



# **Landscape Character Assessment of the Essex Coast**

CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

**Preface**

This document was commissioned by SAIL (Schéma d'Aménagement Intègre du Littoral) and Essex County Council. It aims to collate current information about the landscape character of the Essex coast in a structure designed to help inform future planning decisions. The study involved consultation and gathering of existing data and information and we appreciate the time and advice given by many individuals within Essex County Council.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the report is factually accurate, its contents, opinions, conclusions and recommendations are entirely those of the consultant who carried out the study. It is for information purposes only and to be used as a background technical document.

Catherine Bailey wrote the draft of the Mid-Essex Landscape Character Assessment in 2002.

We are grateful for the guidance and advice provided by the steering group:

- Beverley McClean - Essex Estuaries Partnership
- Alex Midlen - Essex Estuaries Partnership
- Crispin Downs - Essex County Council
- Sarah Green - Essex County Council
- Martin Wakelin - Essex County Council

With additional advice particularly from:  
 Ray Brewer - Essex County Council  
 Nigel Brown - Essex County Council  
 Terry Coehlo - Essex County Council  
 Lynn Dyson-Bruce - Essex County Council  
 Debbie Knopp - Essex County Council  
 Peter Spurrier - Essex County Council  
 and Oliver Ishmael and Dennis Bauszus in GIS

Photographs by Catherine Bailey, Mary McHugh and Almudena Quiralte.

The project team who produced this document was:  
 Mary McHugh  
 Almudena Quiralte



# Contents

## PREFACE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

GENERAL BACKGROUND

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF MID ESSEX LCA

METHODOLOGY

GEOLOGY AND LANDFORM

SOILS

HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

SETTLEMENT AND LAND-USE

CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

ECOLOGY

STUDY AREA

## PART ONE. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES

UNVEGETATED FORESHORE

INTER-TIDAL SALT MARSH

DIVERSE COASTAL MARSHLAND

UNIFORM COASTAL MARSHLAND

URBAN FRINGE MARSHLAND

RIVER TERRACE FARMLANDS

MIXED MARSHLAND EDGE

ROLLING CLAY FARMLANDS

VALE TOP FARMLANDS

ENCLOSED VALLEY-SIDES

## PART TWO. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

•INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

•LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

SOUTH ESSEX COAST

AVELEY, WENNINGTON & RAINHAM MARSHES

TILBURY, MUCKING & FOBBING MARSHES

CHADWELL AND WEST TILBURY

WEST CANVEY / SHELLHAVEN

CANVEY BENFLEET

## MID ESSEX COAST

CROUCH ESTUARY AND FOULNESS ARCHIPELAGO

ROCHFORD MIXED FARMLANDS

RIVER ROACH

CANEWDON SLOPING CLAYLANDS

RIVER CROUCH

BURNHAM SLOPING CLAYLANDS

DENGIE COASTLANDS

TILLINGHAM ANCIENT FARMLANDS

DENGIE ANCIENT CLAYLANDS

UPPER BLACKWATER ESTUARY

LOWER BLACKWATER ESTUARY

MALDON MIXED FARMLANDS

TOLLESBURY ROLLING FARMLANDS

TOLLESBURY COASTLANDS

## NORTH ESSEX COAST

MERSEA ISLAND

COLCHESTER CLAYLANDS AND MARSHLANDS

LOWER ROMAN RIVER

LOWER COLNE ESTUARY

UPPER COLNE ESTUARY

BRIGHTLINGSEA ENCLOSED VALELANDS

BRIGHTLINGSEA FLAG CREEK

ST OSYTH COASTLANDS

HOLLAND COASTLANDS

HAMFORD WATER

STOUR ESTUARY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## CONSULTEES

## APPENDICES

FIELD SURVEY SHEET USED FOR MID-ESSEX LCA



**Essex County**

## Executive Summary

### CONTENTS

Preface
Executive Summary
Landscape Framework
Part One. Landscape Character Types
Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
Bibliography
Consultees
Appendices

Because of its proximity to London there has been longstanding use of the coastal area of Essex not only for holidays and recreation, but also for industry and military purposes. This seeming contradiction is explained by the remoteness of some of its creeks and headlands.

This document aims to collate current information about the landscape character of the Essex coast, to help inform future planning decisions.

Several Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) studies have been undertaken of the county of Essex. This document, The Landscape Character Assessment of the Essex Coast, co-ordinates access to those character assessments which have been published to date, whether at a regional or local scale.

However the sections referring to South East Essex and North Essex have been included via links to other assessments because this document also includes the publication of the Mid Essex Coast Local Landscape Character Assessment for the first time and that section is here presented in greater detail.

The aim is to provide an extended overview from Thurrock, part of the Thames Gateway, in the south to Harwich and the Stour Estuary bordering the county of Suffolk. It concentrates on those sections which analyse the Essex coast and provides visual data and links to further information available through Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

The structure of this document aims to allow further LCAs to be incorporated in the future, so that a 'one-stop' access to information remains current. Thus a bench-mark from which to base a description of the unique character of the Essex coast has been created and can be revised or amended to remain up to date.

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

### Countryside Character Initiative and Landscape Character Assessment

The landscape is what determines the character of the British countryside: it belongs to each and every one of us. Policy makers, practitioners and special interest groups need techniques to identify what gives a locality its own sense of place, what makes it different from its neighbouring area, and what conditions should be set for any new development and change.

"Most of us welcome progressive change, but don't want to see development running amok. We applaud new woodland to enhance the landscape, but know that planting and management must be sensitive to the locality.

We can be excited by bold regeneration for places in need of a lift, but recognise that the new development must work around the best of the old, and not sweep it away."

Richard Wakeford Chief Executive, Countryside Agency

The Countryside Character Initiative came about because it was recognised that there was a need for a new approach to landscape assessment which would look at the whole of England's countryside - rather than just specific designated areas - and provide a consistent national framework within which more detailed local landscape assessments would sit.

This new approach led to the task of mapping the country into 159 separate, distinctive character areas. The features that define the landscape of each area are recorded in individual descriptions which explain what makes one area different from another and show how that character has arisen and how it is changing.

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/61081>

## Purpose and Scope (of Mid Essex LCA)

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

The Mid Essex Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was produced in draft form in 2001-2, (hereafter referred to as Mid Essex LCA) and, edited and published here, forms the core part of this document The Landscape Character Assessment of the Essex Coast.

The area covered by the Mid Essex LCA was broadly equivalent to the existing Essex Coastal Protection Belt from Jaywick (near Clacton-on-Sea) to Shoeburyness (near Southend-on-Sea). There is some overlap with the North Essex (Tendring LCA) definitions.

The Essex Coastal Protection Belt is a county planning designation that covers undeveloped coastal areas, together with the estuaries and rivers subject to tidal influence, and which protects them from all but essential development. The belt broadly follows the 10m AOD contour as its inland limit which itself has a strong relationship with the underlying geology and soils. The assessment boundary extends seawards to the low water mark.

The Mid Essex LCA is one of the specific actions that has originated from SAIL (Schéma d'Aménagement Intègre du Littoral), the acronym for a project funded under the European Union Interreg 11c programme that consists of strategic work on integrated coastal zone management and local pilot projects. Building on existing initiatives, including the Blackwater Project, the SAIL Project involves working with a range of organisations to develop a regeneration strategy for the rural coast.

The key aims of the Mid Essex LCA were to:

- identify and describe the local landscape character types and areas of Mid Essex
- establish the condition of these character types and areas and the issues that affect them
- use this assessment as a basis for possible future Heritage Coast status

(The main objectives of the Heritage Coast policy of the old Countryside Commission [now Countryside Agency] was to include the conservation, protection and enhancement of the natural beauty of the coasts, and their heritage features of architectural, historical and archaeological interest)

A proposal to grant Heritage Coast status to the Essex Coast would be based on the information collated in this document, The Landscape Character Assessment of the Essex Coast.

## Methodology (of Mid Essex LCA)

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

The Mid Essex LCA followed the methodology promoted through the Countryside Commission's Countryside Character Programme and Landscape Assessment Guidelines, CCP423, and supported and updated by the Countryside Agency's Interim Landscape Assessment Guidance 1999. It includes historic and cultural factors, but the emphasis on involvement of stakeholders was not addressed.

The factors used to assess landscape character include:

- Physiography: geology, soils, topography, vegetation
- Human activity: land use, settlement, field enclosure, landscape history
- Aesthetics: form, scale, enclosure, unity, colour, views, cultural perceptions

## Geology and Landform

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

Essex has one of the longest coastlines of any county in England comprising complex estuary systems, extensive salt marsh and intertidal areas of international conservation importance. It still has a small but active fishing fleet and, largely due to its proximity to London, has been a traditional holiday area for over a century.

The geology of coastal Essex is a complex array of varying marine, alluvial and glacial drift sediments that overly or border the thick deposits of the London Clay and terrace gravels. The clay is part of the older strata of rocks that form the eastern sector of the London Basin, a bowl created from the Cretaceous chalk. This stiff, dark or bluish-grey clay, that shrinks and cracks during dry weather, is widespread adjoining the coastal strip and forms, together with the terrace gravels, a gently rolling backdrop to the distinctive level coastal marshlands at its margins.



Sands and gravels are exposed as a cliff at Cudmore Grove, Mersea whilst the London Clay forms the spine of the Island and abuts the marshlands from Langenhoe to Great Wigborough, forming rolling farmlands that extend around the north east of Tollesbury to be exposed at the surface again in a narrow belt south of the town and then around Goldhanger.



West of Tollesbury the clay is overlain by a belt of freer-draining terrace deposits.



The bulk of the Dengie Peninsula is shaped from the London Clay, but with a central tract lying inland forming a gently rolling or distinctly undulating plain above 20m AOD. A gravel ridge runs roughly south-west north-east across the Dengie and this important feature was a major influence on the original settlement pattern. On the north coast of Dengie, however, the clay is exposed in a low-lying belt over a wide area between Mundon and Maylandsea, narrowing to a thin but more undulating wedge south of St Lawrence that ends at Bradwell on Sea.

Head deposits, caused by down-slope movement of material in peri-glacial conditions, are found on the clay in scattered drifts along the north bank of the Blackwater and on Dengie.



### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

Along the banks of the River Crouch the London Clay creates a more steeply sloping hummocky landscape extending west of Creeksea to South Woodham Ferrers, and from Hullbridge to Canewdon.

This is topped by a limited band of Claygate Beds around Althorne, which forms a sandy transition at the top of the clay that is exposed along the narrow crest of the valley's side.



The characteristic fringing marshlands protected by sea walls were traditionally grazing marsh but most of the land is now ploughed. They are composed of varied marine sediments lying at the seaward foot of the low clay hills or terrace gravels. These level, and for the most part ancient, marshlands with their relic dykes and ditches often still visible, generally extend no further than 5m AOD above sea level.

In places the junction between these coastal marshlands and the low hills is perceived as a gradual transition, as on the marshland at St Osyth, Langenhoe and again southeast of Maldon. Elsewhere, as at Fingringhoe, above the Mersea Flats at Cudmore Grove and above St Lawrence Bay, the land rises more steeply to around 20m AOD, to give a distinct backdrop to the horizontal planes of the coastal marsh.

