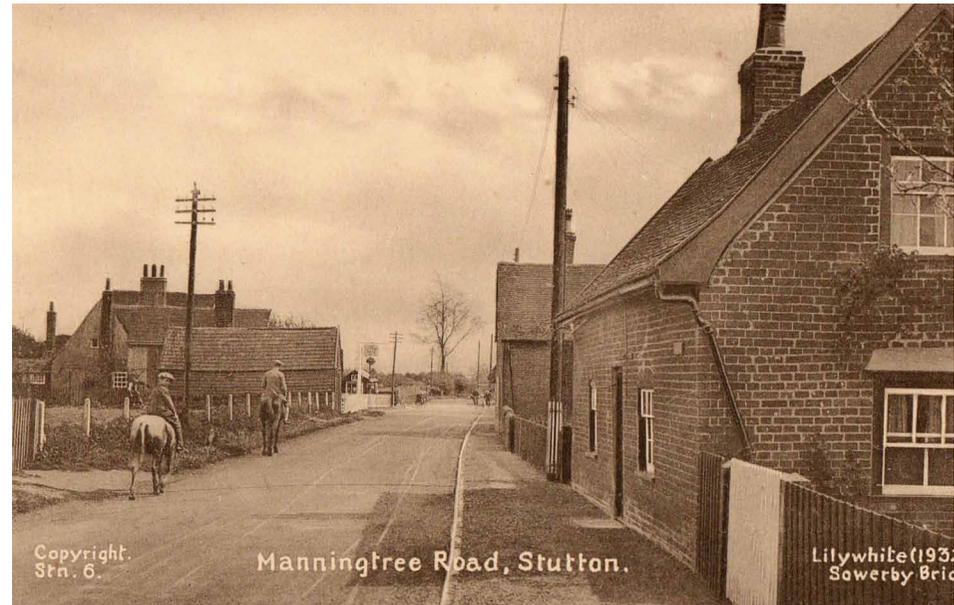
- outbreak of plague at Stutton Green and the village seen today began to establish. The King’s Head public house was built in the 16th Century, and was accompanied by small cottages scattered either side of the main Ipswich to Manningtree Road.
20. The river was important for trade in earlier centuries and local Suffolk products such as woollen cloths and agricultural products would have been exported from Stutton’s wharves. Shallow bottomed Barges could load and unload at the mouth of the Samford River and on wharves and hards to the east. Commercial wharves were built on the Stour (below Crowe Hall and Markwells Farm) during the 19th century to service grain and fertilizer trades. The remains of these wharves, in the form of rows of wooden posts, can be seen at various points along the shore today. Stutton Farms used Thames sailing barges to transport goods in and out here until as late as the 1930s.
21. In 1835 the first primary school was built at the western end of what is now Holbrook



*The Almshouses sit at the village entrance on Bentley Lane*

- Road: that building is now a private house known as ‘The Old Mission Hall’. By 1844 White’s directory describes a picturesque village with a population of 492. The current school was built in 1964 after its Victorian predecessor was burnt down.
22. The decorative brick Almshouses on Bentley Lane date from 1863. These are maintained by a trust as small affordable homes and sit at the village entrance providing an attractive gateway point.

## 2 Landscape history continued:-



From: [stuttonlocalhistoryresearchgroup.wordpress.com](http://stuttonlocalhistoryresearchgroup.wordpress.com)

Narrow lanes leading north and south off the main road occur across the parish and offer important opportunity for informal amenity



The Drift



Alton Hall Lane



Manor Lane



Queech Lane



Hyams Lane

## 2 Landscape history continued:-

### Stutton's large houses

23. Stutton is distinctive for its notable collection of grand country houses in parklands above the shores of the estuary. The fine views, southerly aspect and topography of the riverside sites influenced the similar orientation and design of the Halls and their lands stretching from the village edge to the shores of the river.
24. Stutton Hall and Crowe Hall are both large and impressive Grade II\* listed country houses to the south of the main village. They occupy elevated positions on the banks of the estuary and when landscape setting became a consideration of the design of homes for the wealthy in the sixteenth-century, their early gardens here would have offered scenic views over the wide estuary. These set the scene for the designed parklands that would be added later.



Photo: Andy Sturgeon.com

25. It was in the 19th century that landscape design tastes came into line with the principles of picturesque design and layout; the arrangement of a main house, gardens, trees, boundary features and driveways were combined to provide a 'natural' rural-looking arrangements. Landowners designed their estates to best show off their houses and their general good taste and status. It was in this period that the naturalised styles of the famous landscape architects Brown and Repton became so influential. 18th and 19th century parklands are usually characterised by semi-natural landscapes of grassland and trees, with trees dotted, and in clumps, within extensive grassland. Entrances are often marked by lodges or gatehouses. The open areas were frequently fringed by belts of trees to give privacy and to exclude unwanted views. Decorative buildings or structures

- were often designed in. Such features still endure in Stutton's parklands and contribute very positively to local distinctiveness.
26. Whilst the majority of previous woodlands and boundary trees would have been incorporated into the new parks, the agricultural patterns were often comprehensively overwritten by its new use, especially where tracts of open parkland were created. Parklands are often a complex result of centuries of intervention in the landscape with layers of features which date from different periods.
27. The current manor house at Stutton Hall dates from 1553 and was built by the Jermy family, but records show there was a Manor here before that, under the ownership of Roger de Pavely in 1265. The Tudor house would have had productive gardens but nothing of this era survives except the forecourt and gatehouse to the front of the Hall. Both the Hall and gatehouse are Grade II\* listed. However, despite the significance of the house and gardens, the Jermy family and ensuing owners had financial issues, and the estate became tenanted by a series of farmers until 1841.
28. The gardens and grounds at Stutton Hall then had a second major phase of development after 1887 after being bought by James Oliver Fison. He and his wife Lucy planted, renovated and reconfigured the grounds and Hall and were responsible for the creation of new gardens and parkland including the avenues and groves, and the creation of what is now known as Stutton Park. After J.O. Fison died in 1920 Lucy had Little Hall built for herself, along with a Jekyll-style garden. The parkland was ploughed up for food production in the 1940s but gradually reinstated as grazed parkland by its current owners, the Strutt Family.



Photo: <http://jermy.org/photos/>

*Stutton Hall behind its gatehouse*

## 2 Landscape history continued:-

29. The oldest part of the present Crowe Hall was built in 1605, and has various later additions, but there is evidence of an earlier manor house. Crowe Hall had three phases of designed landscaping, contemporary with modification of the house and wall construction in the Renaissance, renovation in the early nineteenth century, and a more recent renovation from 1997. Today it is an extensive estate with various buildings, avenues, formal and walled gardens, lawns, and sweeping driveways. Since the 1990s extensive work has been done on grounds by the current owner, Stephen Clark with input from various landscape designers to bring a contemporary feel to its extensive gardens.
30. Crepping Hall is associated with Crowe Hall and sits between it and Stutton Hall. There are records of a Creping (now spelt Crepping) Hall from 1275. It is a red brick house with a sixteenth century core and C19th and C20th extensions but little remains of its Tudor gardens.
31. The boundary walls and woodlands of the larger estates have the somewhat unfortunate effect of separating the rest of the village's inhabitants from experiencing views towards the estuary. Whilst their boundaries contribute to the special and distinctive parkland feel along the south side of the village, access and views are often not possible. The reversal of this is that the village is very well integrated into the landscape in views back from the estuary, the well wooded valley sides assimilate the village behind.

### 20th century change

32. By the turn of the 20th century Stutton was a small and dispersed settlement. In 1899 early OS maps show the church and the large houses to the south were joined by a scattering of houses and cottages along Upper Street (Manningtree Road), Church Road and Lower street. As today, the centre of the village appears to focus on the junction of the main road with Church Road and Alton Hall Lane, with the primary school and pub close by to either side.
33. During the 20th century the spaces between the scattered cottages slowly infilled and the linear form seen today became established:
- A wooden village hall ('Victory Hall') was built in the 1920's on Manningtree Road: this was replaced in 1977 by the larger Community Hall, built on land just behind.
  - In the 1930's Lewis Lane was created on what had been farm land and housing

development along Holbrook Road also began. This was a gradual process and continued spasmodically through the 1950's and 1960's in a 'one plot deep' pattern towards RHS.

- Piecemeal development along Alton Hall Lane started in the inter-war years, and including four council houses.
- Expansion at a more significant scale took place with estate development after WWII - Larksfield Road and Stutton Close were started in the 1950's, Cattsfield was added in the 1960's.

### 21st century

34. Developments that were added since 2000 include;

- In 2004 an extra care housing complex was built on Bentley Lane. This is called Oak House and has 38 flats.
- Wheelwrights Close, a new development of five houses including two affordable, was built on Holbrook Road in 2008.



*Spacious mid century development at Stutton Close*

## 2 Landscape history continued:-

### Stutton today

35. Development continues in Stutton today which will result in a 16% increase to the size of the village:
  - Hopkins and Moore are underway on a 34 house development close to the centre of the village, east of Church Road (pictured below).
  - Hopkins and Moore have also received consent for 14 houses (5 affordable) on land east of the village hall on part of the recreation ground. This development is yet to start.
  - A new development of 6 affordable semi-detached houses is also underway at the time of writing on Holbrook Road adjacent the Telephone Exchange
  - Planning permission has been received for 6 houses opposite the school which are due to start soon.
36. The minimum housing requirement for Stutton, as set out in the new Joint Local Plan, is 65 dwellings. This number of houses are already either recently complete/under way/ or consented.
37. Stutton benefits from a number of valued amenities including the Community Hall, the Community Shop and café, the primary school, the playing field and community woodland, allotments, two pubs, Alton Water park and the hairdressers. A number of community organisations aim to improve the quality of life within the village, such as the Stutton Support Network, the Community Council, Stutton Grows (managing the community woodland) and the Community Speedwatch group. There are also numerous clubs and activity groups that use the Community Hall and the primary school, such as the Horticultural Society and the Carpet Bowls club.
38. Commercially, there is a small industrial estate at Manor Farm which is home to half a dozen small businesses, including a soft toy manufacturer and motor mechanic. More than 30 businesses operate from the village in total.
39. Employment comes partly from these businesses, the school and some home-working, but (as in the case of most Suffolk villages) most working residents commute locally and to London – Stutton is 5 miles from Manningtree rail station, which is in turn about an hour from London on a direct rail line.
40. The village has attracted creative inhabitants: there are musicians, artists, writers and potters, many involved artistically in village events. There is also an active community arts

group, recently producing an innovative film - 'Stutton the movie'.

### Future planning for Stutton

41. Stutton is an attractive village much valued by its residents for its historic buildings, good facilities and tranquil rural landscape setting. The parklands bring a feel of status and the scenic draw of the estuary and the amenities at Alton Water are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Given its location within reach of two major towns and regional rail infrastructure, it is likely to continue to feel pressure for future housing expansion.
42. Other pressures on the landscape could come from recreation. The recent move to accommodate overnight visitors at Alton Water, and the increase of event days at the centre indicates there is a growing market for outdoor pursuits. The strong growth of the domestic tourism market and fitness culture during/following the pandemic could also be fuelling this trend.
43. One purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure any development that takes place responds well to local character and distinctiveness. Distinctiveness in the settlement appears to be strongest where historic boundaries and buildings remain dominant features in the street scene, and where there is interaction between the settlement and woodland or open space. In the rural landscape distinctiveness is strongest in the parklands and along the shoreline of the estuary where highly scenic views suddenly open out. Conservation and /or enhancement of these characteristics and open spaces, especially where they interact with historic buildings and their settings, is of primary importance to retain the special character of Stutton in the future planning of further development.
44. The AONB designation provides a good degree of protection for inappropriate development outside the settlement boundaries, and to some lesser extent where it provides setting to the AONB. However, when housing supply is in doubt, additional pressure will be felt. Recent developments have not always strived to respond to the specific context of Stutton in terms of architecture and detailing.
45. This study will help define Stutton's special qualities and characteristics and look at how local character differs across the parish. It will provide a useful tool for ensuring development responds to variation in character and to special features.

### 3. Planning Context

1. The need to understand and respond to local character is set out at all levels of the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
  2. NPPF para 127 requires 'good design' and states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that development:
    - will function well and add to the overall quality of the area,
    - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
    - are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change
  3. Para 131 guides new design. It states;
 

'In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings'.
- Local Plan**
4. Babergh, along with Mid-Suffolk, are in the process of adopting a new Joint Local Plan (JLP). The Plan is not yet adopted at the time of writing but the final draft is available. (Until it is adopted extant policy from Babergh's 2006 Local Plan also remain relevant).
  5. Policy LP18 of the new JLP specifically focuses on landscape and character. It states:
 

*To protect and enhance landscape character development must:*

    - a. *Integrate positively with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforce the local distinctiveness and identity of individual settlements.*
    - b. *Proposals must be sensitive to their landscape and visual amenity impacts (including on dark skies and tranquil areas); subject to siting, design, lighting, use of materials and colour, along with the associated mitigation measures;*
    - c. *Enhance and protect landscape character and values and heritage assets such as; locally characteristic landscape features, for example by use of materials which complement the local individual landscape character, archaeological and historic patterns of settlement and land use and designations; being demonstrably informed by local guidance, in particular the Council's Joint Landscape Guidance, the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment.*
    - d. *Consider the topographical cumulative impact on landscape sensitivity.*
  6. Policy LP19 – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty supports development in or near the AONBs that:
    - a. *Gives great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty;*
    - b. *Does not adversely affect the character, quality views and distinctiveness of the AONB or threaten public enjoyment of these areas; and Landscape and landscape features include but not exclusively; Local Green Space, hedgerows, woodlands, rural lanes, orchards, parkland, TPOs, historic field systems, trees, watercourses, ponds and lakes, heritage assets and the historic skyline.*
  7. The AONB Management Group also define an Additional Project Area in which the rest of Stutton parish is situated. It is an area fringing the AONB which is deemed to share the same landscape features. The AONB Group aspire for this area to be managed in the same way as the AONB and for the value of the area to be recognised, but it has no formal landscape status in planning terms. The AONB Management Plan states (p12) '*It is considered by the AONB Partnership that these two areas are valued landscapes as defined by the NPPF, as revised in July 2018*'
  8. A Valued Landscape Assessment was undertaken for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Additional Project Area by Alison Farmer Associates in 2020. This provides detail on the landscape qualities of this area as well as opportunities for Conservation and Enhancement.
  9. Imminent loss of the Dodnash Special Landscape Designation designation that included the Samford Valley to the west of the village is anticipated with adoption of the new Joint Local Plan which has done away with this policy designation. This action has been remedied by the expansion of the AONB area in summer 2020. The AONB now encompasses land north of the B1080 and west of Lewis Lane - the Samford valley. This means landscape protection here has actually strengthened despite loss of the SLA policy.
  10. Neighbourhood Plans must expand the requirements for the protection of character and settlement identity into their plan making process to be compliant with the planning framework that it sits within. Defining character is the first step of that process.