This topographical difference is most striking at Creeksea, where the higher land comes to the river's edge as low cliffs, and behind Bridgemarsh Island where the land rises steeply to 50m. Canewdon, which perches on an outcrop of London Clay topped with river terrace gravels, is one of a distinct series of low, but visually dramatic, coastal hills running west, which rises from this matrix of clayey alluviums.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of this coast, however, is the way the alluviums extend to form most of the eastern Dengie peninsula, Wallasea, Foulness and the Roach archipelago, stretching in unremitting horizontals from the defensive sea walls up to 10km inland before the land rises. This trait is most marked on Wallasea Island where the level landscape

is unmarked by tree, counter-wall, creek or building over most of its 5km length. This open character turns almost any elevated position into a ready vantage point from which distant views are only limited by the often misty atmosphere found here at the coast.

East of Rochford the Wakering and Paglesham farmlands are formed on a distinct patchwork of terrace, sands and gravels, overlain by brickearth, all deposits of economic value giving rise to a landscape of worked-out and restored land. The Quaternary sands and gravels, that cover parts of coastal Essex are primarily the result of the Thames and Medway rivers' migration during the last Ice Age. In the final cold period, the Devensian, the brickearths of southeast Essex were formed by the deposition of loess, or windblown silts.



## Soils

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

The soils along the coast associate closely with the geology, reflecting the recent drift deposits, the underlying Tertiary London Clay and the small outcrops of Tertiary sands.

At the coast itself the most common soils are those associated with the marine alluviums. These are deep, generally clayey soils on flat land, with fluctuating groundwater levels giving rise to the risk of flooding in places. Water is controlled by a complex system of criss-crossing drains and ditches, some retaining the curves and bends of natural watercourses whereas others form the straight lines and right angles of the drawing-board.

These soils are found on the marshland of the Colne and Blackwater estuaries, the Rivers Crouch and Roach, the length of Dengie and Foulness and much of the Roach archipelago. On the seaward side of Dengie and Foulness a more silty and calcareous soil exists. This underlies the more recently settled marshlands and has given rise to good quality soils traditionally used for arable crops. The salt marshes themselves are formed on weakly developed soils of varying texture in the intertidal zone. The higher salt marsh was traditionally used for grazing, with wildfowling and

recreation among the creeks.

The hinterlands of the marshes are formed on the clayey soils and loams that have developed on the London Clay and terrace gravels. The sands and gravels found in broad swathes behind the marshlands at Brightlingsea, St Osyth and Fingringhoe have given rise to loams that are variously affected by groundwater but produce soils traditionally used for arable crops.

On Mersea, in the backlands of Dengie and around Paglesham, the finer loamy soils have traditionally given rise to short-term grassland and some field vegetables as well as arable crops.

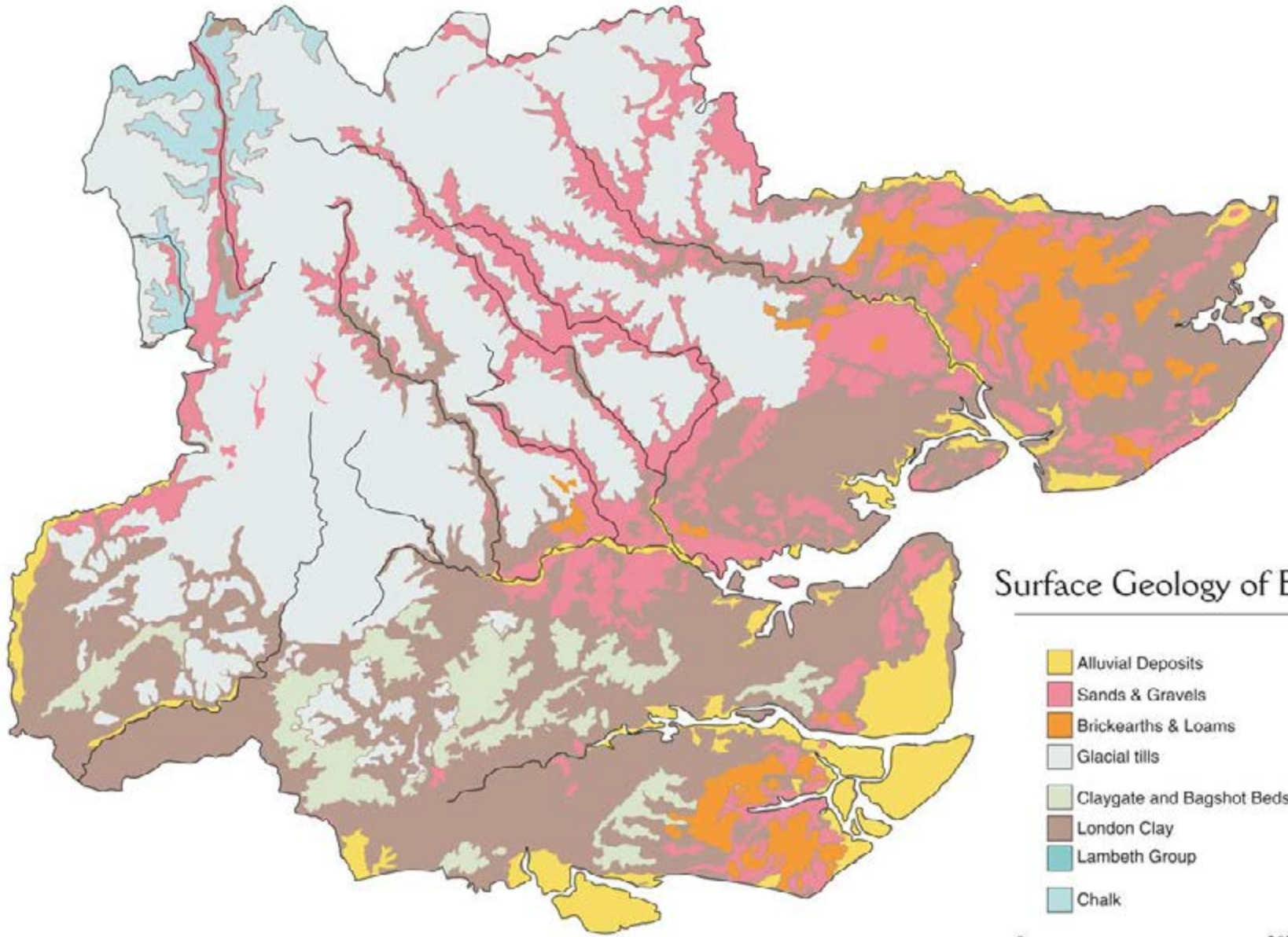
The brown soils found around Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D'Arcy are good quality well-drained loams derived from the underlying gravels. These soils are used for both arable and horticultural crops and also support some woodland.

The higher ground formed on the London Clays gives rise to clayey soils and where topped by river terrace gravels to loamy soils. The clayey soils, forming the higher ground behind the marshes on the Crouch and Blackwater estuaries are often mottled due to water-logging, but are

less wet on the slopes leading down to the river valleys. Traditionally used for dairying, most of this land has now been given over to cereals. Scattered woodlands are locally common, especially on the steeper valley slopes.

Where the London clays and drift deposits are topped by river terrace gravels, in the Dengie hinterlands, around Heybridge and between the Roach and the Crouch, the good quality soils can support horticultural crops and cereals. However, much of the area east of Heybridge has been exploited for its gravels.





Surface Geology of Essex

- Alluvial Deposits
- Sands & Gravels
- Brickearths & Loams
- Glacial tills
- Claygate and Bagshot Beds
- London Clay
- Lambeth Group
- Chalk



© Essex County Council 2001

*This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Essex County Council 076619 2001.*

### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
  - General Background
  - Purpose and Scope
  - Methodology
  - Geology and Landform
  - Soils
  - History and Archaeology
  - Settlement and Land-use
  - Cultural Perceptions
  - Ecology
  - Study Area
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

Archaeological survey work of the coastal zone of Essex has revealed some of the best and most extensive evidence for prehistoric settlements in the county.

At the beginning of the current interglacial, people were already living in most parts of Essex. Inland, the rolling hills and coastal slopes were covered with mixed woodland, possibly dominated by oak and lime. The lower reaches of the rivers were wide and shallow with swampy floodplains of reeds and wet grassy areas.

From the end of the last glaciation, a combination of rising sea level and subsidence of the North Sea basin led to submergence of former coastal lowlands. A sequence of rises and falls between 4,000–10,000 years ago resulted in the effective covering of previously occupied sites by estuarine sediments, thus protecting the sites from further weathering.

Evidence from what were dry-land sites at Hullbridge and Maylandsea suggest that communities at this time were mobile, undoubtedly exploiting resources from the sea as well as the land. Seasonal coastal settlements may have been abandoned each year, and with sea-level rise, their

insubstantial remains have been lost. The inland sites, however, were reoccupied over many centuries and have therefore retained archaeological evidence showing a hunter-gatherer subsistence.

By the Neolithic, there is evidence at many sites in the intertidal zone. The most extensive and completely investigated site is at The Stumble, now in the intertidal zone of the Blackwater Estuary. These sites provide evidence of an economy based on localised agriculture and woodland foraging. Although it is thought the estuarine fringes were still well wooded, there is also evidence of forest clearance. In the Bradwell, Burnham, Wallasea and Foulness area, the coastline was substantially different from that of the present day, being much further inland. What is now land was then a complex of tidal sand and silt flats, and occasional beach ridges of sand, gravels and shells.

The Later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age are marked by increased woodland activity, evidenced by extensive charcoal remains, possibly a late stage of clearance, with decreased settlement in the present intertidal zone. Settlement appears to have moved inland away from the damp estuary edge. At Jaywick an

extensive settlement seems to have evolved behind a protective coastal sand or gravel bar. Following a further sea transgression, the coast took on a form much like the present.

In the later Bronze Age there is evidence of wooden structures such as platforms of brushwood, possible landing stages, hurdle bridges and small lengths of trackway, the latter perhaps allowing sheep access to wetland or marsh, in the sheltered estuaries. The finding of the 'Canewdon Paddle' from this time is evidence that the estuaries and creeks were being used for transport and undoubtedly small boats were used to link the small coastal communities not only within Essex but also across the southern North Sea. Salt production began around the Essex coast in the Middle Bronze Age.

The late Bronze Age was a time of great expansion of settlement and agriculture. Settlement systems in the estuaries would have used the resources available there; the marshes for grazing, the estuaries for hunting, fishing and shellfish gathering. Although shellfish were undoubtedly exploited in previous eras, it is only from the Bronze Age that evidence of cockle and mussel shells become available and numerous settlements

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

are known along the Blackwater, Thames and other Essex estuaries from this time. Evidence also suggests an essentially pastoral agriculture but with relatively high woodland cover, still mainly oak.

The Iron Age and Roman periods, about 2000 years ago, were times of gradual increased population and settlement, with resulting pressure on land. Agriculture intensified and deforestation continued with metal ploughs used for the first time, as these were effective on heavier soils.