## 4. Landscape Character Context

### Landscape Character Assessment

1. Parish level character assessments fit into a wider structure of landscape characterisation that has been developing over the last 25 years in the UK. The English landscape is assessed and mapped at larger spatial scales - there is a National Character assessment and also a County level assessment available in Suffolk. Both these are relevant and provide the context into which this parish level study fits.
2. 'Landscape' is understood as a result of the interaction of the natural, physical components of the environment with the human elements - historical and cultural, land use and human interventions over time. Assessment of character maps and describes the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes that relate to the landscape, as well as its experiential characteristics, such as tranquillity. Landscapes are not just experienced visually, but through sounds, smells, memories and cultural associations. Landscape Character Assessment presents descriptions of these attributes in a consistent, robust and structured way so the characteristics of different areas can be understood and compared. The process analyses the differences which combine to create unique and distinctive sets of characteristics.
3. Landscape Character Assessments help provide an understanding of Stutton's 'sense of place' by looking at;
  - how the village developed historically, its position in the landscape, and how this should influence any future growth;
  - the factors that makes Stutton distinctive and different from other villages. What aspects make up its 'genus loci'?
  - how or if character varies across the parish
  - how its estuary location, heritage, and open spaces and vegetative features contribute to character and how these, and other aspects of value, should be subject to protection;
  - how any important views within the village contribute to its identity
4. Taking a landscape character-led approach to the Neighbourhood Plan will ensure that local distinctiveness is maintained and enhanced, highly valued places and views are identified and development is directed to the 'right' places. The assessment will seek to identify opportunities for landscape enhancement that could be the subject of future projects.

5. This parish study identifies landscape character *areas* but references the relevant *types* identified in Suffolk County Council's Landscape Character Assessment.

Landscape character types are landscapes with broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, vegetation, land use, field and settlement patterns. They repeat across a landscape so that landscapes belonging to a particular type such as 'Valley Meadowlands' are found in different river valleys across Suffolk.

Landscape character areas - these are unique areas that occur in only one place and are therefore geographically specific. They have their own individual character and identity.

### National level Assessment

6. At the largest scale there are 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). The descriptions for these are available on the Natural England website. Stutton parish falls into the 'Suffolk Coast and Heaths' national character area (No. 82). This is a belt of sands and shingles that stretches from Yarmouth to the north, to Harwich in the south. Its characteristics are summarised:
  - Variation in landcover caused by the irregularity of the deposited sands and gravels. A mosaic of heathland, woodland, farmland and marshy wetlands and mudflats.
  - Wooded valley slopes meet a mosaic of shoreline habitats which are important sites for nature conservation, including grazing marshes divided by dykes, salt marshes and mud flats.
  - A number of imposing large houses and estates, built on trade from the local ports. Strong influence of the sea. Seaside (and riverside) settlements are sparse and remain relatively unspoilt.
  - Treed character on the uplands, from plantations and field boundary belts, but few trees in the coastal levels. The coastal marshes are largely devoid of woodland, and hedged boundaries are infrequent. Scrub growth is a growing trend.
  - Vegetable production and outdoor pigs are distinctive land uses as well as cereals. Coastal grazing marshes and valley pastures support high-value beef and lamb production.
  - Extensive public access on land and along the rivers. Sense of tranquillity and open wildness is one reason for the area's popularity as a tourist destination. It has a strong sense of place.

## 4. Landscape Character Context continued:-

### County/district level

7. Offering a finer grain of detail is the Suffolk County Council Landscape Character Assessment <sup>1</sup> which was first published in 2008 (updated 2011). It is a good and comprehensive assessment and describes 31 character types within Suffolk as a whole. Four landscape character types (LCTS) are found in the parish of Stutton (see mapped on following page).
8. The type that is most relevant to the village setting is the 'Plateau Estate Farmlands'. Both Stutton's settlement clusters and their fringes sit on the elevated land that forms this type. There is a further plateau LCT to the northwest 'Ancient Estate Farmlands' where the estate character gives way to a more organically arranged ancient landscape on heavier soils. The plateaux are surrounded by sloping valley side landscape types. Land falls away to the west into the Samford Valley which gives rise to a small area of 'Rolling Valley Farmlands'. The fringes of the estuary and the gentle slopes towards Alton water are 'Rolling Estate Farmlands'. This type is found at various locations across Suffolk exhibiting local variation, depending on the characteristics of the adjoining landscape types. It has an apparent landed estate character and parklands are not uncommon.

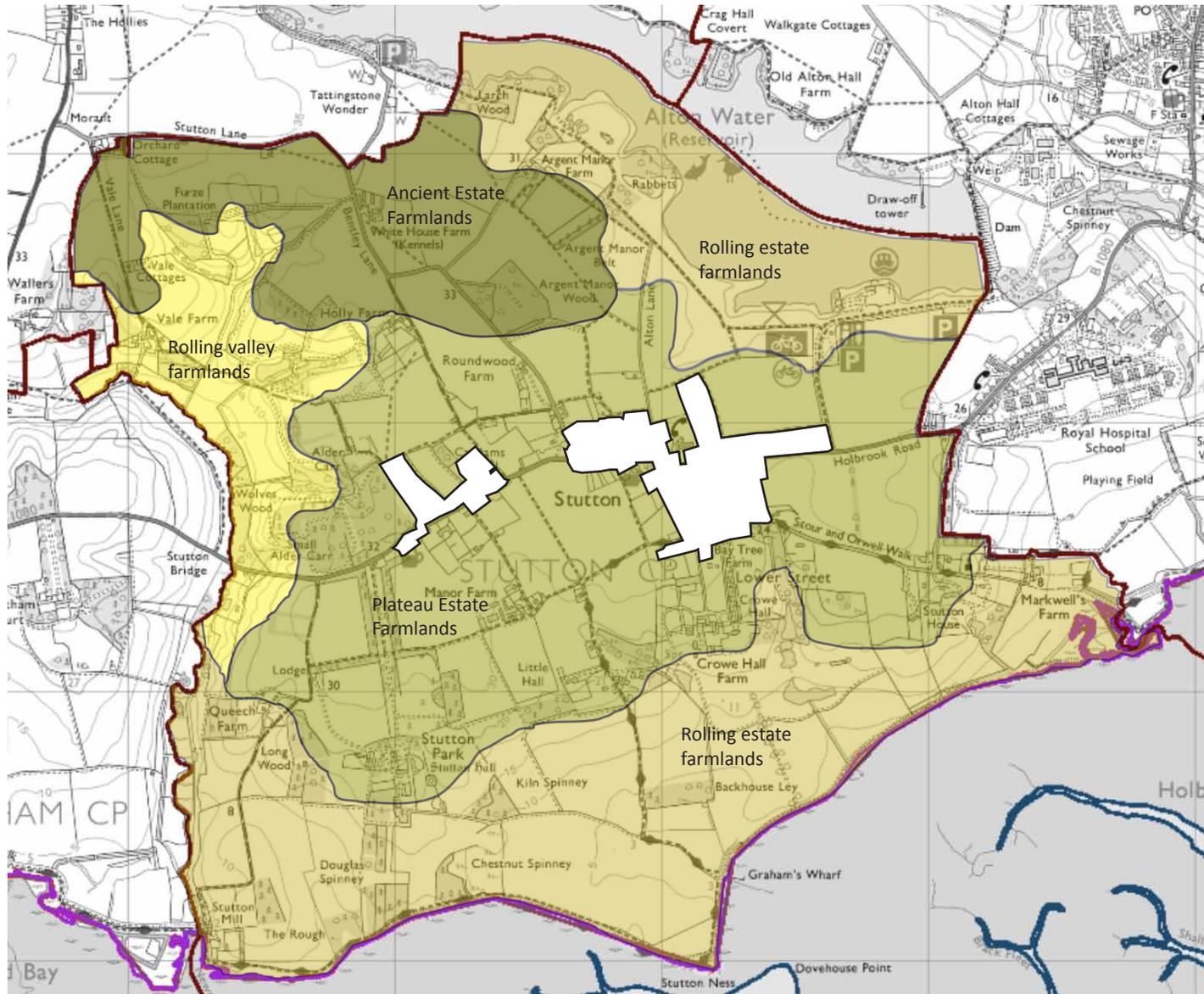


Photo: Oliver Hunt

View northward, above a point west of Lewis Lane. Here the flat, regular plateau estate lands that surround the village meet the more irregular, ancient patterns of the Ancient Estate Farmlands that endure on the valley sides.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/>

## 4. Landscape Character Context continued:- County/district level - Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment character - map



- Rolling Valley Farmlands LCT
- Ancient Estate Farmlands LCT
- Plateau Estate Farmlands LCT
- Rolling estate farmlands LCT

Source: [www.suffolklandscape.org.uk](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk)



Note:

It is not likely these lines are as sharply defined on the ground as this map might indicate, the lines were drawn at a scale of 1:50,000 and often simply follow a contour rather than an actual features on the ground. Parish characterisation should clarify the points of change but in reality there is often also a transition zone between one character area and another.

## 4. Landscape Character Context continued:-

### County/district level - Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment character - description

The village setting is entirely within the Plateau Estate Farmlands. A summary is provided (below left).

The Development Management guidelines are also summarised here (below right).

#### **PLATEAU ESTATE FARMLANDS - summary**

This is a flat or very gently rolling landscape of medium to light soils - a mixture of glacial deposits. These chalky clay tills and sandy drift deposits have given rise to mainly free-draining loam and mineral soils that is characteristic of the transition between the Sandlings and the claylands. It is a regular landscape, long enclosed, laid out in simple regular and linear forms. They are good for farming, particularly where irrigation available, and agriculture is largely arable with grassland confined to parklands and paddocks. Production is a mixture of combinable crops and a strong element of vegetable production and outdoor pigs.

Historically it is a relatively “new” landscape of C18th and C19th estate farms, with ‘new’ woodlands. In this type, across the county, heathlands are common but this is not the case on the peninsula. There is an early 20th century landscape park at Stutton.

This is a settled landscape type. There are some substantial villages in all parts of this landscape type, including Stutton. The villages tend to have a clustered form with an outlying scattering of farmsteads.

Woodland cover is scattered, mostly in the form of rectangular plantations and coverts.

Hedges are mixed although often dominated by unmanaged elm typical of these light soils.

In terms of visual experience the assessment notes that the general rule for this type is a sense of openness. However in Stutton the situation is different, the assessment notes ‘*only in those areas associated with parklands and their surroundings is there a more enclosed feel such as at Nacton, Stutton or Pakenham*’.

Vernacular architecture is often 19th century estate type of brick and tile.

#### **Accompanying guidance in relation to sensitivity:**

In respect of visual impact the regular nature of this landscape means that it does have more potential capacity, to accept significant settlement expansion than the ancient countryside of the claylands. The Plateau Farmland with its simpler and more modern land cover pattern and extensive regular pattern of tree cover can be adapted to accept larger growth.

Unlike the Estate Sandlands, this landscape does have a history of settlement. Therefore there is some capacity, in terms of landscape character, for the tightly clustered settlements to expand. However, it is important to integrate the settlement edge into the surrounding rural and sparsely settled countryside to minimise the impact on the character of the wider countryside.

The settlement pattern in the Plateau Farmlands has a strong tendency towards clustered villages surrounded by a scattering of individual farmsteads. Wherever possible this clear distinction should be maintained.

The guidance also notes if developments encroach on landscapes located on river valley sides or coastal slopes they will have a profound landscape impact on the character of these adjacent landscape types.

## 4. Landscape Character Context continued:-

The other three character types present in the wider parish are summarised below.

Refer to [www.suffolklandscape.org.uk](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk) for further details and development management guidelines.

### **ROLLING ESTATE FARMLANDS - summary**

Gently sloping valley sides and plateau fringes forming the the sloping edge component to Ancient Estate Farmlands LCT. The slopes can be dissected by short streams.

Generally deep, well-drained, clayey and silty loams which are good for agriculture. Exposures of clay along the edge of the Shotley peninsula were exploited for brick-making in the 19th and early 20th centuries

The older organic pattern of fields has been modified by realignment giving rise to .straight boundaries here on the Shotley peninsula, partly due to influence of the extensive Woolverstone estate in the 18th and 19th centuries, but even more to mid-20th century field amalgamations and re-orderings.

Important foci for early valley-side settlement, with good access to water and farmable, soils. The cores of villages are generally on the valley sides although they may have expanded into the adjoining plateau landscape.

A string of substantial Tudor and Jacobean houses in parklands overlook the Stour estuary on the southern side of the peninsula -Crowe Hall and Stutton Hall. The trend continued with the addition of Stutton Park in the C20th. Landscape parks with a core of wood pasture are a strong influence around Stutton.

The landscapes are generally ‘ancient’ in feel, with ancient woodland blocks on the edges of the landscape. The estate character and frequent parklands gives a tidy estate countryside feel.

### **ROLLING VALLEY FARMLANDS - summary**

To the west of Stutton the landscape comprises the gently sloping valley sides of Stutton Brook, a tributary of the Stour which drains into the estuary to the south.

Generally gentle valley sides that cut through the glacial till / boulder clay of the adjoining plateau, but sometimes with surprisingly complex and steep slopes.

The underlying chalk geology and surface till forms deep well drained loamy soils.

Predominantly an organic pattern of ancient piecemeal enclosure with small and medium sized fields, particularly on the lower slopes. On the higher ground of the upper slopes and plateau edges there is an increasingly regular field pattern and some amalgamation to form larger arable fields.

There is a scattering of landscape parks in this type.

Woodland, including small parcels of ancient woodland, are mainly confined to the upper slopes and valley fringes.

River valleys slopes were the focus for historic settlement and the area remains comprehensively settled.

A network of lanes and roads, many formed as sunken lanes.

A predominance of hall and church complexes and former manorial halls, many of which are moated.

In terms of visual experience, the area is described as a “rich and varied landscape.” The prosperous medieval towns and villages, steeper valleys and sunken lanes make the valleys locally distinctive. Much of the landscape retains its cultural and historic patterns.