The coastal plains and river valleys were characterised by unenclosed farmsteads, villages and hamlets. Evidence for trackways and drove roads linking animal enclosures to settlements has been found. The particular feature, however, of this period are the red hills found widely around the Essex coast resulting from the manufacture of salt.

Salt was important for preserving food, and was made by evaporating sea water in ceramic vessels, the remains of which have given rise to the distinctive red earths of the hills. Remains of the charcoal used for burning can also be found. These red hills appear to be concentrated in the estuaries in the north-east of

the county, just behind the sea wall, maybe relating not only to demand for salt from thriving towns such as Colchester and London but also supply of resources such as fuel and clay to make the ceramic vessels. At Canvey Island there is evidence of what might have been a trans-shipment point for traded goods.

There is evidence from the shellfish and fish bones found on the coast elsewhere in Essex of on-going economies based on marine life; at The Stumble the remains of what may be an Iron Age fish trap have been found. Sheep and goat bones indicate the importance of the marshes for grazing at this time.

Essex's coast, so close to that of Europe, made it vulnerable to invasion from across the channel from Roman times. From then into the twentieth century there is evidence of military defence of the coast, an early example is at the Roman fort of Bradwell on Sea. The Roman site at Bradwell was subsequently chosen as the spectacular site for the Saxon St Peter's on the Wall, one of a group of churches in pivotal positions in relation to Europe that helped re-establish Christianity in England. Also mid-Saxon in origin is the Strood, the causeway from the mainland to Mersea

Island. The most dramatic remains of this period are huge timber fishtraps, many examples of which have been recorded in the Blackwater Estuary.



St Peter's Church

At this time, pollen samples indicate intensification or better management of pasture and increased crop production around the Blackwater. Bradwell was part of a thriving and productive economy with trade by boat likely with East Anglia, Kent and Europe.

The distinctive coastal sea walls that protect large parts of the old grazing marshes of Essex are medieval or post-medieval in origin. At Canvey, Foulness and adjacent islands each marsh was separately protected and only at a later date was the whole island enclosed with walls and the old ones left as counter-walls. In places the timber structure of these ancient sea walls has been exposed where the walls have been undercut, as at Tollesbury Creek.

### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
  - General Background
  - Purpose and Scope
  - Methodology
  - Geology and Landform
  - Soils
  - History and Archaeology
  - Settlement and Land-use
  - Cultural Perceptions
  - Ecology
  - Study Area
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

Waterborne transport was the prime method of movement of both people and goods throughout the greater Thames. From at least the Saxon period every farm would have had a simple quay alongside which boats could tie up. In effect this system survived into the 20th century when barges took straw etc. from the fields of Essex to the horse-powered streets of London, bringing back refuse to manure the fields. The Bronze Age paddle recovered from the Crouch at Canewdon and more recent shipwrecks and reused fragments of vessels are known from several sites, and present potentially important archaeological evidence associated with Britain's development as a maritime nation and a world power. This tradition of maritime movement did not cease completely until after the Second World War with sailing barges in particular still to be found at the wharves of Colchester, Brightlingsea and Maldon.

The importance of shellfish, and specifically oysters around the Blackwater and Colne, continued through to the 19th century. This was the great era of the Essex fishing fleets, of specialized coasters and smacks which dredged under sail from the many small ports around the river estuaries; from Colchester,

Rowhedge, Brightlingsea, West Mersea and Maldon. These fleets fished not only inshore but also for months at a time went to Falmouth or Holland looking for deep-sea oysters and also off the French coast for scallops. It is from this time that the numerous oyster pits that still mark the salt marshes all around the Mid Essex coast can start to be dated.

Oyster storage pits, mostly of post-mediaeval date, occur extensively around the coast. The remains of these can still be clearly seen today. They represent the holding-grounds from which the oysters could be packed before being sent to London and onwards by train on the aptly-named 'Crab and Winkle' lines. These branch lines once linked each small port back to the main line, but some, such as the Tollesbury branch did not even survive the First World War.



In contrast to the many oyster pits, there are few remains of the long history of wildfowling in the marshes. An exception is the once common decoy ponds, often starfish-shaped; many of these were lost in the 1950s and 1960s when the grazing marshes were ploughed. These features were most plentiful on the Blackwater and Dengie marshes in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some remained in use into the middle of 20th century, those that remain being most easily identified by the scrub that gradually chokes them from the banks.



Martello Tower

The defensive role of this part of the Essex coast in post-medieval times continued with construction of earthwork forts at the mouth of the Colne estuary in the 1540s. Remarkably one of these earth forts survives at Cudmore Grove. The 19th century martello towers that form such imposing structures in the low-lying marshlands at Seawick and Point Clear were built as part of a string of

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

fortifications against Napoleon that stretch up the coast to Harwich. In the Thames estuary the importance of defending the approaches to London led to the construction of major defences like Coalhouse and Tilbury forts.

Military activity around Foulness, specifically at Shoebury, dates from 1855 when the experimental range for artillery was transferred from Woolwich, because that location was already too close to neighbouring settlement. Firing ranges were established on the marshes at Aveley, near Purfleet later in the 19th century. The long history of military occupation of Foulness and Purfleet has tended to preserve many of the historic features and wildlife interest of these marshlands.

All around the Essex coast there are extensive remains of Second World War defences and some First World War installations also survive. Cold War weapons' research at Foulness ended recently and the training base and experimental range at Shoeburyness are likely to be partly redeveloped in the near future.



### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
  - General Background
  - Purpose and Scope
  - Methodology
  - Geology and Landform
  - Soils
  - History and Archaeology
  - Settlement and Land-use
  - Cultural Perceptions
  - Ecology
  - Study Area
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

The marshland areas of the Mid Essex coast have been important for agriculture since at least the later Bronze Age. They produced, in particular, wool and dairy produce for both local use and export to London. Although grazing was the dominant farming pattern for centuries, some marshland areas, such as part of Foulness, were intensively farmed as early as the 16th century with a high percentage of the land growing cereals for the London market.

The grazing marshes, which were created during mediaeval and early post-mediaeval times, were extensive all around the coast. On the higher ground, a mixed agriculture of grassland and arable developed, producing hay or corn for London. Orchards, copses and hedgerows gave a more enclosed and textured landscape than the poorly-drained land below.

This pattern of farming continued almost unchanged until the mid-20th century when developments in drainage technology, improvements to sea wall defences following the 1953 floods and the provision of subsidies and incentives led to substantial loss of grazing marsh and its associated features in conversion to arable. Habitat value, historic field boundary

ditches and archaeological features were all lost to modern farming methods. Around 80% of the grazing marsh appears to have been lost since the Second World War, although this is being slowly rectified through agri-environmental schemes such as the creation in the past ten years of an Environmentally Sensitive Area along this coast.

In much of the farmed hinterland above the marsh, a distinct rectilinear pattern of small to medium-scale fields of ancient origin can be discerned, although agricultural intensification has resulted in high loss of hedgerows locally and so left a fragmented and discordant pattern that is hard to read in places.

Historically, most settlements were located beyond the edge of the marsh on the higher land, with farms often sitting just above the 5m AOD mark in a line above the marsh.

The only settlements of any size that developed within the marshland itself were the fishing villages and small ports: Brightlingsea, Wivenhoe and West Mersea towards the northern part of the study area; Maldon, Burnham, Rochford, Leigh, and Fobbing further south.

Paved roads and lanes lie close to the 15-20m AOD contour with unpaved trackways, usually to farms or old wharves, forming right-angled routes down to the marsh edge and beyond to the creeks or sea, testament yet again to the importance of water in commercial and agricultural life until the middle of the 19th century and beyond. The amphibious dual existence of many of the inhabitants of the coast until the early years of the 20th century lives on in the old pub names of what are now land-based communities; The Plough and Sail at Paglesham, the Ferryman at North Fambridge.

The traditional building materials used for cottages found around the marsh are timber clapboard, usually white-painted or with black gable ends, or red brick with red tiled roofs. Thatch may have been more extensive in the past, as references in 19th century and early 20th century texts testify. Many of these traditional buildings may only date from the early 19th century, with the timber trade through Maldon and the Crouch contributing to the use of clapboard nearby. The marshes were traditionally economically important but peripheral to the main areas of settlement so the older buildings were often modest in size and origin, and due to their poor construction, many

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

did not survive into the 20th century. There are some notable exceptions, such as St Osyth's Priory and Hadleigh Castle.

Farmers in the 1930s agricultural depression divided fields into plots to sell to Londoners. Tents and sheds became more permanent homes during and after the war and plotlands developed often without services or other amenities. The conversion of grazing marsh and pasture, mainly since the Second World War, has affected the colour and texture of the marshland character, yet it is perhaps the gradual encroachment of settlement into this low-lying land that has altered its open character more significantly at a local level. This is apparent in the settlements at Jaywick and Point Clear and the rambling caravan sites of Mersea; the spreading seaside villages of Maylandsea and St Lawrence on the Dengie Peninsula that have grown around plotland villages; Bradwell power station and the scattered military installations of Foulness, as well as the extensive urban and industrial developments in south Essex.

There has been longstanding use of the coastal area of Essex not only for holidays and leisure use, because of its proximity to London, but for

industry and military purposes, both ironically because of the remoteness of some of its creeks and headlands.

CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

- General Background
- Purpose and Scope
- Methodology
- Geology and Landform
- Soils
- History and Archaeology
- Settlement and Land-use
- Cultural Perceptions
- Ecology
- Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

Although much of the current perception of Essex can be summed-up by the image presented in the recent film *Essex Boys*, this is a distorted view that treats all of Essex as an extension of the East End of London. Most early observations of the people and their landscape were matter of fact. Commenting on the Essex estuaries in the 18th century, Daniel Defoe focuses on the abundant natural produce available for London tables:

*In this inlet of the sea is Osey or Osyth Island, commonly called Oosy Island, so well known by our London men of pleasure, for the infinite number of wild-fowl, that is to say duck, mallard, teal and widgeon, of which there are such vast flights, that they tell us the island, namely the creek, seems covered with them, at certain times of the year.....*

Defoe, 1724

John Constable, although associated most with the landscapes of the Dedham Vale, executed at least one oil painting of the country house of the Hawkins family at Alresford Hall. It sits on the wooded slopes that form the backdrop to the Colne estuary and, most famously, he painted the ruins of Hadleigh Castle in its striking bluff overlooking the Thames estuary

at South Benfleet. The bright light that has attracted painters down the years to Dedham Vale is present at the coast itself, with a combination of what Ronald Blyth describes as 'high skies and low landscape'.

Displays in the Beecroft Art Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, include W Bates' *A View of Leigh*, 1861; *A view near Southend* by A Vickers; and *Benfleet Creek and Southchurch Beach*

By the 19th century, Sabine Baring-Gould, in his novel *Mehalah*, looks lyrically at the Essex wetlands, describing their intrinsic character admirably and for its own sake. He describes The Ray, the marshy land that at high water appears to float between Mersea Island and the mainland:

*Between the mouths of the Blackwater and the Colne, on the east coast of Essex, lies an extensive marshy tract veined and freckled in every part with water. At high tides the appearance is that of a vast surface of Sargasso weed floating on the sea, with rents and patches of shining water traversing and dappling it in all directions. The creeks, some of considerable length and breadth, extend many miles inland, and are arteries whence branches out a fibrous tissue of smaller*

*channels, flushed with water twice in twenty-four hours. At noontides, and especially at the equinoxes, the sea asserts its royalty over this vast region.*

Sabine Baring-Gould, 1880

As the vicar at East Mersea church for several years, Baring-Gould obviously spent many hours observing and recording the landscape around him:

*A more desolate region can scarcely be conceived, and yet it is not without beauty. In summer, the thrift mantles the marshes with shot satin, passing through all gradations of tint from maiden's blush to lily white. Thereafter a purple glow steals over the waste, as the sea lavender bursts into flowers, and simultaneously every creek and pool is royally fringed with sea aster.*

Sabine Baring-Gould, 1880

It is not from the land, however, but from the sea that so much of this long, sinuous coast reveals itself. Several authors have discovered that the best way to explore the Essex coastline, although not necessarily the safest, is in a small sailing boat. The most obvious of these is Maurice Griffiths, yacht designer and journalist, who, in 1932, wrote '*The Magic of the Swatchways*', 'swatch' being an East Anglian word for the narrow navigable

CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

- General Background
- Purpose and Scope
- Methodology
- Geology and Landform
- Soils
- History and Archaeology
- Settlement and Land-use
- Cultural Perceptions
- Ecology
- Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

channels that wind between the land and the numerous changing mud and sandbanks that define its seaward edge. The book describes almost every creek and channel between Brightlingsea and Paglesham, every bar and sandbank between Colne Point and Maplin, and every mood of the sea. Many of the features of that time, the fishing boats and barges, a thatched roof, the calling cattle on Foulness are now just ghosts, and yet the character of the places has not fundamentally changed.

*The ebb had been silently receding for nearly three hours, and on each side of the river the mudflats were uncovering rapidly. A small white-sailed barge-yacht was trying to beat up against a dying westerly wind, and on the horizon, it seemed, Osea lay like a mirage with its purple undulating masses of trees.*

*The shore where we landed was hard, and we scrunched away along towards the point - and the sea. It was a deserted bit of coast, this strip of sedge-bordered shingle, although two miles to the north lay Brightlingsea, with its creek crowded with oyster smacks and fishing boats...*

*From out there towards the invisible bar buoy came a continuous noise,*

*not deep enough for the roar of surf nor shrill enough for the shriek of the sea's onslaught on shingle, but a steady incessant commotion, like the sound of an angry crowd heard through closed doors.*

Maurice Griffiths, 1932

In the 1950s John Betjeman, in his collected poems, reflected on the Essex he knew at the beginning of the 20th century.

*Far Essex, - fifty miles away  
The level wastes of sucking mud  
Where distant barges high with hay  
Come sailing in upon the flood.*

Like many observers before and after him, the dramatic quality of the traditional working boats, the barges, smacks and 'bawleys' (a corruption of boiler from the tradition of boiling the shellfish on board), as well as the empty mudflats, captures his imagination.

Fifty years after Maurice Griffiths Jonathan Raban, author and journalist, coasting around Britain in a small yacht, chose to explore and also to overwinter on the wild marshlands of Dengie.

*On my first circuit of the islands, three years before, I'd steered clear*

*of this meagre and featureless coast as being too untrustworthy to do business with. The sea lathered over its maze of offshore sandbars; church towers marked on the chart were lost among trees that looked like lines of crouching mangroves in a swamp; I'd investigated the narrow swatchways leading inshore through the sands, and headed north for the broad, safe channel into Harwich.*

Having mastered his sailing-boat and gained the courage to enter the Blackwater, however, he becomes beguiled.

*Essex had hardly any vertical dimension at all; its character lay in voluptuous horizontals - the looping sea walls, the crescent sandbars, the curving throats of the river mouths.'*  
Jonathan Raban, 1987

Raban's description of the landscape of Dengie could in fact be a picture of any number of locations on the Essex coast and estuaries:

*Land and sea were constantly changing places. As the tide shrank away through the culverts between banks of cord-grass, it left large islands of shining mud, looking more liquid than the ruffled water round their shores. When the sea came back, flooding in*

### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
  - General Background
  - Purpose and Scope
  - Methodology
  - Geology and Landform
  - Soils
  - History and Archaeology
  - Settlement and Land-use
  - Cultural Perceptions
  - Ecology
  - Study Area
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

*over the salt marshes, drowning the islands and opening sandy footpaths to navigation, it was arrested only by the ancient earthwork of the sea wall...*

Jonathan Raban, 1987

Even under cultivation, the marshes have retained many of their seascape qualities:

*...the face of the England that I could see from the window was fat - a landscape of amazing plenty. The billowing sea waves of growing corn went on for miles. When the combine harvesters moved in, they worked all night, stealing across the marshes in isolated pools of brightness like illuminated trawlers.*

*The cornstalk rustle of the sea makes itself heard a mile away.*

Jonathan Raban, 1987

Today, the wildness and history of this coast still exerts an influence on local artists, whose growing numbers, provide material for the thriving art galleries. Martin Newell, poet and musician, the self-styled *Wild Man of Wivenhoe*, has brought to a contemporary audience some of the legends and tales that haunt the East Anglian coast. He recounts the tale of the mythical ghost dog

of eastern England, in *Black Shuck*, evocatively illustrated by local artist James Dodds.

*He rises from the blackness  
And races through the lanes  
To reach the lonely estuary track  
And sneaks along the sea walls  
The saltings and the flats  
With no one but the wind to call him back*

Martin Newell & James Dodds, 1997

The ancient folktale from which this poem originates can grip the imagination if you walk alone along the remote tracks and footpaths that are even now the only routes to the sea in this remote and tranquil landscape. These pictures of lost marshlands were popular through the late 20th century.

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Ecology

The undeveloped coast of Essex exhibits a strong relationship between its ecology and landscape, perhaps more than anywhere else in the county. Much of the Mid Essex Coast has been designated in some way for its nature conservation value, often at an international level. More than any other attribute apart from landform, the ecology of the coastland gives it a unique and distinctive quality.

**Grazing marsh:** These habitats, once characteristic but now exceptional, are found traditionally behind the sea wall formed on the poorly-drained silty and clay soils of the marine alluviums. From Roman times, the inhabitants of the open wetlands of these coasts tried to control the extent of the tides with dykes and walls in order to create non-tidal grazing marsh from the natural salt marshes. Traditionally such marshes have been grazed by sheep all year round and by cattle in the summer, but much of this land is now arable. In the less disturbed grazing marshes, the former salt marsh structure is still apparent in the sinuous system of ditches, dykes and fleets that drained the marshes. The water ranges from fresh to almost as salty as sea water, and the wildlife reflects this. In contrast, Wallasea Island has lost not only its marshland character and features, its habitat

value and diversity but a remarkably rich and diverse historic environment has also been lost.

One of the best remaining examples of grazing marsh along the Mid Essex Coast is at Old Hall Marshes, north of Tollesbury, which has been under the management of the RSPB for fifteen years. In winter there can be up to five thousand Brent Geese, 4-5% of the world population, inhabiting these marshes. The water levels and salinity in the fleets and dikes are controlled by a complex system of pumps and sluices that gives varied micro-habitats. These drainage systems are of great entomological interest with many special insects relying upon the continuation of grazing to provide lightly trampled margins in which to breed.

The marsh grassland can be equally distinctive, often dominated by meadow barley, strawberry clover, spiny rest-harrow and hairy buttercup. Those marshes which have escaped the plough during their history often feature large numbers of ant hills; the hills provide a unique, well-drained micro-habitat, as well as shelter for breeding redshank, lapwing, shelduck and yellow wagtail, and ants as food for green woodpeckers. The Essex grazing marshes are also

being colonised by small numbers of breeding avocets.

The success of all breeding waders is enhanced by the restriction of grazing during spring to avoid trampling, and the maintenance of open water margins into June to provide feeding areas for chicks. A marsh grazed at the optimum density will usually develop a tussocky sward, which harbours high densities of small mammals and birds. These in turn support birds of prey, often widely dispersed over huge areas; short-eared owl, hen harrier, peregrine and merlin in winter, marsh harrier on migration, and barn owl and kestrel all year round.

Grazing marshes have had a varied history. Many have undergone drainage, levelling and ploughing, some from early in their history as on Foulness. Whilst small areas have subsequently reverted back to marshland, most have remained in arable cultivation. The most dramatic phase of arable conversion was around the Second World War and following the Great Flood of January 1953. Last century 80% of grazing marsh was lost, mostly dating from this period, although there was another rapid period of conversion following Britain's entry into the European Economic Community.

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Ecology

Damaging though these losses have been, the vast areas of winter cereal crops have proved highly attractive to Brent geese, and form colourful and striking landscapes in their own right in high summer.

Losses have also occurred through urbanisation, but to a far lesser degree than arable conversion. A steady increase in urban land use took place between 1947 and 1960, mainly in land adjacent to existing centres of population such as Maldon, Burnham and West Mersea. Urbanisation results not only in the loss of habitat but of the open and linear character of the marshlands, with buildings and ornamental tree planting causing fragmentation of once uninterrupted landscapes and seemingly limitless views.

**Sea walls:** These unique coastal and estuarine features, designed to protect the salt marshes from tidal influence, may have their origins in Roman times. Most date back at least to the Middle Ages, although considerably changed by raising and repair. Only a small percentage of the undeveloped coast is not protected in this way. From time to time the remains of counter-walls can be found somewhat inland in the marshland marking an old line of defence. The land to the

seaward side can be higher than that to landward because the latter has fallen due to isostatic settlement. The areas outside the wall have grown higher in response as silt deposition continues.



The sea walls of Essex now represent one of the last expanses of grassland in the county, and support a range of uncommon plants and insects. In early summer, grass vetchling, sea clover and narrow-leaved bird's-foot trefoil create a carpet of colour.

On a warm summer's day, the air can be filled with the whirring songs of Roesel's bush-crickets, like the sound of bicycles freewheeling. This insect can be extremely abundant along the Essex coast, despite being scarce nationally. Even more noticeable are the butterflies, especially grass-feeders: Meadow brown, and Large, Small and Essex skippers are widespread; and Ringlet, Brown argus and Marbled white can be locally

abundant.

The counterpart habitat to the sea wall is the borrowdyke or delph ditch, from which clay was excavated to make the wall. These ancient linear water-features run parallel to the sea-walls over hundreds of miles around the Essex coast with few breaks, forming an unusual habitat of varied salinity depending on local conditions and management.

The water in the borrowdyke is usually brackish, a mixture of salt water seeping through the wall or leaking through sluices and fresh water drainage off the land. The typical dominance of sea club-rush, glaucous bulrush and lesser reed mace is a reflection of this water chemistry. Where stands of reeds and other emergent plants have developed, a limited range of reedbed birds is present, along with rare insect and animal life.