### **ANCIENT ESTATE FARMLANDS LCT - summary**

A relatively flat plateau landscape, characterised by a combination of large, rectilinear fields resulting mainly from 18th and 19th century estate farms, such as Woolverstone estate, and a substantial number of ancient and plantation woodlands.

Generally deep loamy soils, mainly well draining. Good for farming.

The existing settlement pattern in this anciently-settled area is predominantly one of nucleated, distinct villages and only few dispersed farmsteads or house clusters.

Most of the larger landscape parks have been broken up, for example, Woolverstone Park is now home to a school.

Views in this area are predominantly open and only occasionally confined by woodland, although woodland is a strong feature within the views..

Despite localised development pressures, the area generally maintains its character and condition.

Note: the LCA provides a short guidance document for each of its landscape types and this should be referred to for understanding local pressures and managing future change: [www.suffolklandscape.org.uk](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk)

## 5. Method of Assessment

### Parish Characterisation

1. This study focuses on the character of the rural fringes of Stutton. It does not consider the different character areas within the settlement itself. Settlement character is the subject of work by AECOM associated with their work to develop a village design guide which is in progress at the time of writing.
2. Methods follow nationally accepted best practice and available guidance on undertaking Landscape Character Assessment<sup>1</sup>. The character areas were initially mapped via digital methods from desktop study. Through overlaying digital maps of character, topography, soils, field patterns, land use, aerial mapping etc, areas of common or divergent character emerged. These maps are each provided in the separate appendix document.
3. This initial desktop stage resulted in a set of draft character area boundaries, which were then tested and adjusted, if necessary, following visual survey in the field. The study was carried out using mapping at the scale of 1:10,000.
4. In addition to the existing character assessments, the following specific sources of information were used to help develop parish character area boundaries:
  - Topography data from OS maps
  - Soils and geology data from Landis
  - Designations for heritage and ecology information from government GIS website Magic Map<sup>2</sup>
  - Historic mapping from National Library of Scotland website
  - Google's aerial photography
  - Historic England designation maps
  - Suffolk Landscape Character map
  - Suffolk Historic Landscape character assessment map
5. The village fringes fall into a single character type - 'Plateau Estate Farmlands'. The parish study divided it into five character areas. Mapped lines and features were used to define and draw the boundaries.

1 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', Natural England, 2014

2 [magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap)

6. The boundaries and a short description were submitted to the Neighbourhood Working Party for comment before the final descriptions for each area were written up.
7. The descriptions are supported by a set of representative illustrative photographs. The following topics are considered in turn:

#### Wider Character Context and location

Reference to the relevant area description for the Suffolk character assessment. The location of the area within the village.

#### Elevation/topography/position in the landscape

Describes where the area sits within the parish and within the landscape, and gives a summary of its physical character. Describes the landform, its elevation in metres above ordnance datum (AOD); whether there are water courses or ponds in the area; the direction that drainage basins fall toward.

#### Landcover and land use

Describes how the land is being used, the types of farming or cropping, and whether it is being managed for another activity, such as shooting. It describes the pattern of enclosures. What patterns the landscape demonstrates in terms of the size and form of its fields, e.g. whether organic or geometric in shape, and the presence or absence of boundary hedges.

#### Interface between settlement and rural edges

Describes the pattern of settlement found, the shape or form and 'grain' of the settlement. The degree to which an area's pattern of subdivisions is small and frequent (fine grain), or large and infrequent (coarse grain). How today's patterns relate to the historic pattern. Describes the transition between settlement and the countryside.

#### Aspects of value and heritage

Lists aspects of value, which could include:

- Listed buildings/structures and their settings
- Greenspaces which are designated.
- Non-designated heritage buildings, open spaces, or other features, which contribute positively to the character of an area; parkland.

Describes the extent and value of any rights of way.

## 5. Method of Assessment continued:-

- Areas designated and protected for geological or biological conservation, such as SSSI's and County Wildlife Sites; ancient woodland and veteran trees.

### Visual and perceptual experience

Description of the visual experience - whether views are generally open or intimate, whether long or short; how scenic they are. Whether the area feels noisy or tranquil, busy or remote and isolated. Whether the landscape feels well cared for and in good condition, or where there are aspects that are degraded or cause visual intrusion. Are there any Key views in the area?

### Management issues and opportunities

In what condition are the landscape and its features? How strongly does the historic character endure to this day?

Is any aspect under threat? What should be the objectives for conservation or enhancement? Are there possibilities for future creation of ecological habitat, or expanded recreation etc?

must be particularly sensitive where it forms a new edge or gateway/arrival point to a settlement.

## Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

8. The final part of each character area description deals with the sensitivity of each character area. It provides an understanding of the specific landscape and visual issues in each part of the village fringe.
9. Stutton has two defined settlement clusters. The main village sits to the east and Upper Street to the west. They are separated by a belt of rural land in between. The remainder of the outlying settlement, including the small historic group around the Church are in 'countryside' in planning terms. Pressure for new residential development will, therefore, be felt on the rural fringes or between the existing settlement clusters. Stutton, is identified as a Hinterland village within the Holbrook functional cluster (BMSJLP Policy SP03/Table 2). Hinterland villages are expected to find 10% of housing growth during the plan period.
10. Development in countryside has less support in the NPPF and district planning policy and must meet strict tests to be acceptable. But where it abuts the existing built-up area there is usually more scope than on land separated from the village edge. Development must be particularly sensitive where it forms a new edge or gateway/arrival point to a settlement.
11. This study will assist by providing an understanding of the sensitivity of different parts of the village fringe and whether there is any potential capacity (in landscape terms) for allocating sites for development. Sufficient housing needs to be delivered in appropriate locations that do not harm the special character of the village, its valued views or features.
12. It will assist with the following task and decisions:
  - a) provide the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party an aid for making sound decisions in relation to spatial planning and policy formation, in relation to landscape;
  - b) provide evidence to help the parish respond to future planning applications;
  - c) help identify and justify land for allocation, and aid site planning on any such land;
  - d) aid transparency; it is important that residents and land owners understand why decisions have been made, particularly in relation to allocation, and understand where development might be supported and where it might be discouraged;
  - e) identify opportunities for the enhancement, management and conservation of the landscape and views.
13. It is important to note that the results of the study are not intended to suggest specific development site areas or define future settlement boundaries. The study also takes no account of other factors that would influence development, for example such as availability of land, flood risk, sustainability issues or whether highways access is possible.
14. Methods for assessing landscape sensitivity have only fairly recently been published. *"An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management"* was published in June 2019 (Christine Tudor, Natural England). The guidance urges studies to be simple, transparent, robust and defensible. An idealised process schematic is shown at the end of this document.
15. The guidance provides the following definition of sensitivity (p5):
 

*'..Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and*

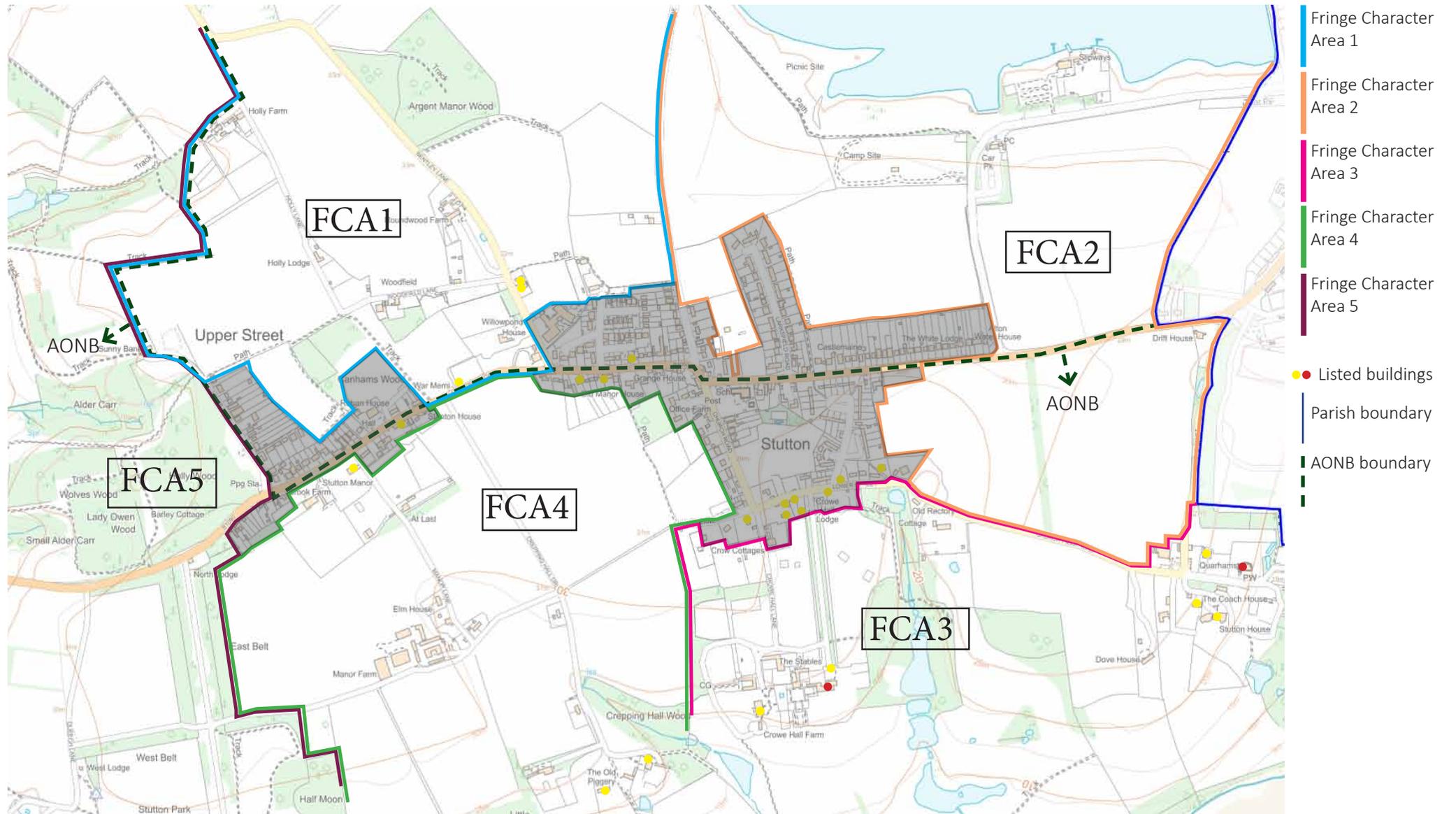
## 5. Method of Assessment continued:-

*visual baseline and their value... a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value - to a defined change, or changes..'*

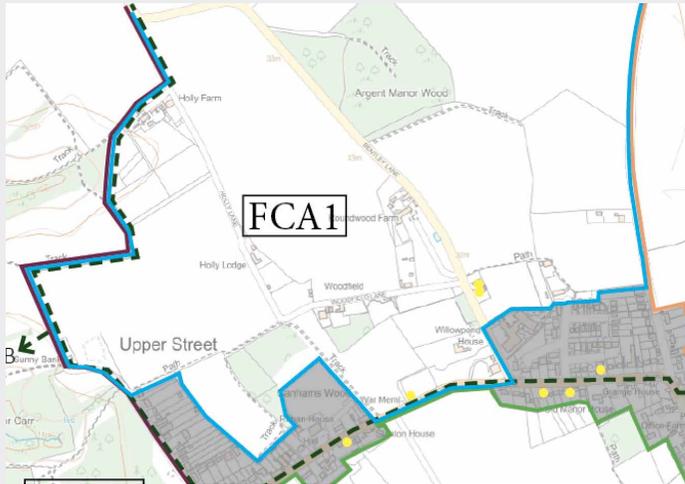
16. The assessment relies on the premise that development or change should be more readily acceptable in the least sensitive areas, and where appropriate forms of mitigation would be possible. Development would be least acceptable in areas of higher landscape value and where visual sensitivity is high, and/or where conditions are such that the landscape would be sensitive to available mitigation measures.
17. Conditions indicating HIGH sensitivity are where **landscape value** is high and where **visual sensitivity** is high, for example in the following scenarios:
  - Where impacts might result to recognised indicators of value - the setting of heritage features (such as listed buildings) or key landmark buildings
  - Where impacts might result to natural or topographic features that contribute notably to local character and sense of place
  - Where impacts might result because land is very visually prominent, and openness is an essential contributor to character
  - Where settlement has stark edges and assimilation of new development would be hard
  - Where commonly valued 'Key' scenic views, that are important to the experience of a settlement, are vulnerable
  - Where a large number of people might be affected, and/or viewers would be considered sensitive (i.e. views experience directly from homes or busy recreational areas)
  - Where a sense of tranquillity is strong
18. Conditions indicating LOW sensitivity are where **landscape value** is low and where **visual sensitivity** is low, for example in the following scenarios:
  - Where there is a lack of any designations for landscape, ecology or heritage,
  - Where there is little visual amenity or aesthetical value in the views affected
  - Where the landscape does not fall into any key views of the village and/or has little scenic value
- Where land is contained or well vegetated and where development could be assimilated without wider impact
- Where development would fit well with the historic pattern of settlement development
- Where development might offer the opportunity for the enhancement or reinforcement of character.
- Where there are few receptors - few opportunities for people to view change
- Where a sense of tranquillity is absent
19. In most cases, the conditions aren't so clear cut and professional judgement has to be applied to determine values.
20. Landscape value and Visual Sensitivity were attributed along the following scale: LOW / MODEST / MODERATE / HIGH / VERY HIGH. The scales are useful for comparative purposes, but more useful is the detail in the supporting text that pick out the sensitivities for each area. Further example circumstances indicating higher and lesser value are given in the tables in appendix 2 and 3 to this document.

# 6. Fringe Character Area Map

Refer to following pages for descriptions of each area.



## Fringe Character Area 1: Description



### Summary

A belt of the village fringe that shows variety and best retains its historic character. Small scale fields and small woodlands interface with the farmland to the north. Hints of the ancient organic landscape patterns endure despite the organisation imposed creation of the farmland estates in the 18th century.

The simple grid-like network of roads, lanes, and footpaths is distinctive and also adds to the area's recreational/amenity value. The adjoining village edges are modern and display a linear settlement pattern. Outlying scattered dwellings and farms are also found on the lanes. Vegetation has strong impact in this flat landscape and skylines are wooded, fringing open farmland. The Almshouses are a distinctive gateway feature on Bentley Lane.

### Wider character context and location

Common to the whole settlement, this area of the village fringe is in the 'Plateau Estate Farmlands' LCT of the Suffolk LCA.

It comprises land north of the B1080 on the western side of the village. It lies north of Upper Street and the main village, between Lewis Lane and Alton Hall Lane.

This character area includes the route for the proposed Greenway.

### Elevation/topography/position in the landscape

Land is flat and the village edge sits on the plateau around the 34m contour. The central part of FCA1, west of Bentley Lane has a function in separating the Upper Street cluster from the main village.

Planned 18th century enclosure has created straight roads and regularly arranged estate farmlands which overlie more organic shapes in the settlement edges. Small field sizes backing the village edges increase to medium to large fields with distance north. This area has more remnants of the underlying ancient patterns than other parts of the village fringe, and smaller field sizes.

There are no significant water courses or ponds in the area.

### Landcover and land use

Land use is mixed. High value arable land in the wider landscape meets a network of meadows, small woodlands paddocks, some spacious private curtilages and a recreation ground along the village edge (the eastern half of the Recreation ground to the rear has recently received permission for housing). The area also bounds the village hall and shop site- key local resources.

The 'gap' between the two settlement clusters features a meadow which has strong rural character with oak trees seen in its boundary hedges. Densely vegetated curtilages such as that of Stutton Lodge contribute to the semi-wooded feel of the area.

### Interface between settlement and rural edges

The interface between the settlement and the rural landscape has mixed character, but on the whole is well vegetated and soft.

The edges of the more modern development (eg Lewis Lane and Cattsfield) are simple and straight. The outlying scattered older properties and farms create more complexity and a dispersed feel. Vernacular cottages often front directly onto the road, larger properties sit back out of sight in well vegetated curtilages.

The village gateway on Bentley Lane feels very rural, the Almshouses and the large oak tree on the corner form an attractive arrival point.

## Fringe Character Area 1:Description

### Aspects of value and heritage

There is evidence of ancient historic patterns and features in the landscape that can be seen in aerial photography. Historic continuity is seen in the survival of the relatively small scale pattern of meadows, fields and woodland. Argent Manor Wood sits some distance north of the village fringe, is remnant Ancient woodland.

There are three listed features in this area. The war memorial is just inside the southern boundary, and the Almshouses and its enclosing wall are on the Bentley Road (all grade II listed). The Victorian brick Almshouses are very distinctive and are a memorable gateway feature on the village edge. The memorial and the Almshouses have a slightly separated location from the village, and their surrounding rural backdrops are important contributors to their character and significance.

Access: Good access opportunities across a network of footpaths and quiet lanes. Alton Hall Lane and Alton Water are connected through to Upper Street, and there are connections to the wider footpath network and the estuary. Woodfield Lane and the east-west footpath are to be the focus for the parish's Greenway project, providing access for all on surfaced paths.

There is also a community woodland (started in 2004) which, along with the playing field, hall and community shop which it adjoins, form key local resources and a focus for community interaction.

### Vegetation character

There is woodland in this area - Canhams Wood and the adjoining newer Community Wood are on the village edge, and Argent Manor Wood lies at a short distance to the north. The flatness of the landscape means they have strong visual impact. In addition the regular hedged lanes and dotted oak trees in the field boundaries means trees are a regular skyline feature.

A 'wall' of trees strongly defines Manningtree Road between Bentley Lane and the War Memorial and prevents views to the north.

Verges are full of bracken in the summer indicating the light acidic soils beneath.

### Visual and perceptual experience

The visual experience varies.

Along the village edges mature trees and tall hedges often bound fields and line the lanes, giving rise to areas with strong feelings of containment and confined views. Where absent,

mid-range rural views to the north are experienced across farmland. These are contained along the skyline by regular hedges, woodland and trees which link up to contain long range views.

### Management Objectives

- Protect, maintain and enhance the amount of woodland cover.
- Conserve the distinctive pattern of small scale enclosures and field boundary hedges/trees.
- Maintain the stock of boundary oak trees. Look for opportunities to plant new specimens in verges and field boundaries to maintain a healthy age range in the population.
- Protect the low key rural character of Woodfield Lane. Avoid the addition of signage, lighting, kerbs etc., which would erode its rural feel.
- Enhance public enjoyment by establishing the accessible Greenway route to provide access for all.
- Protect and enhance the landscape settings of the listed war memorial and Almshouses.
- Protect the rural character of the arrival point along Bentley Lane.
- Conserve and enhance green space around the village hall/shop including the recreation ground and the community woodland, and prevent further loss.
- Encourage local landowners to pursue agri-environment schemes (new post-Brexit schemes pending) which enhancing biodiversity, such as field meadow margins or seed mix strips for birds along the footpaths.
- Protect the area's key views.

## Fringe Character Area 1: Illustrative Photographs

*Streetview images for now - update*



Character dominated by the simple arrangement of straight roads and lanes dotted with dwellings. Mature trees and woodland are part of the visual experience, fringing views.

Glimpses of outlying farms feature in views to the north



Large oak and decorative wall at the Almshouses are important features. Oak trees are a regular feature along fields and lanes.



Character area often edged by a wall of green along Manningtree Road.



Important network of pedestrian routes, as here, west of Alton Hall Lane.

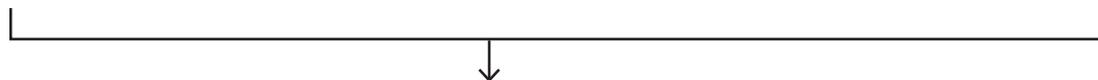
## Fringe Character Area 1: Sensitivity to development

### Landscape Value and Visual Sensitivity:

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations & aspects of value	MODERATE/HIGH Not in AONB. Southern edge adjoins AONB across Manningtree Road. Three listed assets. Evidence of historic continuity.	Visual prominence Vulnerability of key views	MODERATE sensitivity: Village edge not visually prominent, generally contained by roadside hedges or behind continuous and well vegetated curtilages.
Landform	LOW Topography not a strong contributor to character.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	MODERATE sensitivity: Traffic passing along the Manningtree Road and Bentley Lane - glimpses only. Walkers on the footpath network (including the proposed Greenway)
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH Smaller scale enclosures here. Historic field boundaries with substantial boundary oak trees. Good condition.	Tranquillity / activity	MODERATE sensitivity: Little less tranquil than other parts of the parish. Roads bring traffic noise. Activity around the shop and village edge.
Settlement edges, & gateways	MODERATE Historic landscape pattern endures. Some modern infill. Some porous edges. Well integrated settlement edge.	Aesthetic perception	MODERATE sensitivity: Moderately scenic views of quiet farmland, especially where mature oak trees are dotted along boundaries.

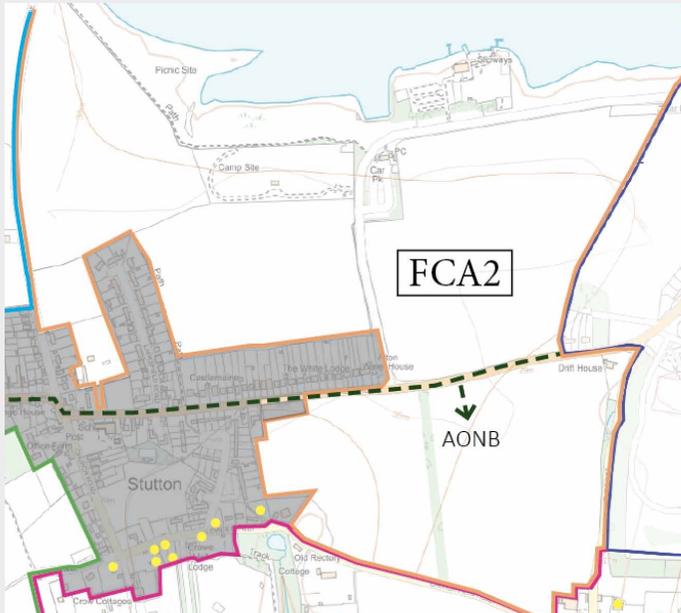
### Change management in FCA1 should account for:

- The rural gap between the two village clusters is under pressure. Any further development here must carefully consider how to maintain the rural feel. There maybe opportunities for small or medium developments in locations which are contained and visually less sensitive.
- Patterns such as small and medium-scale meadow boundaries or historic hedge lines must be conserved. Detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of any proposal.
- Any development should be attached to the existing village edges. The farmland is more open and visually sensitive and has limited capacity to accommodate development.
- Any new development in this area must seek to integrate within substantial boundary hedges and trees. New boundary planting should use only native species.
- Vernacular materials (brick, clay tiles, render) are most appropriate although visual prominence can be reduced with use of timber on both elevations and roofs. Brick can be less prominent than render.
- The separated nature of outlying cottages should be maintained.
- Protection of the many mature oak trees that are so distinctive here.



LCA2: Overall sensitivity Values					
Landscape Value	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low

## Fringe Character Area 2: Description



### Summary

Plateau and valley edge landscape made up predominantly of large open fields growing high value crops. Woodland is generally absent but present in adjoining areas and fringes views along the horizon. Views can be open and long. The northern edges of the parish have seen considerable disruption with the creation of Alton Water which dominates views to the north and provides a key local leisure resource. Settlement edges are generally modern, straight and stark. The RHS tower is a key local waypoint feature and landmark. Old narrow vegetated lanes are points of particular value as is a more modern but distinctive coniferous tree belt in the southern half of the area.

### Wider character context and location

This area of the village fringe is in the 'Plateau Estate Farmlands' LCT of the Suffolk LCA. The fringes of the reservoir to the north are 'Rolling Estate Farmlands'.

It comprises land on the eastern side of the village. It lies west of Alton Hall Lane, where it forms a belt of land between the village edge and the reservoir, and includes land south of the B1080 as far south as Church Field Lane.

Land on the south side of Holbrook Road is in the AONB but, given the openness, the whole of the character areas would be sensitive.

### Elevation/topography/position in the landscape

Land adjoining the village fringes is notably flat. It forms the plateau top of the sub-peninsula and lies either side of the 30m contour. Land falls gently along the edges of the reservoir.

To the west, FCA2 separates Stutton from the large collection of listed buildings that make up the Royal Hospital School (Holbrook parish) arranged around its tall and distinctive clock tower, and from the church and cluster of settlement at Stutton Green.

Other than Alton Water, there are no significant water courses or ponds in the area.

### Landcover and land use

Land use is arable/vegetable crops arranged in a large-scale rectilinear enclosure pattern. These straight sided fields have significant value for agriculture and their free draining nature means they can be used for high value crops. Fields are edged by trees - a pine belt and a strong wooded edge along the Drift contributes to the estate character. Hedges are less prevalent here.

Alton Water centre and its public green space is accessed through FCA2. The barrier controlled access drive brings visitors to the public leisure facilities - a recently added campsite, car parking, a play area and sailing centre and cafe.

### Interface between settlement and rural edges

The interface between the settlement and the rural landscape is uniform and sometimes abrupt, reflecting the geometry in the landscape.

The ribbon development pattern along Holbrook Road, and cul-de-sac layout of Larksfield Close has created particularly straight edged interface. The boundaries are prevented from feeling too stark however by deep gardens with mature trees.

The eastern arrival point to the village, on Holbrook Road, is abruptly marked by the drive to Alton Water and ribbon development and is indistinct.

On Lower Street 'The Grove' marks the village edge - an attractive house dating from the early 20th century.

## Fringe Character Area 2: Description

### Aspects of value and heritage

South of the B1080, the landscape is in the AONB. It contributes to the scenic beauty of the AONB through its estate farmland character that characterises much of the wider AONB, and providing a distinctive unspoilt rural setting to settlement in both Stutton and the RHS.

The farmland has been organised first through parliamentary 'late' enclosure, and then through further 20th century amalgamation. Little of the ancient organic landscape remains and particular disruption to the valley landscape to the north is obvious with the flooding to form the reservoir.

There are several historic narrow lanes with special character. The Drift, is a tree-lined lane along on the eastern boundary, that connects the oldest part of the village, around the ancient Church, to the main road. Church Field Road connects into Lower Road on the village edge and has a pleasant narrow and quiet character. Alton Hall Lane defines the west boundary of the area.

Access: A network of footpaths follow field boundaries and Alton Hall Lane to link the village to Alton Water. The reservoir edge provides a popular 8 mile circular walk. Church Field Road provides an important link from the village to the highly scenic Holbrook Bay and the estuary walks.

The landscape is the site of a former WWI airfield which was located between the current village edge and the reservoir.

### Vegetation character

There is a belt of coniferous plantation south of the B1080 which brings a feel of the Suffolk 'Sandlings' - farmland arranged between pine belts is a sight more commonly seen in the AONB north of the Deben.

There is no ancient woodland here but trees can be seen in Crowe Hall parkland, along the Drift, fringing the estuary and even on the side of the reservoir, forming strong wooded skylines on the edges of the character area. Many oak trees line Alton Hall Lane.

### Visual and perceptual experience

The visual experience here is generally open and longer unimpeded views are possible. The RHS tower is usually present in views to the east and is a strong and distinctive landmark emerging from tree cover.

Views to Holbrook village are distinctive, although somewhat marred by the industrial character of the water treatment facility east of the dam.

Views across the flat farmland can be somewhat featureless but scenic quality improves

where a line of pines conveys the estate character or where topography and vegetation around the shoreline of the reservoir creates more textured and natural compositions.

There is a sense of tranquillity away from the main road. Perceptions can be dominated by the sense of openness - lack of hedges either side of Holbrook Road and large fields give sense of exposure that contrasts strongly with the contained feel of the west side of the village.

### Management Objectives

- Increase the amount of woodland cover to address some of the feelings of exposure, but formations should be linear to reflect the estate character.
- Conserve the rural 'backwater' qualities of The Drift, Church Field Lane and Alton Hall Lane.
- Conserve the distinctive straight edged, geometric patterns in the landscape.
- Explore ways of enhancing the village entrance point on Holbrook Road which is dominated by the driveway to Alton Water. Consider tree planting to define and enhance the gateway and help assimilate new residential development (underway) here.
- Avoid, or effectively mitigate, impacts from further expansion of recreational or tourist related land uses at Alton Water in order to preserve landscape character and open views. Indirect impacts from recreational or tourist-related land uses must also be carefully considered, such as from increased traffic and effects on the rural tranquillity must also be fully assessed.
- Additional structural planting/tree planting should be employed to screen the recent land use changes at Alton Water. Residents feel recent development i.e. the camping area and access controls, and light spill from the toilet block, has had adverse impacts on the landscape, views and residential amenity. Monitor screening planting as it matures to ensure its establishment into continuous buffer.
- Support the designation of Alton Hall Lane as a 'Quiet Lane'. Verges have been under pressure from cars from visitors to Alton Water. Consideration should be given to the parking issues that have resulted here and elsewhere. Seek ways of limiting traffic and preventing damage to verges. Tree planting or landscaping could be employed to prevent this or to screen and assimilate vehicles. It is preferred to use planting and other similar 'low key' methods over other intrusive highways interventions such as bollards or railings.
- Protect the area's key views. Conserve views to the clocktower from the village edge.
- Encourage agri-environment schemes adding opportunity for enhancing biodiversity such as seed mix strips for birds along the footpaths.