**Salt marsh:** Beyond the sea wall, where the surface of the mud flats is exposed for long enough in the tidal cycle, a range of plants can colonise and form a salt marsh. The surface of the marsh is dissected by a system of creeks and often pitted with isolated pools. Deceptively green when the tide is out, at high water they can

**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

- General Background
- Purpose and Scope
- Methodology
- Geology and Landform
- Soils
- History and Archaeology
- Settlement and Land-use
- Cultural Perceptions
- Ecology
- Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Ecology**

be remote and dangerous places, but accessible from the comparative dryness of an Essex punt!

Essex is especially important for this habitat, having a larger area of salt marsh than any other British county, amounting to 10% of the total national resource. It is under enormous pressure from coastal squeeze, however - a combination of a relative rise in sea level meeting the resistant force formed by the sea wall. Staggering losses have been recorded in the 25 years from 1973 to 1988. The extent of Essex salt marsh fell from c4,000 hectares to c3,000 hectares - that means about 40 hectares a year or 1% a year. Although there is variability between different parts of the coast, it is the big picture which is most worrying. Extensive marshes still remain at Colne Point, Abbot's Hall and Northey Island and fringing the east coast of Dengie but some show signs of erosion.

Salt marshes have a much specialised flora composed of species that can tolerate or thrive in high salt concentrations. At the lower levels, covered by every tide, most of the plants are annuals, notably the glassworts (a very palatable plant known also as samphire). These develop distinctive tints in the autumn,

ranging from yellow to deep purple.

The middle marshes are more diverse, with sea aster, salt marsh grasses, and sea purslane with its highly palatable leaves, and its abundant seeds much eaten by wintering birds. In summer, salt marshes can be a blaze of colour, first pink with thrift, and then purple under swathes of sea lavender. One unwelcome invader of both salt marshes and upper mud flats is common cord-grass, which can adversely affect the habitat for birds and other plants.

In their natural state, salt marshes also have an upper zone, washed only by the highest tides. Higher marshes in Essex have now largely been lost as a result of sea-wall construction, but where fragments remain, they can support a distinctive flora. Shrubby seablite and golden samphire, both nationally scarce species, are often abundant with sea wormwood locally common. Above the threat of high tides during the summer, the upper marshes may support high densities of breeding redshank and, more locally, large colonies of black-headed gulls.

These upper zones were traditionally used for summer sheep grazing at low water.

**Intertidal mudflats:** Where sheltered conditions allow small particles of sediment carried by the sea and river currents to settle, mud and sandy flats can form. These form an extraordinary landscape at low tide, especially when viewed from the water itself.

*It was not so much an estuary as a broad sea gulf, thirty miles from jaw to jaw, with the ebb tide turning it to an expanding archipelago as whaleback islands of mud and sand began to ease themselves out into the hazy sunshine.*

Jonathan Raban, 1987

Perhaps one of the most dramatic and best known of the sand flats are the Maplin Sands off Foulness where literally miles of sands are exposed, forming one of the biggest intertidal zones in Britain.

Glistening in the sun at low tide, the estuarine and coastal muds and sands are places of great beauty that reveal their ecological richness on close examination. Countless millions of worms, snails, shellfish and other invertebrates, and often a surface layer of green algae contribute to a biological productivity, which surpasses that of even the most intensive agricultural system. Life

## CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
  - General Background
  - Purpose and Scope
  - Methodology
  - Geology and Landform
  - Soils
  - History and Archaeology
  - Settlement and Land-use
  - Cultural Perceptions
  - Ecology
  - Study Area
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

## Ecology

on and in the mud is supported by nutrients brought in by the twice-daily tides. In turn this becomes food for fish and birds, in particular to more than a quarter of a million wading birds, ducks and geese every winter.

The sheltered estuaries of Essex are not generally under threat from land reclamation or barrage construction and are a major recreational resource supporting all manner of water-based activities. Where such activities are subject to control, they can be integrated with wildlife interest, but excessive or inappropriate use of the estuaries, especially during the winter months, can lead to disturbance of feeding or roosting birds. Developments associated with water recreation, such as marinas, are also a cause of habitat loss, and, in some cases, a significant source of pollution.

The threat from anti-fouling agents is now receding and other sources of pollution, especially from sewage and effluent discharges, are also being reduced as European directives on water quality are implemented.

**Shell and shingle banks:** Along the seaward edge of some salt marshes and sea walls, the remains of estuarine shellfish accumulate into shell banks.

They are a special feature of the Blackwater, Dengie and Foulness areas, a reflection of the massive populations of cockles in the adjacent mud and sand flats. They also contain varying proportions of other species, including mussels, oysters, winkles and the invasive alien slipper limpet.

Similar shingle habitats may be found in the outer reaches of the estuaries especially in north Essex. Colne Point, a 4km-long shingle spit, is the best Essex example, supporting an area of vegetated shingle, an internationally scarce habitat.

Shells and shingle may be very different, but the wildlife they support shows great similarities. The unstable substrate and susceptibility to both salt spray and drought make them unsuitable for all but a few well-adapted plants. Typically, the sparse vegetation is dominated by sea beet, sea kale, yellow horned-poppo and sea campion, all plants that can withstand the conditions.

Shell and shingle banks are also of importance for ground-nesting birds, including ringed plover, oystercatcher and also common, Sandwich and little terns. The eggs are simply deposited in a shallow depression, relying on camouflage for defence



against predators. Such a defence is, of course, counter-effective against human trampling, and on the more heavily used beaches these birds have been completely excluded.

**Sand dunes:** Deposits of sand forming into dunes are also associated with outer estuarine areas. These small fringing dunes, limited to a few places such as Jaywick, are of value for their special plants, and as natural defences against the sea. Sand is both unstable and drought-prone, and most plants growing on dunes show adaptations such as deep tap roots, succulent tissues, waxy coatings and silvery foliage.

The roots of all plants help to stabilise the sand, but the most effective is marram grass, which can grow through mobile sand, forming an effective frame to the dune. Once stabilised, other plants can colonise, including sea holly, sea bindweed and sea spurge.

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

•General Background

•Purpose and Scope

•Methodology

•Geology and Landform

•Soils

•History and Archaeology

•Settlement and Land-use

•Cultural Perceptions

•Ecology

•Study Area

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Ecology

Bird life on the dunes is restricted to a few pairs of ground-nesters in the summer, and roving flocks of larks and other small birds in winter. Down on the sandy foreshores, the sanderling is a characteristic wader, brilliant white in winter, following each wave in and out on clockwork legs in its search for food.

Human pressures, especially trampling, horse riding and off-road vehicles, damage the fragile vegetation cover, but natural dynamism, from wind and waves, also helps mould and move the sand. Dunes may, when not impeded, roll over on to salt marshes to provide a unique interface habitat, which supports a number of scarce plants.

**Hedgerows:** Hedgerows are not at all typical of the coastal marshlands. Yet they form an important linear habitat on the higher ground of the hinterland landscapes on the London Clays with associated drifts, and on the better-drained farmlands of the brickearths, river sands and gravels.

Elm is the dominant hedgerow plant in all these landscape types, but it is often associated with blackthorn and bramble, and can even be enriched with hawthorn, field maple, hazel, oak, and ash. The hedgerows are

generally tall and unkempt-looking, the result in part of the natural habit of the elm compared to the more bushy form of hawthorn or hazel. This form can perhaps also be linked in part to management regimes or reflect the local climate at the coast, since more compact, clipped hedges can be found inland on the Dengie peninsula. There appears to be no local tradition of laying these elm hedgerows.

Sadly many of the hedgerows on the coastal hinterland are littered with the skeletons of dead elm trees, ghosts of the 20th century when much of the landscape, notably of the Dengie plain, was graced by their distinctive outline, and the lanes turned into tunnels by their over-arching branches.

The culprit in their demise, Dutch elm disease, was first found in Britain in the 1920s but the virulent strain that caused so much damage in the latter half of the century didn't take hold until the late 1960s. There is currently both a local programme, run jointly by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and Braintree District Council, and a national one run by the Conservation Foundation, of taking cuttings from large elms that, by their size, can be assumed to have resistance to the disease. These can then be grown on, hopefully as

healthy adults. These programmes are extremely important for the future both of the landscape and the tree, whose status is recognized in its designation as a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species by Essex County Council.



## CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
  - General Background
  - Purpose and Scope
  - Methodology
  - Geology and Landform
  - Soils
  - History and Archaeology
  - Settlement and Land-use
  - Cultural Perceptions
  - Ecology
  - Study Area
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

## Study Area

Several local Landscape Character Area studies, which include the coastal area, have been undertaken in Essex.

### Regional and County Scale

*The Essex and Southend-on-Sea Landscape Character Assessment* is one of a series commissioned by Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, the Joint Structure Plan Authorities (JSPAs). This regional scale report, prepared at the same time as the Mid Essex LCA [2002] by landscape consultants Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) was published in 2003. For further information, please see here: [https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/media/2277/lca\\_essex\\_2002.pdf](https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/media/2277/lca_essex_2002.pdf).

### District Scale

*Tendring landscape character assessment* was produced in November 2001 by Land Use Consultants (LUC).

*Thurrock LCA* (draft) was produced in September 2001: this is being updated but until it is made available reference is made where appropriate to the existing assessment.

*The Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy* has been produced for the Greengrid Partnership by

Landscape Design Associates (LDA Design). It incorporates a summarised landscape Character Assessment of the study area. For further information, please see here: [https://www.rochford.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/green\\_grid\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.rochford.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/green_grid_strategy.pdf).

*Colchester Borough Council LCA* is currently being prepared.

The differences in definition of areas and types that evolved between different practitioners are outlined in Definition of Terms on page 27.

### Scope

The Essex Coastal Protection Belt is a county planning designation that covers undeveloped coastal areas, together with the estuaries and rivers subject to tidal influence, and was set up to protect them from all but essential development. The boundaries of the belt omit urban coast, larger towns, and land committed for development within existing plans. Land affected by forms of development such as caravan sites is also excluded. Small villages and developed land that remains predominantly open such as mineral extraction or landfill sites are included, however.

For the purposes of this study, a similar belt has been extended into the Thames Gateway area to the south (excluding urban centres) and along the Stour valley to the north to define the 'study area'. The scope of this document covers the coast from the Thames Gateway to Harwich and along the southern bank of the Stour, roughly following the 10m AOD contour as its inland limit.

In Part Two there are therefore three broad sections, loosely defined. The South Essex, Mid Essex and North Essex groupings take account of geographical rather than district boundaries.:

**South Essex – (Thames Gateway)**  
Aveley Marshes to Mucking Flats  
Mucking Flats to Canvey Island & Southend

**Mid Essex – (Foulness and Dengie)**  
Foulness Archipelago  
River Crouch  
Dengie Peninsula  
River Blackwater

**North Essex – (Tendring)**  
St Osyth (River Colne to St Osyth)  
The Naze (St Osyth to River Stour)



— study area limit

## Landscape Character Types

### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

This section describes the general character of each of the different landscape character types. The information base for their identification has been described broadly in the section METHODOLOGY OF MID ESSEX LCA [2002]

The following landscape types identified for the Mid Essex LCA have been 'translated' to the equivalent landscape types for the other areas:

<i>South Essex (Thurrock LCA)</i>	<i>Mid Essex LCA (+ overlap areas of North Essex)</i>	<i>North Essex (Tendring LCA)</i>
ESTUARY SALT MARSH / MUDFLATS	UNVEGETATED FORESHORE INTER-TIDAL SALT MARSH	OPEN COASTAL MARSH
ALLUVIAL DRAINED MARSHLAND	DIVERSE COASTAL MARSHLAND	DRAINED COASTAL MARSH
	UNIFORM COASTAL MARSHLAND	
URBAN FRINGE ESTUARY MARSHLAND	URBAN FRINGE COASTAL MARSHLAND	
SAND/GRAVEL TERRACES	RIVER TERRACE FARMLANDS	RIVER FLOODPLAINS
	MIXED MARSHLAND EDGE	
CLAY VALLEYS	ROLLING CLAY FARMLANDS	CLAY VALLEYS
	VALE-TOP FARMLANDS	HEATHLAND PLATEAUX
	ENCLOSED VALLEY SIDES	

Characteristic features and key issues have been stated. Unless otherwise stated, the landscape types have been mapped at 1: 100,000; 1:50,000 or 1:10,000 scale.

### Definition Of Terms

The complex nature of the assessment process necessitates a degree of qualitative judgement, as the factors that govern character definition – geology; soils; topography; ecology; archaeology and history; land use and settlement; and cultural perception – can be variable within a specific type.

Boundaries between types can be distinct as between the Diverse Coastal Marshland and the Unvegetated Foreshore or salt marsh where the sea wall marks a clear division; whereas some boundaries are broad and merging as between the Rolling Clay Farmlands and the Mixed Terrace Farmlands.

### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

Some of the broader landscape character types are capable of variety at a local level; for instance the Unvegetated Foreshore can subdivide into muds, sands, shingle, and shells: some types can be defined more narrowly such as the Intertidal salt marsh.

So, for example the landscape type Estuary salt marsh/mudflats in south Essex is a similar type to Open Coastal Marsh in North Essex, whereas in Mid Essex this category has been subdivided into two separate landscape types - Unvegetated Foreshore and Intertidal salt marsh.

In Part Two character areas, often composed of various character types, are described in more detail.

**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

    Unvegetated Foreshore

    Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

    Diverse Coastal Marshland

    Uniform Coastal Marshland

    Urban Fringe Marshland

    River Terrace Farmlands

    Mixed Marshland Edge

    Rolling Clay Farmlands

    Vale-Top Farmlands

    Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

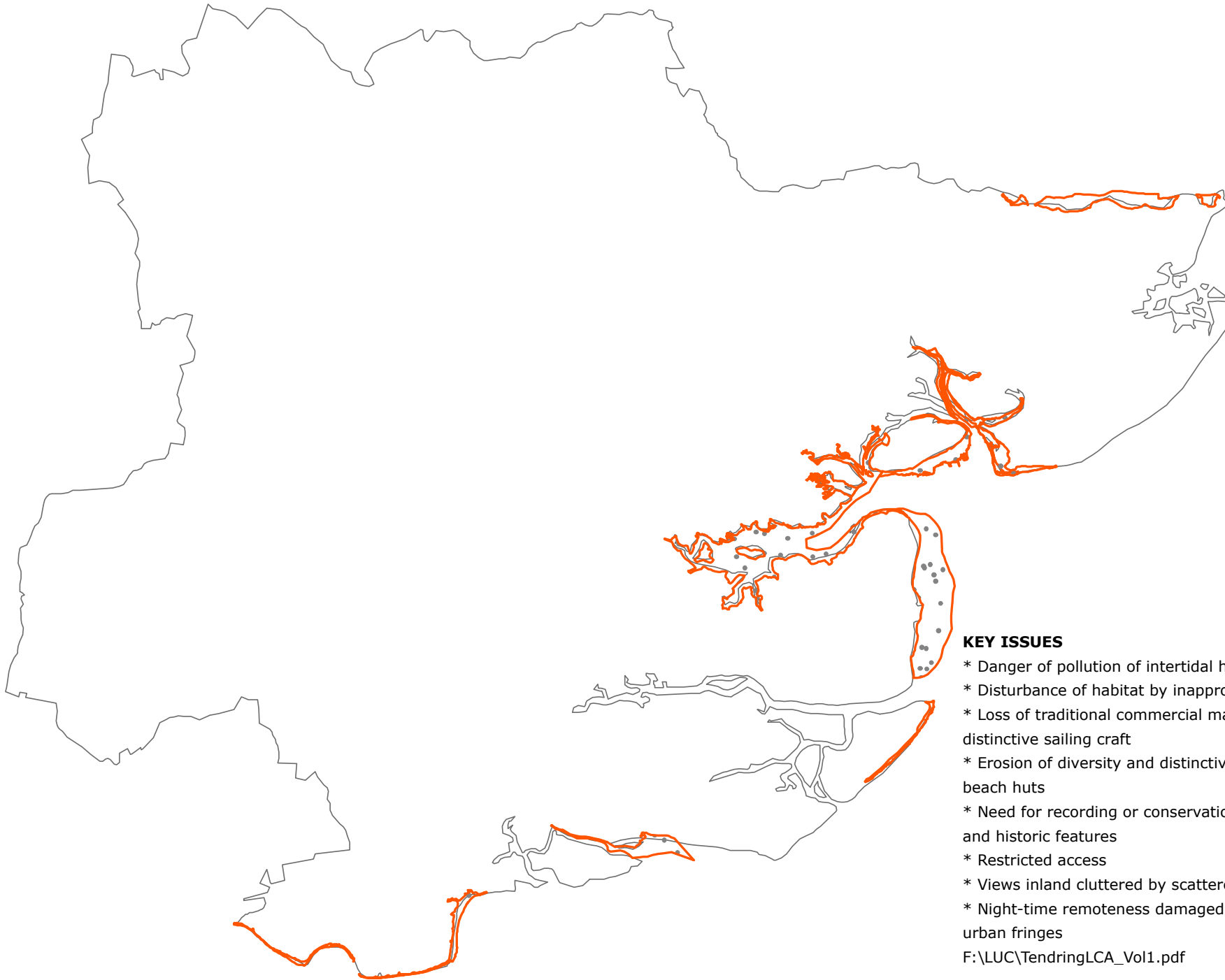
**Unvegetated Foreshore**

South Essex	Estuary salt marsh /mudflats	Aveley, Wennington Rainham Marshes, (Inner Thames to St Clement's Reach)
		Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
		Benfleet Creek at Canvey Island / Benfleet
Mid Essex	Unvegetated Foreshore	Foulness Point in Crouch Estuary and Foulness Archipelago
		Dengie Coastlands
		Upper Blackwater Estuary
		Lower Blackwater Estuary
North Essex	Open Coastal Marsh	Tollesbury Fleet in Tollesbury Coastlands
		Strood Channel at Mersea Island
		Salcott Channel in Colchester Claylands and Marshlands
		Upper Colne Estuary
		Lower Colne Estuary
		Brightlingsea Flag Creek
		St Osyth Coastlands
		Stour Estuary

Estuary salt marsh/mudflats (South Essex)

Unvegetated Foreshore (Mid Essex)

Open Coastal Marsh (North Essex)



**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Danger of pollution of intertidal habitat
- \* Disturbance of habitat by inappropriate recreation
- \* Loss of traditional commercial maritime trade and distinctive sailing craft
- \* Erosion of diversity and distinctiveness of seaside beach huts
- \* Need for recording or conservation of archaeological and historic features
- \* Restricted access
- \* Views inland cluttered by scattered development
- \* Night-time remoteness damaged by lighting at urban fringes

F:\LUC\TendringLCA\_Vol1.pdf

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Unvegetated Foreshore



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Dynamic system of muds, sands, shingle and shells between the tides
- \* Rich habitat for invertebrates and molluscs
- \* Extensive feeding grounds for wildfowl and waders; basking areas for seals
- \* Archaeological and historic remains
- \* A large-scale open landscape with extensive views of estuary and coast
- \* Big skies giving keen sense of the weather
- \* Sense of remoteness



## CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

## Unvegetated Foreshore

For South Essex (Estuary salt marsh/mudflats) and North Essex (Open Coastal Marsh) the landscape types include all coastal or estuarine areas down to the low water mark and where sheltered conditions have led to the build-up of sediment.



The further subdivision of the landscape type Unvegetated Foreshore, which excludes salt marsh, is mostly found in Mid Essex and refers to the entire intertidal zone between the high and low marks where this has not yet been colonized by vegetation, a dynamic environment that evolves in shape and form season to season with changes in the wind and tide.

Most characteristic of this varied landscape are the extensive mudflats of the estuaries and creeks, often deeply incised by the moving tide. At low tide these muds, glistening with retreating sea water, form shimmering landscapes of eerie beauty, occasionally

revealing the long-hidden remains of ancient human activity or the more recent wreck of a working barge or smack. The remains of Saxon fish traps have been discovered, but are vulnerable to damage by modern-day boating: the wrecks of 19th-century sailing barges, are gradually being lost with each winter storm.



On the coastal shores themselves it is possible to find smooth, hard or pebbly sands, which can be extensive and flat, or narrower and more steeply-shelving. These coastal flats form some of the most remote, wilderness areas not only of Essex but Britain. Wild, potentially hazardous places, inaccessible to all but experienced sailors, basking seals and feeding waders, these are places of extraordinary natural quality.



Perhaps most dramatic, are the shingly and shelly spits. Shell banks are also found along the seaward edge of some of the salt marshes up the estuaries themselves, where the vast numbers of cockles and other shellfish provide the material for these spits. Where the currents are strong enough, great banks of shingle interspersed with small creeks, and in places vegetated, form ridged hummocks from which dramatic views can be had.



Most unifying of all the characteristics of these shorelines is their sense of openness, of horizontality, with limitless views and, in certain lights, shore, sea and sky merging into one. In fresh clear conditions the views are usually enhanced by the sails of small pleasure boats or the glimpse of distinctive rigs of old fishing smacks, winkle brigs and the occasional Thames barge. At night, these landscapes are generally unlit and free from man-made intrusion. However the caravans, holiday homes, and small

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Unvegetated Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

Uniform Coastal Marshland

Urban Fringe Marshland

River Terrace Farmlands

Mixed Marshland Edge

Rolling Clay Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Unvegetated Foreshore

settlements that cluster locally behind the sea wall in some places, decrease the night-time sense of remoteness with inappropriate lighting, and can clutter views from the shoreline.

Some of the foreshores, especially in Mid Essex have restricted public access due either to military ownership or to conservation management. Most are inaccessible without private access from the public highway to the sea wall or to a boat. Even though there are few pleasure craft for hire or charter around the Essex shores, inappropriate usage of the creeks and shorelines can still be a problem.

Jet skis have the potential to disturb wildlife and damage fragile ecosystems and are still used to explore isolated channels though they are supposed to be restricted, especially within SSSI limits.