## Fringe Character Area 2: Illustrative photographs



View toward village along Church field Road. Plantation belt and parkland conceals the village edge.



Large scale farmland offers long distance views



Long views are possible from inside the parish boundary towards Holbrook across the re-engineered valley of the Tattingsstone Brook - now Alton Water.



Alton Hall Lane, along the west side of the character area, has quiet rural character

## Fringe Character Area 2: Sensitivity and value

**Landscape Value and Visual Sensitivity:**

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:	
Designations & aspects of value	HIGH value: Landscape in AONB and within setting of AONB. No heritage assets. High recreation value at Alton Water.
Landform	LOWER value: Flat topography key contributor to character but not sensitive to losses.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	LOW to MODERATE value: No ancient patterns endure. Clear influence of late enclosure estate farmland which is a strong contributor to character. Hedges often absent, amalgamated fields.
Settlement edges, & gateways	LOWER value: Straight, abrupt and modern. Ribbon development. No historic elements.

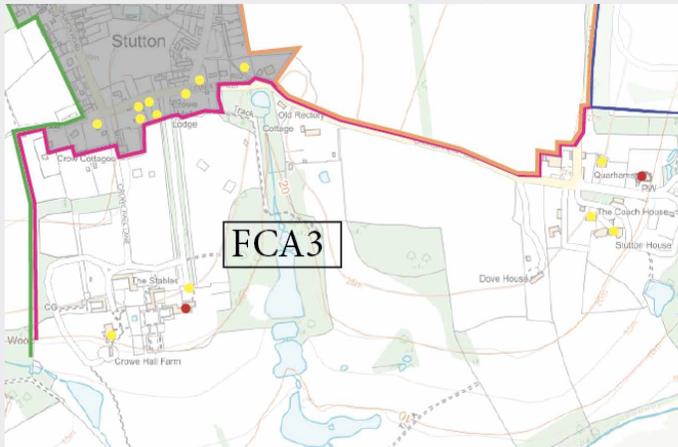
VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Visual prominence Vulnerability of key views	HIGH sensitivity: Open, character of the farmland, means views can be long. However, the adjacent character areas to the east are more wooded. Landscape is also sensitive forming the skyline in views from across the Stour estuary.
Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH sensitivity: Views are easily experienced from the main road, footpaths and Alton Water - high numbers of people.
Tranquillity / activity	MODERATE sensitivity: Prevailing sense of tranquillity created by large water body and tracts of quiet farmland but vulnerable when main road busy and large numbers of visitors arrive in summer months.
Aesthetic perception	MODERATE sensitivity: Simple, uniform views across farmland are of lower value. Views across shores of reservoir and where include RHS clock tower are more distinctive.

Change management in FCA2 should account for the following:

- This flat and open landscape is visually sensitive and has limited capacity to accommodate development without change being noticeable from the wider landscape. Vertical elements could be seen from a very wide area.
- Development is generally less appropriate in the AONB. Policy is in place to require development to provide protection of its special character.
- The village edges are well defined and straight. There are few opportunities to ‘mesh’ with any indentations - therefore development is likely to constitute intakes into countryside and be harder to assimilate.
- Any new development in this area must integrate its edges, where they abut countryside, with substantial boundary hedges and trees. Overall the linearity and geometry of the landscape can be reflected in new planting.
- New planting should be native species. Lines of pines, and parkland species as well as native species can be used to enhance the estate feel.
- Further intensification of visitor and tourist facilities or accommodation at Alton Water could have visual impacts as well as impact the prevailing tranquillity. Direct and Indirect Impacts should be considered carefully. Appropriately designed belts of vegetation must be used to assimilate and screen views from the village edges.
- Encourage ongoing communication between the parish and Anglian Water on the future of Alton Water.

LCA2: Overall sensitivity Values					
Landscape Value	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low

## Fringe Character Area 3: Description



### Summary

This character area is dominated by the extensive private designed parkland of historic Crowe Hall and its related estate buildings and enclosures. The extensive grasslands with scattered trees, copses and linear tree features contribute greatly to the AONB landscape. Its interface with the village brings distinctiveness and a strong sense of the historic landscape.

Public access is not possible so perceptions are limited to the treed skylines seen to either side and this area presents views of large area of undeveloped wooded rural landscape.

### Wider character context and location

This area of the village fringe is in the 'Plateau Estate Farmlands' LCT of the Suffolk LCA. The shores of the estuary are in the Rolling estate farmlands LCT.

It comprises land south and southeast of the main village, between Lower Street and Church Field Road and the estuary. It also includes the small hamlet of Stutton Green to the east.

This character area is entirely in the AONB.

### Elevation/topography/position in the landscape

Land is fairly flat along the village edge, sitting on the plateau between the 30 and 25m contour. With distance to the south, the valley side falls away and becomes more complex with two small shallow tributary streams cutting down through the main valley. One stream rises with a pond near the Old Rectory, close to the village edge.

Land also begins to slope towards the east at Stutton Green where the church and large properties sit along the top of the valley side.

### Landcover and land use

Land use is dominated by the extensive parkland curtilage of Crowe Hall. Crowe Hall began life as a medieval manor and was rebuilt in 1605. It saw a second phase of evolution, into the impressive neo-gothic mansion house seen today, from 1821. It continues to be improved and updated in modern times by current owners with large acreages of arable land converted (back) into parkland and substantial new tree planting in the last 30 years. Today it comprises grassland with naturalistic tree clumps placed across the valley sides, as well as more formal avenues, gardens and ancillary buildings. Water has been captured down the length of the stream to create a series of small lakes. It is not open to the public.

There is also an L-shaped area of arable land on the east side of the parkland which helps provide separation to Stutton Green from the village edge.

### Interface between settlement and rural edges

The parklands interface with the village along Lower Street with a distinctive crenelated brick boundary wall either side of the entrance gate, with views of its lodge building and walled gardens beyond. Other than a glimpse down the avenue driveway here unfortunately little else of the estate can be appreciated from public viewpoints. The walls, and dense boundary vegetation on other parts of the boundary, prevent views towards the estuary. The curtilages of some historic cottages also sit along the south side of Lower Street. Ancient House is particularly attractive with distinctive pargetted render walls.

Detracting elements are also present, such as the trio of low-cost council-built bungalows on Lower street, almost opposite the entrance to Crowe Hall, on the junction with Stutton Close. These mid-century houses have an awkward relationship with the heritage features on view along Lower Street.

## Fringe Character Area 3: Description

The settlement edge on Lower Street is definitively marked by the Old Rectory. Its vegetated boundary clearly marks where the village ends and countryside begins

Settlement at Stutton Green comprises large houses and a farmyard. There are some impressive historic properties as well as more modern ones. They tend to feel very private and are enclosed by gated walls and fences. The exception is Markwells, which provides a very attractive passage to walkers, via public footpath, through its unfenced meadows east of the church, and past its formal topiaried gardens.

### Aspects of value and heritage

The area has significant heritage and landscape value. The whole of the character lies within the AONB.

The greatest concentration of listed buildings are found in the adjoining settlement along Lower Street and at Stutton Green. There are 16 Listed buildings/structures in total, two of them Crowe Hall and the church are grade II\*. Where they interface with the street they contribute very positively and bring a rich sense of history. Much of the area is parkland and valued for its high scenic quality, associated contribution to the natural beauty of the AONB, high number of trees and intrinsic historic cultural value.

Access: Compared to other parts of the village, access opportunities are more limited. Routes through Crowe Hall park are notable by their absence and the only section of the estuary that does not have a shoreline footpath is along the curtilage of Crowe Hall lands.

Church Field Lane is important because it provides a route by road, albeit a quiet one, to the sea wall footpath to Lower Holbrook.

### Vegetation character

The area has a strongly wooded feel, dominated by the parkland and its tree planting in clumps, copses and avenues. Yet this is not experienced by many people, the parkland is rarely in view, but it presents a strong 'treed' edge to the landscape on either side. It results in a very rural, wooded shoreline in views from Wrabness, all but concealing the village from view.

### Visual and perceptual experience

The public's visual experience is often confined by high tree cover. Lower Street has a contained feel from properties along the roadside and walls of both brick or vegetation.

There are limited views to the south except in the gap between the village edge and Stutton

Green where the first glimpses of the estuary are detected. But even here, a hedge along the south side of the lance hinders views across the character area. Trees also cluster on the valley side around the church and houses at Stutton Green preventing longer views.

### Management Objectives

- There are no footpaths in this character area. Seek opportunities to provide links to footpath network.
- Support conservation of the parklands
- Protect the low key rural character of Church Field Road. Avoid the addition of signage, lighting, kerbs etc., which would erode its rural feel.
- Protect the landscape settings of the listed features where the landscape contributes to their significance.
- Protect the rural character of the village entrance point.
- Maintain the general open rural character of the gap between the main village and Stutton Green.
- Support the Quiet Lane status for Church Field Road being sought by the parish council.
- Protect the area's key views.

**Fringe Character Area 3: Illustrative photographs**



View west along Lower St. Old cottages front directly onto the lane.



Ancient looking 'Barnfield' on Hyams Lane (grade II listed).



Bungalows opposite Crowe Hall gates



Glimpse into Crowe Hall park on Lower Street



In Stutton Green large properties often have gated curtilages

### Fringe Character Area 3: Sensitivity and value

**Landscape Value and Visual Sensitivity:**

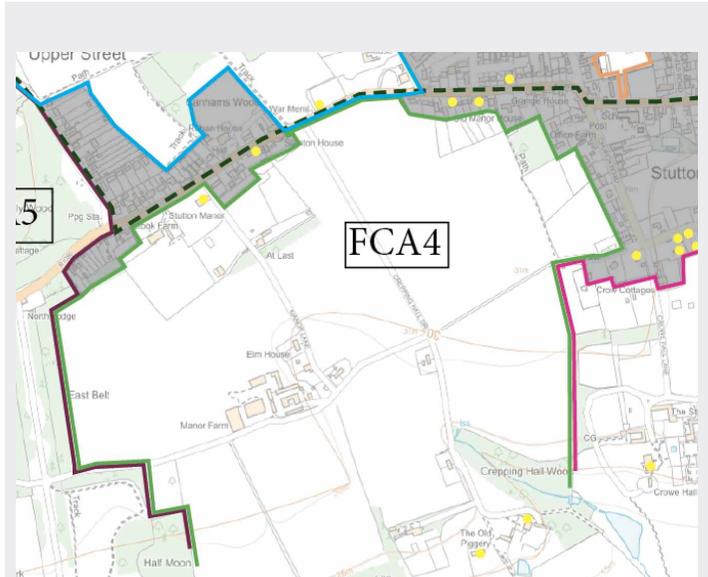
LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations & aspects of value	VERY HIGH value: - Landscape in AONB. - Important heritage assets, gardens and parkland. High historic and cultural value.	Visual prominence Vulnerability of key views	MODERATE sensitivity: Much of this area is out of sight behind walls and tree belts. No shoreline access. Stutton Green properties to some extent also follow this pattern.
Landform	HIGH value: Gently rolling valley side topography encloses and defines the estuary, contributes to scenic views.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	LOW sensitivity: Views into Crowe Hall park are not possible. Stutton Green 'tucked away' not generally visible from main village or main road. Church Field Road and footpath past church brings walkers.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH value: Historic avenues and features endure in the parkland. New designed landscapes add to the high quality setting to the Hall.	Tranquillity / activity	MODERATE sensitivity: Very high degree of tranquillity across the tract of parkland. No public access. Quiet and tranquil atmosphere at Stutton Green.
Settlement edges, & gateways	MODERATE value: Mid century housing estates interface with historic boundary features is abrupt and uncomfortable.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH sensitivity: Rich, historic, scenic views where historic properties and pastoral landscapes combine, but views not always available to the public.

Change management in FCA3 should account for the following:

- Development is generally less appropriate in the AONB. Policy is in place to require development to provide protection of its special character.
- Policy might allow for small scale exceptional or innovative design in places where assimilation can be demonstrated. However, there is little opportunity for development into undeveloped land along this village edge.
- The private ownership of Crowe Hall parkland and its high heritage significance means development is not likely to be a dominant issue in this character area. Policy relating to the AONB is also in place to provide protection of its special character.
- Development west of the village edge beyond the Old Rectory is not appropriate. It would cause a departure from the more nucleated form of this part of the village and be hard to assimilate.
- Interpretation boards for visitors could potentially tell the story of Stutton's great houses and gardens even if views of them aren't possible.
- Future opportunities may arise to enhance the character of Lower Road where its heritage character is weakest.
- Any new development in this area must seek to integrate within substantial boundary hedges and trees. New boundary planting should use only native species.
- Vernacular materials (brick, clay tiles, render) are most appropriate although visual prominence can be reduced with use of timber on both elevations and roofs. Large windows likely to spill light into adjacent dark landscapes should be avoided.

LCA3: Overall sensitivity Values					
Landscape Value	<b>Very high</b>	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	<b>Moderate</b>	Modest	Low

## Fringe Character Area 4: Description



### Summary

This landscape fringe is an ordered grid of fairly flat land with rectilinear fields divided by tracks and drives. It is high value estate farmland. Some small meadows backing the settlement provide a soft edge to the village. The area is contained and fringed by trees because it is flanked by mature wooded boundaries of parkland to both east and west. The area is important for amenity and offers numerous access opportunities. The holly avenue along Crepping Hall Drive is a distinctive feature and communicates the estate feel of the landscape.

### Wider character context and location

This part of the village fringe is in the 'Plateau Estate Farmlands' LCT of the Suffolk LCA. The shores of the estuary are in the 'Rolling Estate Farmlands' LCT.

It comprises land southwest of the main village and south of Upper Street. It sits between the parkland settings of Crowe Hall to the east and Stutton Park to the west. This character area is entirely in the AONB.

### Elevation/topography/position in the landscape

Land is very gently rolling. The 30m contour swings to either side of Hyams Lane as it defines the upper reaches of a small tributary stream which rises and flows southeast through Crepping Hall Wood. The settlement edges sits consistently at about 32m AOD.