**CONTENTS**

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

**Inter-tidal Salt Marsh**

South Essex	Estuary salt marsh /Mudflats	Vange and Fobbing Creeks in W Canvey/Shellhaven
		Benfleet Creek at Canvey Island / Benfleet
Mid Essex	Inter-tidal salt marsh	Crouch Estuary and Foulness
		Dengie Coastlands
		Upper Blackwater Estuary
		Old Hall Creek and Salcott Marsh in Tollesbury Coastlands
North Essex	Open Coastal Marsh	Plyfleet Channel & The Strood - Mersea Island
		Lower Colne Estuary
		Brightlingsea Enclosed Valeland
		St Osyth Coastlands
		Hamford Water Marshes

Estuary salt marsh/mudflats (South Essex)

Inter-tidal salt marsh (Mid Essex)

Open Coastal Marsh (North Essex)



**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Loss of salt marsh through coastal squeeze
- \* Disturbance of habitat by inappropriate recreation
- \* Loss of historic remains
- \* Restricted public access

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

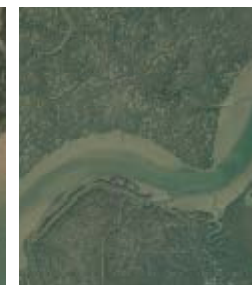
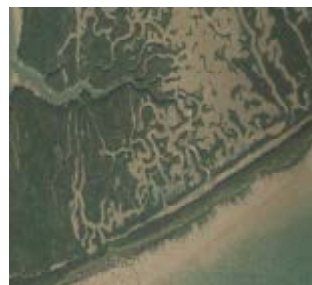
Appendices

## Inter-tidal Salt Marsh



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Dynamic environment between low and high tide
- \* Extensive salt marsh habitat important for nature conservation grass and water
- \* Large flocks of wildfowl and waders in the winter months
- \* Salt marsh dissected by many small channels and creeks
- \* Archaeological and historic remains
- \* An open landscape with extensive views of estuary and coast
- \* Strong sense of the weather and sky
- \* Sense of remoteness
- \* Restricted access



## CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

## Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

For South Essex (Estuary salt marsh/mudflats) and North Essex (Open Coastal Marsh) the landscape types include all coastal areas down to the low water mark. Particularly in the remoter landscapes of Mid and North Essex these areas comprise salt marsh, mudflats, shingle spits and tidal creeks and are notable for their absence of settlement and for their open, remote character. The upper boundaries are defined by sea walls which separate the undrained open marsh from the drained marshes and mainland.



Estuarine alluvium, sand and shingle beaches are the building blocks of this delicate coastal environment. In sheltered areas, such as behind shingle spits or alongside inland creeks, sediment is trapped leading to the creation of mudflats, these become progressively colonised by salt-tolerant vegetation, forming salt marsh. Vegetation helps trap silt particles, accelerating the silting

process until the level of the marsh is eventually raised above high tide. The patterns of erosion and deposition continue to change in this dynamic landscape.

Essex is rich in salt marsh: these are flat, vegetated, often remote seascapes cut by numerous creeks and runnels that are not visible at high tide. The perception of salt marsh is that it is a large-scale environment, mainly because of the long views from the edge across estuaries or over the sea. At the coast there is often little but a thin line of land and a few sails in the middle distance to interrupt this seaward vista. But within the creeks, at low tide, an intricate and intimate landscape with a distinctly sheltered microclimate is formed from which only the sky can be seen. The tidal muds fizz and pop gently as they are uncovered and the only sure way to navigate at mid-tide is in a flat-bottomed Essex punt.



There is widespread variation between the marshes' size and appearance. In places the marsh stretches for 2.5km behind its protective sandy spit. This marsh is characterised by extensive marsh grasses and sea purslane, with localised tracts of colourful sea lavender, golden samphire and scattered clumps of shrubby seablite.

These are habitats of high conservation value, both at a local and international scale, renowned for their important numbers of wildfowl and waders particularly in the winter months.



In the Iron Age the woollen industry, supplied by marshland flocks, flourished. The salt marshes were considered a good place to graze sheep as the saline conditions minimised foot rot and liver fluke. Grazing on the unenclosed salt marshes is still seen, although rare. The Romans introduced the salt industry and a trading culture which relied on the many waterways for transport. Much later, the development of navigable waterways and quays helped in the transport of the increasing amounts of cereal crop and shellfish in flat bottomed barges.

## CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

## Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Buried within and beneath the salt marshes are a range of archaeological sites - deposits of prehistoric and later date which provide a record of the development and human use of the marshes.

The salt marshes in eastern England are part of a dynamic system of intertidal habitats but one that has been subject to erosion for many years, a combination of sea-level rise and local settling of the southeast of England. This is causing both a net loss of habitat and destabilisation of the sea walls. Salt marshes are important in protecting the coastline from erosion: they are a form of soft engineering. The presence of a salt marsh has a protective role in absorbing wave energy. Salt marsh protects the coastline by spreading out the force of storm waves, which reduces the amount of required defences, and prevents damage to existing sea defences: to the seaward of a sea wall it acts as a natural buffer to the sea's impact. When the salt marsh is eroded, the stability of the wall is compromised. Natural habitat can respond to the changing conditions, but is affected by human intervention, such as the construction of a sea wall. Though a seeming contradiction, wash from boats can cause further damage to the salt marsh due to more

concentrated wave action.

In places the vegetation is deeply dissected and eroded leaving mud mounds, and measures to try to prevent further loss using brushwood groynes have been attempted in places.

The figures for salt marsh loss in the recent past are significant. These range from 10% on the Dengie peninsula to 26.5% within the Crouch, measured between 1973 and 1988. The average rate of retreat on Dengie during this period was an alarming 2.6 ms per year.

Methods of managing the dynamics of sea-level rise by working with nature have been pioneered in Essex through the process of managed retreat.

In many places around the coast, the rectilinear remains of Oyster pits, probably from the 19th century, mark the salt marsh.



Salt Marsh at high tide



**CONTENTS**

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

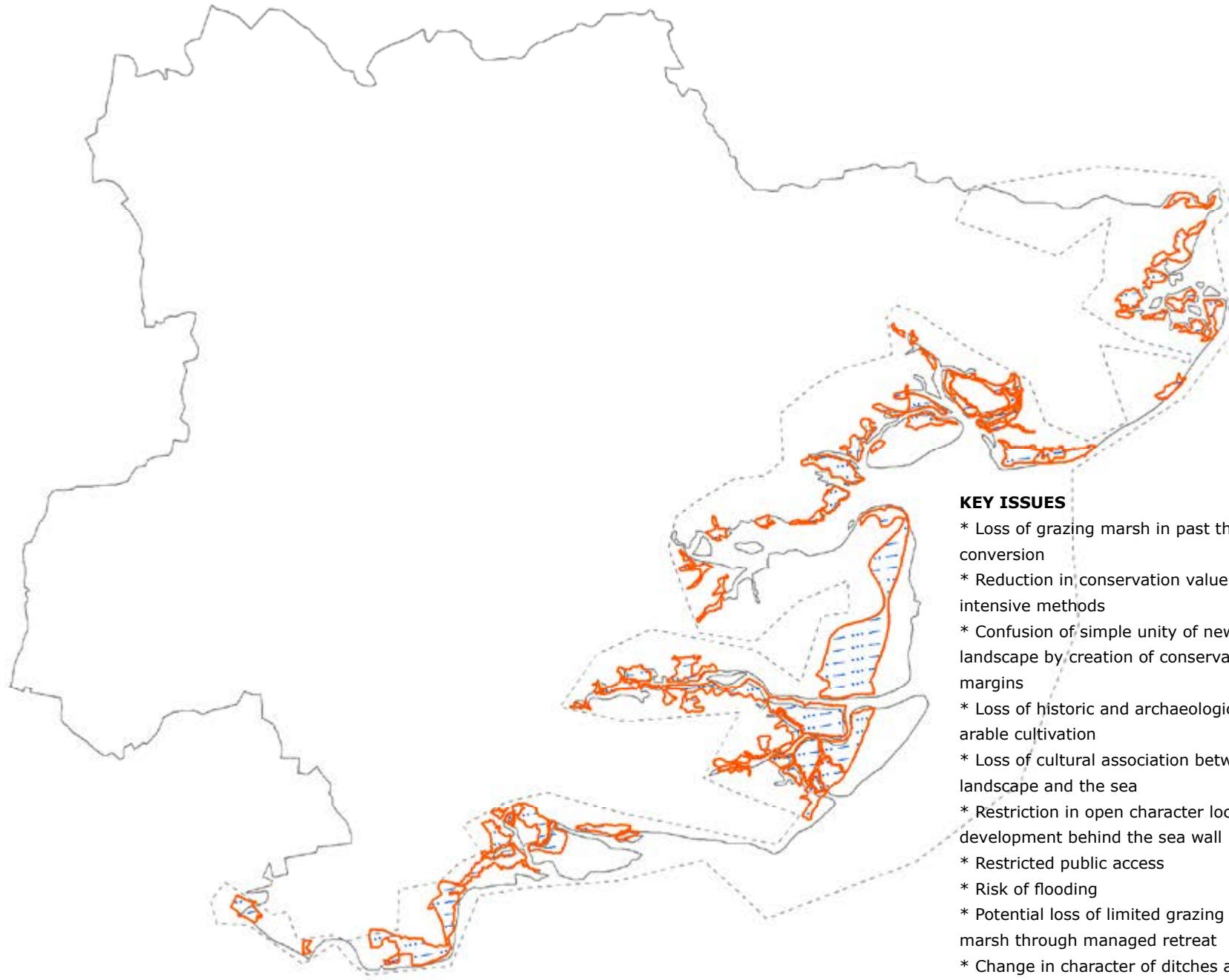
**Diverse Coastal Marshland**

South Essex	Alluvial Drained Marshland	Aveley Marshes
		Mucking & Tilbury Marshes
		W Canvey / Shellhaven
		Canvey Island / Benfleet
		Fobbing Marshes / Holehaven
Mid Essex	Diverse Coastal Marshland	Crouch Estuary and Foulness Archipelago
		Rochford Mixed Farmlands
		River Roach
		Canewdon Sloping Claylands
		River Crouch
		Dengie Coastlands
		Upper Blackwater Estuary
		Lower Blackwater Estuary
North Essex	Drained Coastal Marsh	Tollesbury Coastlands
		Mersea Island
		Colchester Claylands and Marshland
		Lower Colne Estuary
		Brightlingsea Drained Marshes
		Brightlingsea Flag Creek
		St Osyth Coastlands
		Holland Coastlands
		Hamford Water / Walton-on-the-Naze
		Stour Estuary

Alluvial Drained Marshland (South Essex)

Diverse Coastal Marshland (Mid Essex)

Drained Coastal Marsh (North Essex)



#### KEY ISSUES

- \* Loss of grazing marsh in past through arable conversion
- \* Reduction in conservation value through continued intensive methods
- \* Confusion of simple unity of new agricultural landscape by creation of conservation headlands and margins
- \* Loss of historic and archaeological features through arable cultivation
- \* Loss of cultural association between the farmed landscape and the sea
- \* Restriction in open character locally through development behind the sea wall
- \* Restricted public access
- \* Risk of flooding
- \* Potential loss of limited grazing marsh back to salt marsh through managed retreat
- \* Change in character of ditches and dykes through management for birds
- \* Localised fence clutter through management for recreation