### Landcover and land use

Land use is generally arable farmland - fertile and free draining land used for vegetables as well as arable crops. It is a simple landscape of straight-edged, medium to large-scale fields in an efficient, geometric arrangement. These lands have long been held in estate ownership and continue to convey a sense of ordered, looked-after estate farming practice.

There is a strong grid-shaped network to the landscape formed by straight lanes and parallel field boundaries. Manor Lane and Crepping Hall Drive cross the area approx. north-south and Hyams Lane intersects them at right angles in the centre of the character area in an east-west alignment. These routes are all public rights of way providing valuable local amenity. The arrangement of the built form in this area also seems to echo the geometry of the landscape, which is emphasised by features such as the avenue of holly trees along Crepping Hall drive.

### Interface between settlement and rural edges

The character area adjoins the village edges along the south side of Upper Street and the main village along Manningtree Road and Church Road, where a historic linear 'one-plot deep' settlement pattern endures. It has of course been subject to much infill. This area has avoided the incursion of modern estate development seen along the north side of the main road.

In the main village the linear development forms something of a High Street, focused around the Kings Head. Along Upper Street are roadside houses of mixed age and design, the older ones fronting directly onto the road. Built forms including an unusual green boarded house, thatched cottages, a Victorian brick gable-fronted chapel, as well as modern houses and bungalows behind deeper frontages.

Small, square-shaped meadows sometimes provide a buffer between the rear gardens and the open farmland beyond. These are associated with the older properties in the village and have escaped amalgamation into the farm estate. Some of these were orchards at the end of the 1800s. These are enduring evidence of the historic landscape patterns.

## Fringe Character Area 4: Description

### Aspects of value and heritage

The curtilages of four listed buildings adjoin FCA4. Stutton Manor (listed grade II) sits within the area, outside the settlement boundary.

### Vegetation character

Woodland is present along the top of the valley edges south of Crepping Hall including some poplar plantation with strong skyline influence. It is not present in any significant amounts nearer to the village. However, it is a significant feature in adjoining character areas - parkland boundaries to the east (FCA3) and west (FCA4) and scattered woodland in FCA1 to the north. The avenue down Crepping Hall Drive is distinctive and reinforces the estate farm feel. Hedges are infrequent.

### Visual experience / Enclosure and openness

Views are inward. The visual experience is contained along the skylines by woodland and by the village edges but moderate length views are experienced within the area itself across open fields.

### Management Objectives

- Protect the character of the rural gap between Upper Street and the main village.
- Maintain the patterns of small fields where they back onto the village edge
- Keep signage relating to the business park low-ley and unobtrusive.
- Encourage local landowners to pursue agri-environment schemes (new post-Brexit schemes pending) which enhancing biodiversity, such as field meadow margins or seed mix strips for birds along the footpaths.
- Look to tree planting or structural landscaping to screen industrial-scale farm buildings in the AONB.
- To protect the character of the setting of the AONB, native structural planting may be necessary here to screen or assimilate development in adjoining character area to the north.
- Protect the area's numerous public access routes
- Protect Key views in the area.

### Fringe Character Area 4: Illustrative photographs



Long view down Crepping Hall Drive emphasizes the linear patterns



A mix of architectural styles along the village edge on Manningtree Road



View to the southern edge of the village centre. Village edge is well integrated by deep curtilages and mature trees.



Hyams Lane looking west towards Manor Farm



Area framed by groves along Stutton Hall drive

## Fringe Character Area 4: Sensitivity and value

### Landscape Value and Visual Sensitivity:

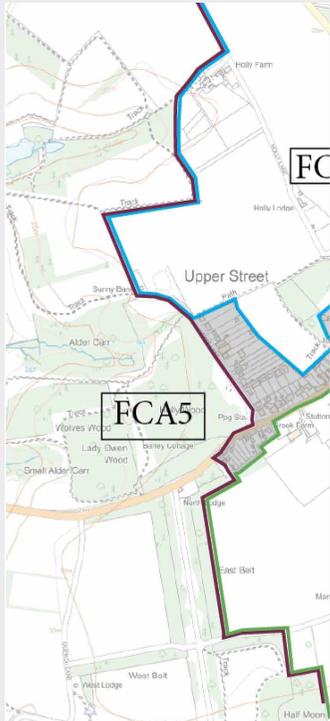
LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations & aspects of value	HIGH value: Landscape in AONB. Three listed buildings in the area, including Crepping Hall. High recreation value from footpath network. Strong estate farm character.	Visual prominence Vulnerability of key views	MODERATE sensitivity: The open parts of the farmed landscape are visual sensitive. Sensitivity reduces along the village edges where there is mature vegetation arranged in smaller scale patterns.
Landform	LOWER value: Flat topography key contributor to character but not sensitive to losses.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	MODERATE/HIGH sensitivity: Many receptors here - change perceived from village edge footpaths, rear gardens and from the main road. Residents and visitors.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	MODERATE value: Clear influence of of late enclosure estate farmland which is a strong contributor to character. Hedges often absent, amalgamated fields.	Tranquillity / activity	MODERATE sensitivity: Points near the main road can be busy. Tranquillity increases to the south. A rural feel prevails.
Settlement edges, & gateways	MODERATE value: Historic settlement pattern is evident, although subject to infill. Small meadows backing onto settlement have historic value.	Aesthetic perception	MODERATE to HIGH sensitivity: Scenic compositions comprising hedges and farmland, and the village edge tucked into vegetation. Mature 'treed' skylines.

### Change management in FCA4 should account for:

- Development is generally less appropriate in the AONB. NPPF and Local Plan Policy requires any development to avoid harm to the special character and scenic qualities of AONB landscapes. However small scale, affordable, exceptional or innovative design can be supported in places where a successful and sympathetic response to landscape and setting can be demonstrated.
- The undeveloped gap between the main village and Upper Street should be conserved given the visual amenity it offers. Development to link the two clusters, or erode the gap, is not appropriate
- There maybe opportunities for single plots or very small developments to 'mesh' successfully, eg. where the village edge has indentations, but patterns such as small-scale meadow boundaries or historic hedge lines must be conserved. Detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of any such proposal.
- Any development should be attached to the existing village edges. The farmland is more open and visually sensitive and has limited capacity to accommodate development.
- Any new development in this area must seek to integrate within substantial boundary hedges and trees. New boundary planting should use only native species. Linear forms are appropriate in line with the estate character of the adjacent farmland.
- Vernacular materials (brick, clay tiles, render) are most appropriate although visual prominence can be reduced with use of timber on both elevations and roofs. Large windows likely to spill light into adjacent dark landscapes should be avoided.

LCA4: Overall sensitivity Values					
Landscape Value	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low

## Fringe Character Area 5: Description



### Summary

Land is flat along the village edge then falls towards the west into the tributary Samford valley, and south towards the estuary. This character is very scenic and is dominated by the parkland setting of Stutton Hall and its wooded estate. South of the main road the character is more formal and geometric, north of the main road it is more organic in form and rural in character as woodland and farmland interact. Apart from the estate buildings settlement is absent. It is an important part of the footpath network, linking walkers down to the estuary from the west side of the village and offers a series of experiences and views finally culminating in the estuary itself and views across the water to Mistley.

### Wider character context and location

Common to the entire settlement, the village fringes are in the 'Plateau Estate Farmlands' LCT of the Suffolk LCA. Towards the west, on the edge of the Samford Valley, the 'Rolling valley farmlands' LCT is found.

The character area comprises the parkland setting of Stutton Hall south of the main road, and land west of Lewis Lane to the north. The character area is entirely in the AONB.

### Elevation/topography/position in the landscape

Land is fairly flat along the village edge on the east side on and just above the 30m contour. The settlement sits on the western edge of the plateau. A short distance from the edges of the village land begins a gentle descent towards the west and the Samford valley. The topography becomes more complex and gently rolling along the winding course of the tributary valley.

Stutton Hall sits on the sloping estuary valleyside to the south about halfway between the 20 and 25m contour.

### Landcover and land use

Land use directly abutting the settlement is woodland which forms abrupt and visually impenetrable edges.

To the south of the main road the landscape is part of the estate of Stutton Hall and is laid out as a formal parkland. The wooded groves either side of the driveway to the Hall are a strong geometric feature and define the westward limits of the village.

To the north of the main road there is a block of woodland some 100 years old with farmland beyond. Here forms are less geometric and softer, more organic shapes prevail as more ancient patterns endure within the Samford valley. Arable fields and a reservoir lie further out on the valleysides to the southwest.

### Interface between settlement and rural edges

The character area has only a small interface with the settlement. It adjoins the west side of Lewis Lane where houses face onto the woodland. A single bungalow - Sunny Bank is found further north along Lewis Lane, isolated from the village edge. (This gained approval for a rebuild in 2020).

To the south of the main road sits a small number of cottages and the Gardeners Arms pub forming the limit of linear development along Manningtree Road. Again, these face into woodland opposite.

An attractive red brick lodge building sits at the entrance gates to Stutton Hall and together, the lodge and the views down the tree lined drive, also provide a form of gateway feature to the whole village. The Hall itself is set more than 750m south of the road, behind a further set of walled gates, and only glimpses of its tudor chimneys are visible. It appears as a prestigious arrival point to Stutton.

## Fringe Character Area 5: Description

### Aspects of value and heritage

The area has significant heritage and landscape value. The landscape is designated AONB. There are two grade II\* listed buildings at Stutton Hall - the Hall itself and its walls and gatehouse to the north.

As well as high value farmland, much of the area is parkland and valued for its high scenic quality, associated contribution to the natural beauty of the AONB, high number of trees and historic cultural value. The landscape is being well managed and is in good condition.

Access: There is a good footpath/bridleway network offering peaceful scenic walks. Footpaths head south towards the estuary which can be reached via the bottom of Queech Lane and Stutton Mill. Part of quite a long circular route, footpaths here tend to be quieter than other routes around the village.

A bridleway heads into open countryside north from Lewis Lane. This offers scenic views over the Samford Valley.

### Vegetation character

Woodland is present in various forms. North of the main road there is a large plantation used for timber production and possible game shooting, judging by the covers of large grass seen to the north. From a narrow wood called Holly Wood seen on 1920s maps it now extends to the top of Lewis Lane.

The parkland, with its groves and avenues, dates from the late 19th/early 20th century - woodland is notably absent from this area on the OS maps from the 1880s. Species include oak, beech, horse chestnut and Scots pine which emerge above the other trees with jagged outlines.

### Visual and perceptual experience

Views around the village edge are generally short range and confined by the high degree of tree cover. Longer views are possible along parkland axes.

Away from the village edge, the experience becomes particularly tranquil and scenic, where mature woodland interacts with rolling valley-side topography, wildlife is experienced and the sounds of the estuary begin to be heard.

### Management Objectives

- Conserve the parkland and protect the landscape settings of the listed features where the landscape contributes to their significance.
- Protect the low key rural character of Queech Lane.
- Little opportunity for development along existing village edge because land use is currently dominated by woodland. Protect and conserve the woodland along the village edge.
- Protect the area's key views.

### Fringe Character Area 5: Illustrative photographs



View over the Samford Valley from footpath north of Lewis Lane



The plantation woodland is used for timber production



Stutton Hall's impressive driveway



Stutton Hall's attractive gatelodge



Woodland edges the village on the west of Lewis Lane



## Fringe Character Area 5: Sensitivity and value

### Landscape Value and Visual Sensitivity:

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations & aspects of value	HIGH value: - Landscape in AONB. - Important heritage assets, Grade II* house and historic parkland lie to the south	Visual prominence Vulnerability of key views	MODERATE sensitivity: Much of this area is out of sight behind tree belts but is served by network of footpaths.
Landform	MODERATE value: Flat along village edge and less sensitive. Gently rolling valley sides adjoin - these are more sensitive to change.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH sensitivity: Walkers passing along the various footpaths and quiet lanes.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH value: Historic avenues and features endure in the parkland. Regular woodland. Landscape is in good condition. High value for wildlife.	Tranquillity / activity	HIGH sensitivity: High degree of tranquillity. Activity on farmland from large machines.
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH value: Wooded edges are distinctive, strongly rural and the Lodge house at Stutton Hall is a distinctive village entrance feature.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH sensitivity: Rich, historic, scenic views where historic properties and pastoral landscapes combine, but views not always available to the public.

Change management in FCA5 should account for the following:

- Development is generally not appropriate in the AONB. Policy is in place to require development to provide protection of its special character.
- There is little opportunity for development along this village edge which is mostly woodland. The private ownership of Stutton Hall parkland and high heritage significance means development is not likely to be an issue in this character area.
- The western village limits are well defined by Stutton Hall. Development west of the existing village edge is not appropriate.
- Interpretation boards for visitors could potentially tell the story of Stutton’s great houses and gardens even if views of them aren’t possible.

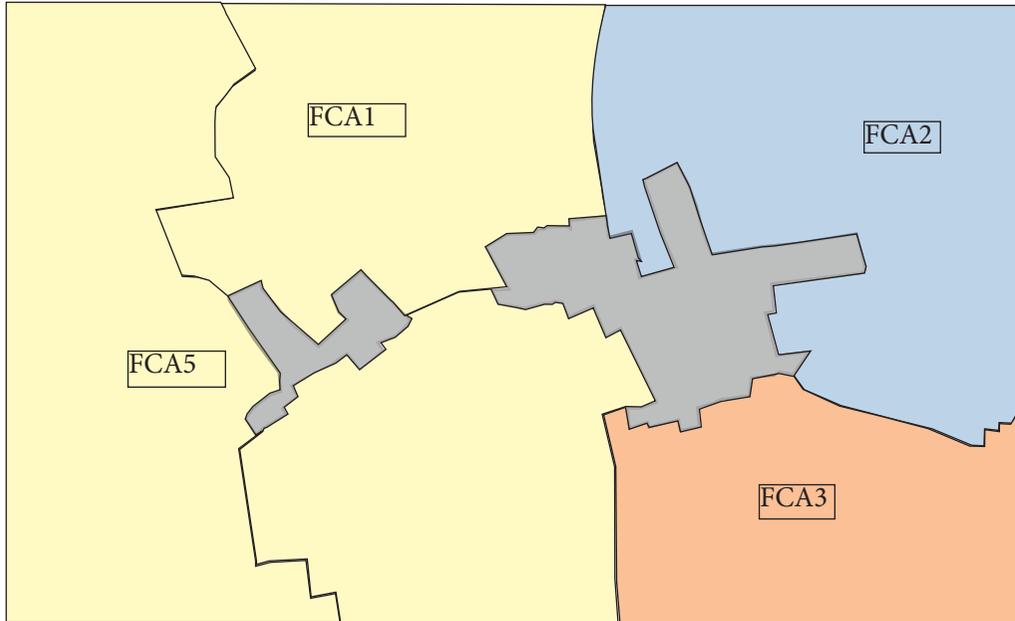
LCA5: Overall sensitivity Values					
Landscape Value	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low

# 7. Summary

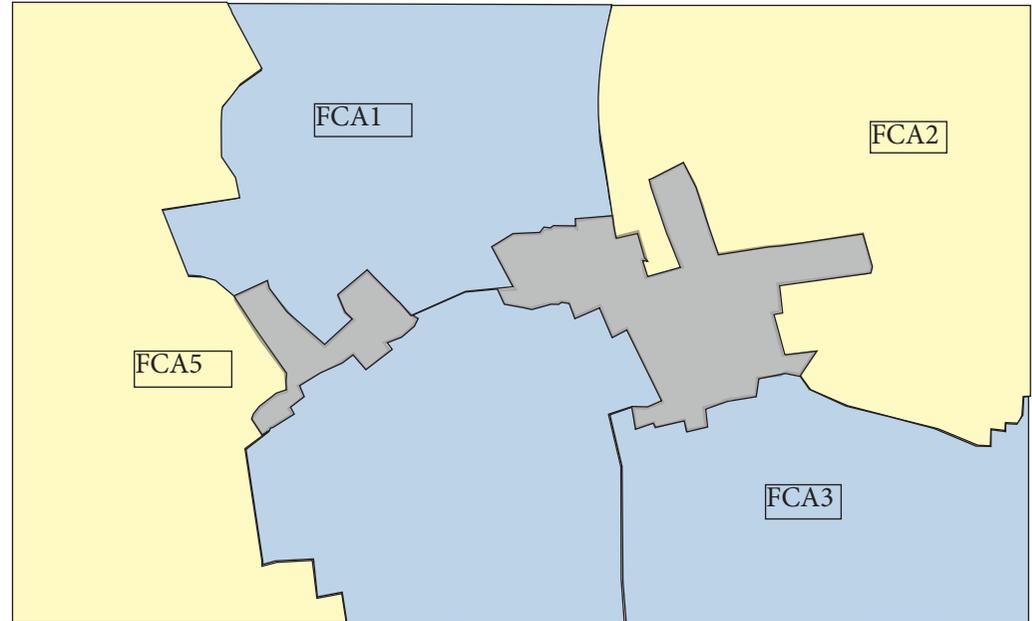
## Comparative sensitivities across the village

These 'heat' maps are for comparative purposes only - please refer to the detail in the text for more information.

Landscape Value



Landscape Value



Visual Sensitivity

KEY	
Orange	Very High
Yellow	High
Blue	Moderate
Light Green	Modest
Light Yellow	Low

## 7. Summary

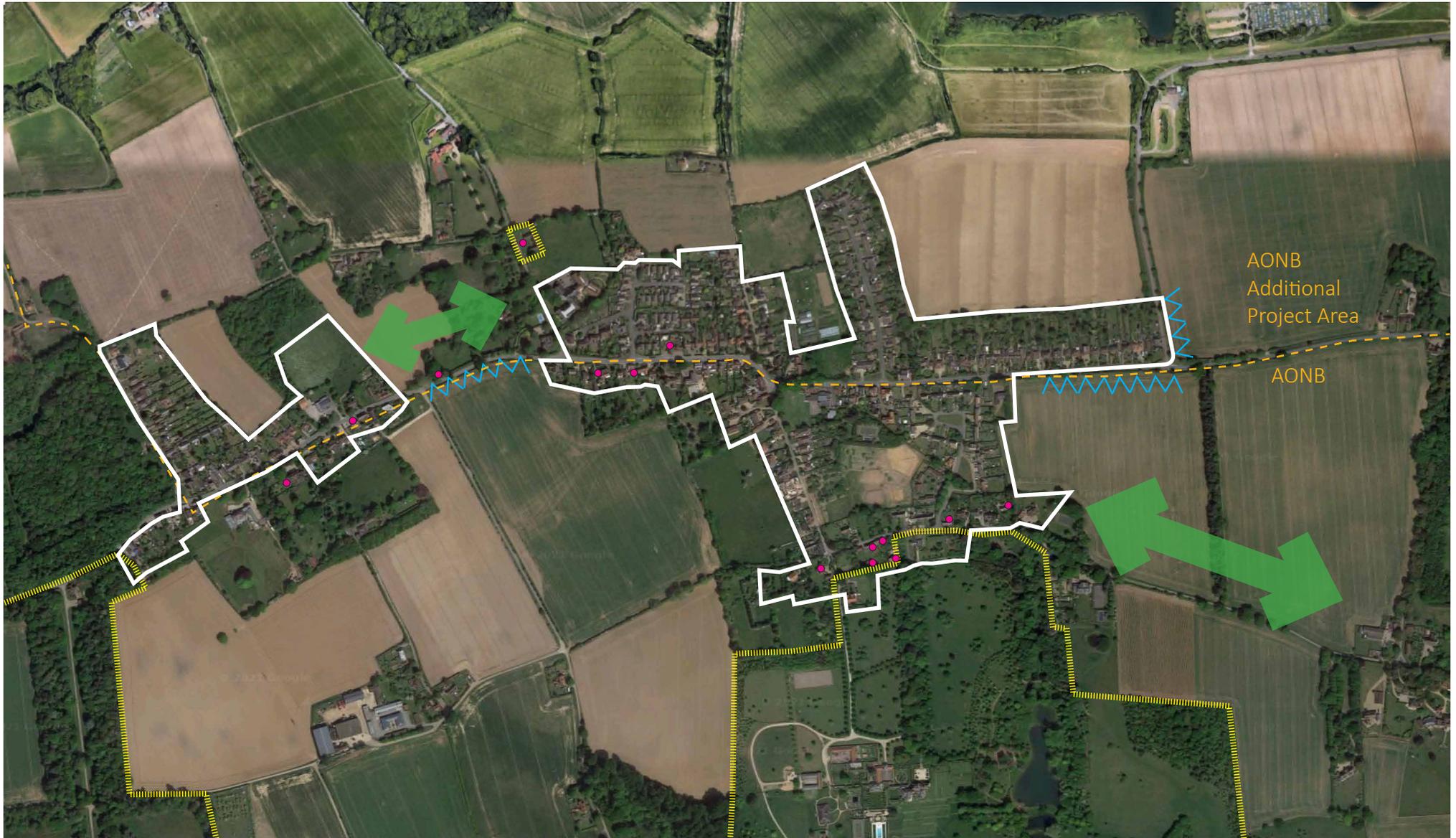
1. Stutton has a high quality landscape setting with many positive aspects and notably few detractors. The quality of the landscape in the southern half of the parish is recognised through designation as part of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB. The AONB was recently extended in the west side of the parish in 2020. The northern part of the parish forms the immediate setting of the AONB and has many of the features that are seen in the designated area. In planning terms the AONB designation places greater constraints on potential development, recognising the need to avoid adverse impacts on their special qualities of AONBs, which are of importance at a national level.
2. The village enjoys a peaceful location set back from shores of the Stour estuary. Although, somewhat physically separated from the river, the walks to the shoreline are rewarded with a highly scenic and tranquil experience, enriched with views to impressive houses, wildlife and the dynamic sights and sounds of the estuary. Elsewhere the dense network of rights of ways will take you north to Alton Water where a different kind of waterside walk awaits. Often quite busy, the informal and formal recreation on offer is a valued local resource and local visitor hot spot.
3. The natural environment is rich with ancient woodland, plantation, historic groves, meadows and everywhere, a wealth of mature boundary and shoreline oak trees. These, along with 'non-natives' such as the parkland pines are ever present distinctive skyline features. The farmland has valuable light friable soils which are frequently seen ridged up ready for potato growing. The farmland landscape has a well cared for and high value feel.
4. The village has grown up in this setting, its linear form spreading over time along the plateau and its geometric network of roads and lanes, a village focused on agriculture and later, the import and export of related products by water. The scenic shores were occupied early on by the lords of the manors and these properties continued to develop into the large landed estates that today are found all along the shores of the estuary. Although modern 20th century housing estates the have somewhat disrupted the linear pattern of the village, the historic form of the village is still appreciable. It remains generally well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation. Only in the east has the Holbrook Road ribbon development proven harder to integrate in the open landscape found on that side of the settlement.
5. Recent development has taken place in the village centre but few opportunities for growth remain inside the village boundaries. Development on fringe 'greenfield' sites are likely to play a part in the delivery process because there are insufficient brownfield or infill sites available. The Suffolk County LCA notes the Plateau Estate Farmlands, that enclose the village, have more potential capacity, to accept significant settlement expansion than the ancient countryside of the claylands. *'Its simple patterns, modern land cover pattern and extensive regular tree cover can be adapted to accept larger growth. There is a long history of settlement and tightly clustered settlements have the capacity to expand'*.
6. The situation in Stutton is not as simple as that. It is strongly influenced by its designated landscape and privately owned parklands and woodlands. The southern and western parts of the parish are designated and, generally, expansion south and west is neither appropriate in policy terms nor feasible in any case as there is little opportunity.
7. The northern and eastern fringes have more physical capacity being open farmland and some small meadows. Character varies from the wide open geometric landscape to the east to the smaller grained patterns and wooded fields along the northern edges, west of Alton Hall Lane. Development in each half presents different issues.
8. In the east, the simplicity and lack of features means there may be physically space/scope to accommodate future village growth. There are no heritage features. However, this part of the village is visually sensitive for the same reasons - there is little vegetation available to assimilate built form, and edges are abrupt and straight. Change would be potentially noticeable from a wide area and initially hard to integrate. However, successful mitigation, responsive to local character, through structural planting is very possible in such landscapes, given time for it to mature. There may be opportunities to improve the existing village edges and gateway points at the same time.
9. In the north west of the village the visual sensitivity is generally lower. Enclosures are smaller in scale, there are lots of mature trees in the village fringes, hedges and indented edges. These conditions combine to make it possible that small developments might be assimilated without adverse impact on the character of the landscape or on visual amenity. However, there are several aspects of landscape value such as historic field boundary patterns, the wealth of mature oak trees, the isolated position of outlying cottages. There are also heritage assets here whose landscape settings contribute to their significance. These contribute to the character of the village and need protecting.

### Future change management

10. During the completion of this study the Neighbourhood Planning team resolved that no site be put forward for allocation for housing. Babergh produced minimum housing requirement figures and in Stutton the number of approvals or recent completions already met the delivery required of Stutton during the plan period. Allocation beyond the number (65) was still an option but critical in the decision of the NP group was the wording of the new JLP policy SP04 (Housing Spatial Distribution). SP04 allows additional housing allocation where the conditions are suitable - the policy states.. *“should the unique characteristics and planning context of the designated area enable so”*.
11. Given the identified unsuitability of much of the landscape for development, given its AONB designation and the presence of significant historic parkland settings, the NP group felt justified not allocating over and above the requirement. It is recognised that speculative applications are still to be expected. This report will help support the parish to withstand development in unsuitable locations, and along with the Design Code being prepared by AECOM, require higher standards in places where development can be supported.
12. This report discusses the sensitivity of the parish to development only in landscape terms. It should be reemphasised here that in reality many other factors will influence which land comes forward for development. This study can take no account of other factors that would influence development, for example, availability of land, flood risk, sustainability issues, water management or whether highways access is possible.
13. Aside from development, the landscape is also likely to face other pressures. Although always subject to human forces for change, the environment and now faces considerable future uncertainty with climate change. For example, over past decades, the decline of elms and now ash has changed the landscape, and other diseases are likely to arrive to threaten other tree species in tandem with our warming climate. Visitor numbers have increased considerably in recent years in Stutton. Whilst the landscape setting is an asset for locals, changes bringing about more visitors have impacts that must be addressed sympathetically for the community.
14. In addition to putting forward objectives to protect and maintain the parish landscape, the working group wish to look for opportunities to make improvements and develop a resilient landscape structure. Given the climate emergency we are facing, the government has set ambitious tree planting targets. Opportunities should be taken to plant trees in this parish that can enhance the landscape without adversely affecting its local distinctive field patterns and character.
15. Tree planting objectives include:
  - Increase woodland cover and develop well managed woodlands
  - Encourage land owners to improve hedgerows by filling gaps and reinstating lost hedges. Manage at appropriate height for biodiversity.
  - Plant diverse range of native species in edge, understorey and canopy layers. Manage to increase biodiversity. Seek advice from ecologists and arboriculturists.
  - Look to provide linked woodland areas with public access to enable movement and connect paths.
  - Promote structural landscaping to assimilate new built form and screen any unsightly structures or car parking etc. Can also use to help address night time light pollution.
  - Use trees to enhance the entrance routes into the village, to improve the attractiveness and demarcate boundaries (both roads and footpaths). Create or enhance access to public rights of way in the area.
16. Other key landscape related design factors include:
  - Carefully consider boundaries of any new development, especially where they interface with the countryside, to ensure they restore or create an appropriate rural edge - native hedging and trees - to avoid suburbanisation of the adjoining area. Ensure boundary hedges are managed by third parties rather than left to householders. Include locally distinctive Holly in hedge mixes.
  - Look for opportunities to plant skyline trees - not just the small fruit tree varieties which tend to be specified, and which rarely achieve any impact. This requires commitment to increased foundation depths/technical solutions and associated uplift in costs.
  - All development proposals will be expected to provide a net gain for biodiversity.
  - Rigorously applied highway standards can have a sizeable adverse impact in rural areas. Use discretion to limit their application particularly where new access points are created onto existing roads. A minimal approach to lighting, signage, concrete kerbing, etc is recommended.
17. Refer to the Village Design Code for further guidance on new development.

## 7. Summary - Map of constraints

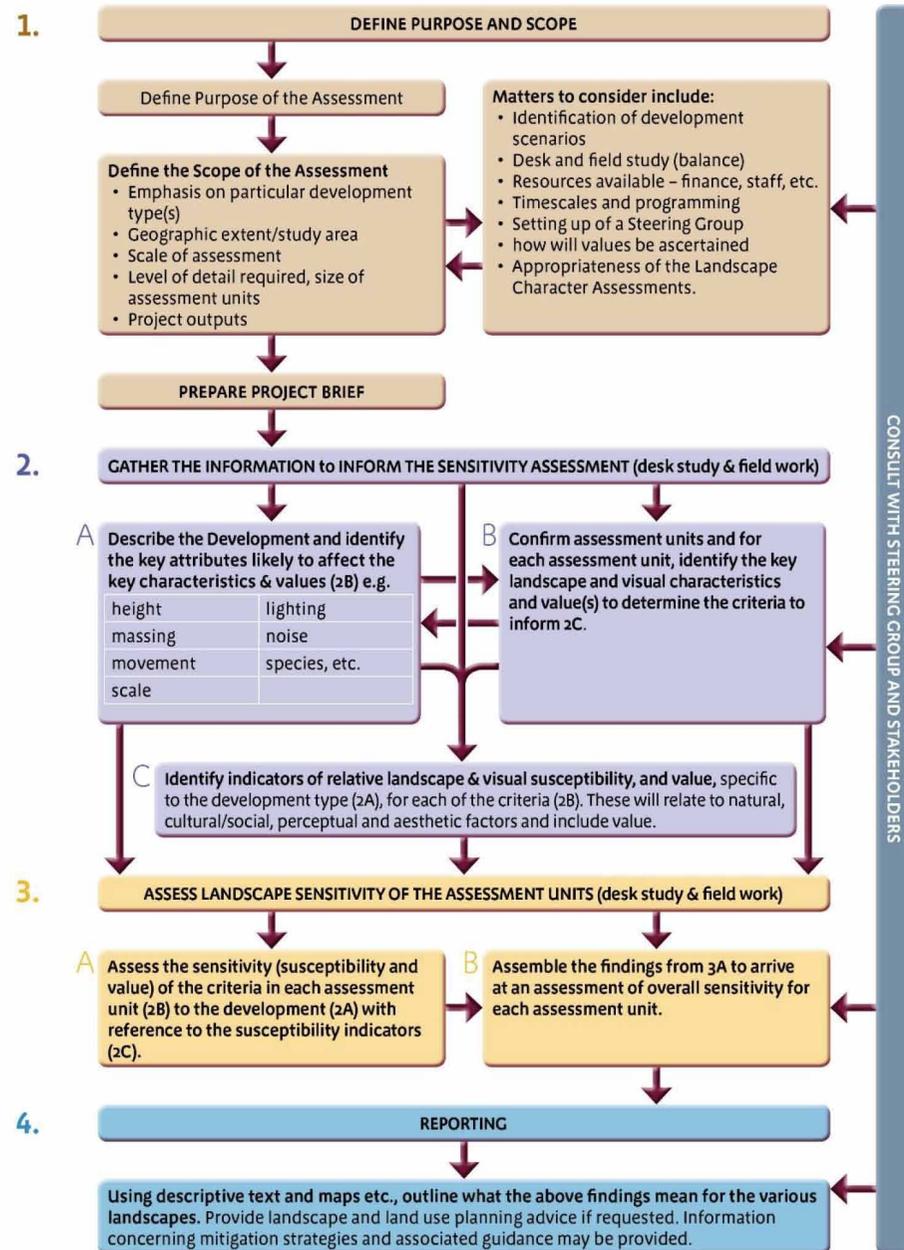
-  Landscape gaps
-  AONB boundary
-  Visually sensitive edge
-  Notable heritage curtilage



# APPENDIX

Appendix 1:  
 Process diagram reproduced from page 12 of 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment' Natural England, Christine Tudor (2019)

Figure 3 The process of Landscape sensitivity assessment



APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF INDICATORS OF VALUE & SENSITIVITY: Landscape

PHYSICAL / LANDSCAPE FACTORS		Lower value and/or sensitivity	←-----→	Higher value and/or sensitivity
Designations and aspects of value	Whether the land parcel, or any of its features, are covered by any designations or protective policies. Indicators of cultural value. Includes attributing value to the historic landscape and heritage assets within it. Where the landscape forms the setting for heritage features such as Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, or ancient woodland, or simply where there is evidence for historic continuity. Also cultural aspects of value and associations - recreational or community related.	No landscape, heritage or habitat designations.  No particular cultural value.		One, or more, features or areas with non-statutory designations e.g. 'Special Landscape Area' or 'Non-designated heritage asset' Some cultural value.  One, or more, features or areas with statutory landscape, heritage or habitat designations present. High value for cultural reasons.
Landform	The extent to which landform plays a role in defining character and sense of place, and how vulnerable the character is to the loss of visible landform.	Topography and landform play little role in defining character		Topography and landform play some role in defining character  Appreciation of topography and landform playing key role in defining character and sense of place
Pattern/ enclosure and condition	This refers to vegetative and field patterns and intactness of habitats. For example, a landscape comprising a complex array of different habitats and/or land cover features such as long established intact hedgerows or ancient woodland will have a higher value than a simple open landscape where structural elements have been lost. Components with a semi-natural character would be highly valued. Condition relates to state of repair of the characteristic features and their resultant role in representation of character.	Simple, large-scale, open; little evidence of historic field patterns; Straightened boundaries and field amalgamation; hedges often absent - remnant boundary vegetation only. Landscape in poor condition. Little indication of time-depth / historic continuity		Medium scale field sizes, evidence of partial boundary loss. Condition of hedges sometimes poor. Some hedgerow trees endure. Some indication of time-depth/ historic continuity  Small scale, fine grain; historic field patterns strongly in evidence; limited amalgamation, intact network of hedges; regular hedgerow trees. Landscape in good condition. Strong indication of time-depth / historic continuity
Settlement edges, and gateways	Consideration of the nature and form of the adjacent settlement edges and gateways. Long established, settlement edges where low density, historic settlement prevails, untouched by modern influences, are more valued than those where the historic settlement edge is no longer evident, owing to modern development and where 20th century development has resulted in a stark interface.	Abrupt interface between edge of settlement and countryside; boundary vegetation absent or sparse, aspects of modern development present		Settlement edge varied and indistinct, some modern elements present.  Porous edge to settlement, breaks allow interface between settlement and countryside; buffered by historic landscape pattern; native vegetation softens edges.

APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF INDICATORS OF VALUE & SENSITIVITY: Visual and Perceptual

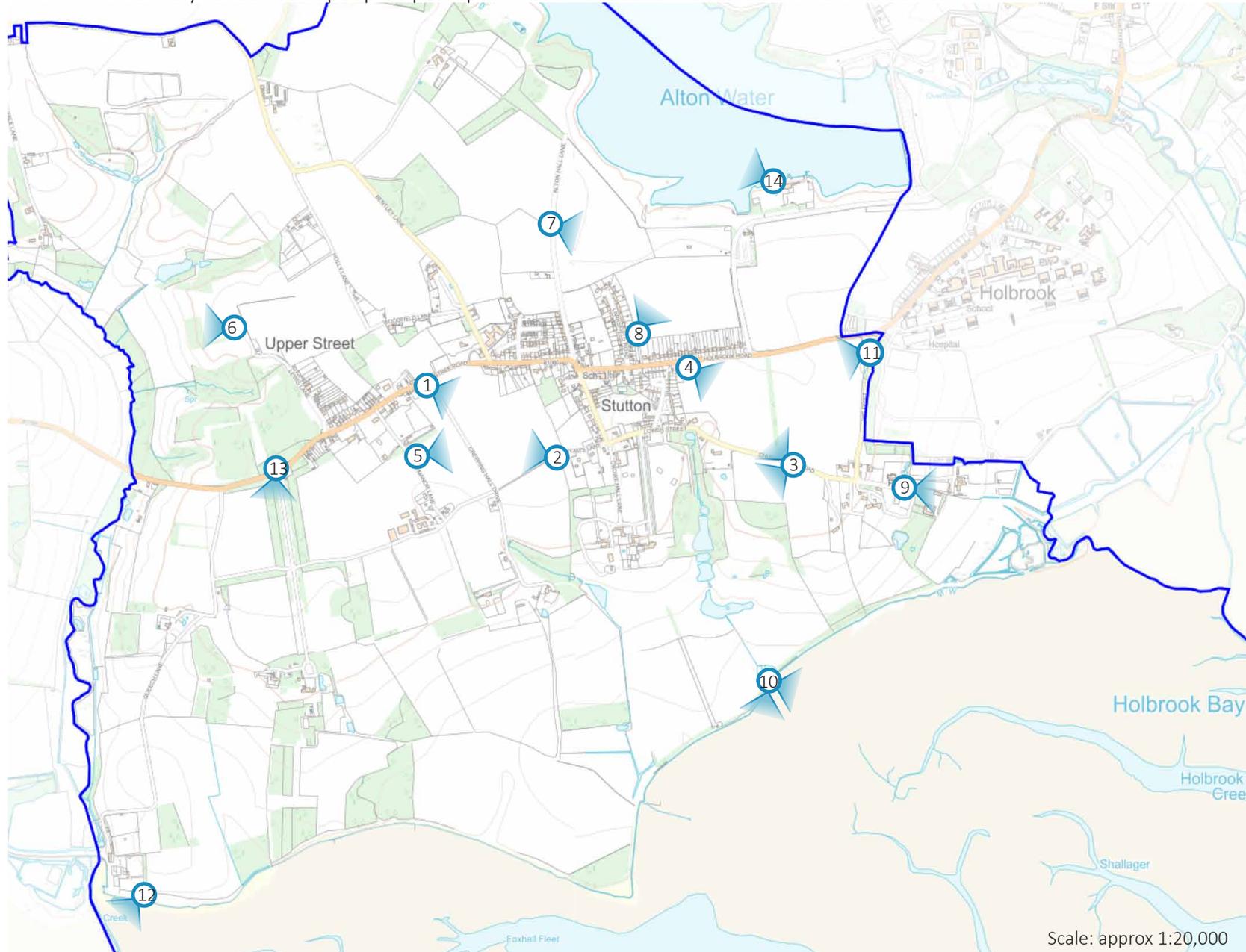
VISUAL AND PERCEPTUAL FACTORS		Lower value and/or sensitivity ←-----→ Higher value and/or sensitivity		
<b>Visual prominence Vulnerability of key views</b>	<p>How generally visible the land is from the surrounding landscape, settlement edges, highways or rights of way. Land that is visually prominent, owing to the combined effects of landform, tree cover or settlement is more visually sensitive than land which is enclosed and hard to see into.</p> <p>Views from major routes are deemed more sensitive than land that is only visible from the minor lanes.</p> <p>Includes consideration of the extent to which footpaths users are likely to be affected by views of residential development.</p> <p>Higher sensitivity is attributed to land easily seen as part of one or more of the key views, lower sensitivity is attributed where land is not seen within any of the key views.</p>	<p>Conditions combine to make views of land generally difficult to experience.</p> <p>Limited visibility from principal routes.</p> <p>No views from footpaths.</p> <p>Land parcel not easily seen within key views</p>	<p>Some views available where conditions allow.</p> <p>Moderately visible in views from principal routes.</p> <p>Views from a few points on footpaths and/or at longer range</p> <p>Part of land parcel seen in some key views</p>	<p>Visually prominent, forming part of view from many points.</p> <p>Integral part of view from one or more principal routes.</p> <p>Direct views from multiple footpaths, or at close range.</p> <p>Land parcel is prominent in one or more key views</p>
<b>Types of receptors experiencing visual change</b>	<p>Sensitive viewers would be residents, tourists and those experiencing views from Listed Buildings or from within a Conservation Area. Less sensitive are viewers engaged in travel or at their place of work, for example.</p>	<p>Users of low sensitivity; e.g. road users, people at work</p>	<p>Moderately sensitive; e.g. some views from dwellings or small number of Listed Buildings</p>	<p>Highly sensitive; visitors, direct views from Listed Building and/or Conservation Area</p>
<b>Tranquillity / activity</b>	<p>Aspects including traffic noise, movement from people or vehicles, sense of remoteness and tranquillity. Landscapes with a higher degree of remoteness and tranquillity will have a higher sensitivity to residential development.</p>	<p>Rarely tranquil, regular human activity seen and/or heard</p>	<p>Moderate tranquillity; some human activity seen and/or heard</p>	<p>Relatively remote and tranquil, little human activity seen or heard</p>
<b>Aesthetic perception</b>	<p>This is the more subjective of the judgments. It covers sensitivity in terms of aesthetic attributes such as interplay of landform and landscape structure, texture, naturalness, the presence or absence of detracting features or human activity. More sensitive landscapes have a more aesthetically pleasing combination of features, likely indicated by complexity, variety, and naturalness, and absence of human scale features.</p>	<p>Simple and uniform in texture; sense of naturalness eroded; human scale features apparent.</p> <p>Unlikely to be considered scenic.</p>	<p>Moderately varied texture, reasonably good degree of naturalness; some features of human scale. Moderately scenic.</p>	<p>Complex and varied texture, high degree of naturalness with few features of human scale.</p> <p>Scenic.</p>

## APPENDIX 4: References

- Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Natural Beauty Assessment. September 2017. Natural England
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths - Additional Project Area Valued Landscapes Assessment. AFA. March 2020
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Management Plan. 2018-23
- Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council. March 2018. Place Services.
- Appendix sheet for Babergh - Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council. March 2018. Place Services.
- Natural Beauty and Special Qualities Indicators LDA Design Nov. 2016
- Sensitivity Assessment Vol 1 Landscape Fringes of Ipswich. July 2018. AFA
- Heritage Impact Assessment for Local Plan Site Allocations, Stage 1 Strategic appraisals. 2020. LUC.
- Stutton hall and Crowe hall: the development of two designed landscapes on the Stour estuary, Suffolk. C. 1500-2017. P. Shone. 2017

## Appendix 5: Key Views assessment

A 'key' view is one that would be generally recognised as having notable qualities or features, landmarks, or a particularly attractive composition that might cause people to pause and appreciate the scene. It is likely to feature in people's perceptions of what Stutton looks like in their memories.



View 1: Crepping Hall Drive footpath - to the southeast.

View 2: Hyams Lane on village edge - west into countryside

View 3: Church Field Road - looking northwest and southwest

View 4: Holbrook Road on village edge - looking southeastward

View 5: Manor Lane - looking east

View 6: Lewis Lane - westwards over wooded rolling countryside

View 7: Alton Hall Lane - eastwards across countryside

View 8: Footpath north of Holbrook Rd - looking north towards the reservoir

View 9: Holbrook Church - view east towards Bay

View 10: Estuary e.g. at Graham's Wharf - multiple views

View 11: North end of The Drift - westwards

View 12: Shoreline near Stutton Mill House - view to southwest

View 13: Stutton Park drive - view to the south

View 14: Alton Water centre - westwards