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Diverse Coastal Marshland



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Enclosing sea wall and associated borrowdykes
- \* Relic system of fleets, creeks, ditches and counter-walls are significant archaeological features important for wildlife
- \* Large numbers of feeding and roosting wildfowl and waders
- \* Scrub associated with farm buildings, decoy ponds, and counter-walls
- \* Open intensively-farmed agricultural landscape dominated by cereals in Mid and North Essex
- \* Limited views to sea or estuary except from sea wall
- \* Long views within the marshland
- \* Views dominated by sky
- \* Restricted public access except along sea wall



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Unvegetated Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

Uniform Coastal Marshland

Urban Fringe Marshland

River Terrace Farmlands

Mixed Marshland Edge

Rolling Clay Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Diverse Coastal Marshland**

The Drained Coastal Marsh landscape type includes all areas of former salt marsh, usually found next to areas of Open Coastal Marsh (Tendring)

The drained marshes originally formed the open coastal marshes developing, in sheltered areas, on estuarine alluvium. The artificially enclosed and drained landscape is now isolated from tidal influences and forms an area of grassland and cultivated fields divided by drains and punctuated by intermittent scattered scrub. These areas are defined by flat, low-lying alluvial fields criss-crossed with drainage ditches. The landscape is protected from the natural processes of erosion and deposition by sea wall defences, traditionally built from clay dug from an adjacent ditch. The walls and ditches often support a range of important insects and plants.

These large-scale, flat, agricultural landscapes behind the sea walls form one of the most distinctive landscape types in Essex, the result of 'inning' of the salt marshes. In most instances these marshes have been enclosed for centuries. Marshlands of post-medieval origin are found in places farther inland than later 'innings' and can be at a lower level if the land has shrunk as it dried out.

Generally lying at or below 5m AOD, the most distinctive features of this marshland's characteristic extensive drainage ditches and dykes are the broad borrowdykes at the back of the sea wall, occasionally retaining the natural pattern of creeks and fleets. Medieval farmers generally enclosed small parcels of saltings along these sinuous tidal ditches and creeks producing an irregular patchwork of fields. Where they are retained, many are fringed with vegetation - rushes, reeds and occasionally sea aster, but others are neglected, dry or overgrown.

The inland limits of the drained marshes are defined by rising ground.

Much of this coastal marshland was traditionally grazed, a landscape of particular value in terms of its ecology and history. A study by the RSPB in the 1980s showed that, in the late 1930s, from Clacton down to Burnham-on-Crouch, roughly within the Mid Essex LCA study area, around 16% would have been grazing marsh and 57% other pasture. By 1981, the total for all types of grassland had dropped to 13%.



## CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

## Diverse Coastal Marshland

In 1994, MAFF introduced an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) within the Essex marshlands that covers most of those in Mid Essex except the Dengie marshlands.

At that date the farmed landscape was 70% arable, and predominantly under cereals. The effect in high summer is of a vast uninterrupted golden sea, an effect heightened on a bright day by vivid blue skies and enhanced by a constant rustle of the crop in the ever-present breeze. Occasionally, agri-environment schemes have encouraged field margins to be left uncultivated or planted-up which, whilst beneficial to wildlife, can make the landscape pattern appear more piecemeal. Notable in these intensively-farmed arable landscapes in late summer are the large harvesters that move rhythmically across the open landscape stirring up great clouds of chaff and dust that can be seen for miles, appearing from a distance like great smoky bonfires.



The continual ploughing has resulted in the loss of features of historic and archaeological interest; predominantly the many red hills that dotted the landscape at the edge of the marsh, buried artefacts, earthworks, relic ditch systems and counter-walls. The sites of old red hills can often be tracked now by the differences in soil colour. The remains of these features should now be protected on land under agreement within the ESA, and initial observation shows that there were no further losses of these features in the first ESA monitoring period. However, MAFF studies show that 64% of such features are not protected by agreements.

There are still intermittent pastures, often reflecting poorer quality clay soils or lower-lying land. These are characterised by more extensive woody vegetation, either in the form of scrubby margins to ditches or with hedge-lined lanes with occasional mature trees. Within the ESA, there has been a small net gain in pasture between 1994 and 1997 through conversion of arable land.

Some of the irregular field patterns still remain in these landscapes, but most have been straightened since 1948. Where pasture does remain, it ranges from species rich unimproved

grassland, the surface of which is often dotted with ant hills, to a mosaic of wet areas associated with old drainage channels where some of the best preserved earthworks relating to historic salt production can be found. Grazing usually results in the ditches being supplemented with post-and-wire fencing, which can lead to scrubby margins to the ditches because the grazing animals cannot keep them in check by feeding there.



The boundary between the farmed and settled landscape can be scruffy with litter or fly-tipping marring the margins of some settlements. Where counter-walls exist, these provide both vantage points out to sea and a more intimate landscape locally, adding texture and variety in scale with the landscape.

Generally settlement is not characteristic of this landscape type

**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

    Unvegetated Foreshore

    Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

    Uniform Coastal Marshland

    Urban Fringe Marshland

    River Terrace Farmlands

    Mixed Marshland Edge

    Rolling Clay Farmlands

    Vale-Top Farmlands

    Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Diverse Coastal Marshland**

and before the 20th century it was exceptional to see more than a barn in these landscapes; even today buildings are rare except at the margins of the larger suburban fringes.

Ornamental planting usually softens early 20th century seaside settlements but this interrupts the open marshland character.

Telegraph poles frequently cross the farmlands but do not stand out excessively in the open landscape. However, pylons do intrude in many places.

Access for vehicles is limited, except on Foulness where MoD activity has resulted in extensive military roadways. Elsewhere, only a limited number of farm trackways give private access to the sea wall. Public access by foot is also restricted across the marshlands, although the sea wall itself is generally accessible.

The sails of modern yachts or older smacks and barges, gliding past the sea walls on their way around the coast or up and down the estuaries, are frequently seen from the marshlands. Apart from these, open skies are all that are usually visible beyond the sea walls, with the weather a constant concern in these coastal landscapes.

A constant feature of much of the marshlands in winter is the large number of wildfowl and waders that roost and feed there.

Foreground shows Diverse Coastal Marshland



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Unvegetated Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

**Uniform Coastal Marshland**

Urban Fringe Marshland

River Terrace Farmlands

Mixed Marshland Edge

Rolling Clay Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

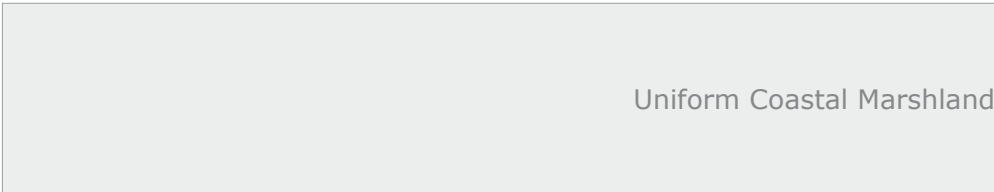
Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Uniform Coastal Marshland**

South Essex	Uniform Coastal Marshland	W Canvey / Shellhaven
Mid Essex	Uniform Coastal Marshland	Crouch Estuary & Foulness Archipelago
		Dengie Coastlands
		Upper Blackwater Estuary
		Lower Blackwater Estuary
		Maldon Mixed Farmlands



Uniform Coastal Marshland



**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Loss of grazing marsh in past through arable conversion
- \* Reduction in conservation value through continued intensive methods
- \* Confusion of simple unity of new agricultural landscape by creation of conservation headlands and margins
- \* Loss of historic and archaeological features through arable conversion
- \* Loss of cultural association between the farmed landscape and the sea
- \* Restriction in open character locally through development behind the sea wall
- \* Restricted public access
- \* Risk of flooding
- \* Potential loss of limited grazing marsh back to salt marsh through managed retreat

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Uniform Coastal Marshland



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Enclosing sea wall and associated borrowdykes
- \* Relic system of ditches and counter-walls important for wildlife
- \* Scrub associated with farm buildings, decoy ponds, and counter-walls
- \* Open intensively-farmed agricultural landscape dominated by cereals
- \* Long views within the marshland, but not over sea wall, dominated by sky
- \* Restricted public access except along sea wall



## CONTENTS

Preface
Executive Summary
Landscape Framework
Part One. Landscape Character Types
Unvegetated Foreshore
Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
Diverse Coastal Marshland
Uniform Coastal Marshland
Urban Fringe Marshland
River Terrace Farmlands
Mixed Marshland Edge
Rolling Clay Farmlands
Vale-Top Farmlands
Enclosed Valley-Sides
Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
Bibliography
Consultees
Appendices

## Uniform Coastal Marshland

A sub-type of the Coastal Marshland, these large areas of marsh were inned and drained generally to a regular pattern. They are found on the seaward side of the older Coastal Marshlands on Dengie, Foulness and Wallasea Islands, each inned still separated by counter-walls in places and visibly higher than the older land. The boundary between the Uniform Marshland and the Diverse Marshland generally runs along the change in soil type from the good quality silts of the Uniform Marshland, to the harder to work clays of the older Diverse Marshland type, much of which remained as grassland until the Second World War.

This intensively farmed landscape was mainly converted to arable before the Second World War, reflecting the quality of the soils. There is little of ecological value now except in the remaining ditches and dykes, isolated patches of scrub or hedgerow and occasional tree. And yet the farmland within 1.5km of the sea wall forms part of the extensive feeding grounds for the important numbers of Brent Geese that frequent the Essex coast.



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Unvegetated Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

Uniform Coastal Marshland

**Urban Fringe Marshland**

River Terrace Farmlands

Mixed Marshland Edge

Rolling Clay Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Urban Fringe Marshland**

South Essex	Urban Fringe Estuary Marshland	Aveley, Wennington Rainham Marshlands at Rainham Marshes
		W Canvey / Shellhaven
North Essex	Urban Fringe Marshland	Upper Colne Estuary

Urban Fringe Estuary Marshland (South Essex)

Urban Fringe Marshland (North Essex)



**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Loss of the cultural association between the river and new development
- \* Need to ensure that any new development would respect the flat, open landscapes
- \* Need to ensure that public have appropriate access to the river

# CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland**
  - River Terrace Farmlands
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

## Urban Fringe Marshland



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Remnant marshland character such as a flat, open landscape, creeks and big views of sky
- \* Many industrial and quayside developments
- \* Long views downriver where land is not built-up



## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Urban Fringe Marshland

This flat marshland river landscape differs from the diverse marshland in having been surrounded by significantly urbanised, or very large industrial landscapes – some of which have fulfilled their previous roles but now have potential for new use. The scale of the potential change makes these marshlands particularly vulnerable.

The river forms a significant feature within the landscape, with its extensive, glistening mudflats at low tide and occasional wading birds. This landscape has survived through having been overlooked in the past.



**CONTENTS**

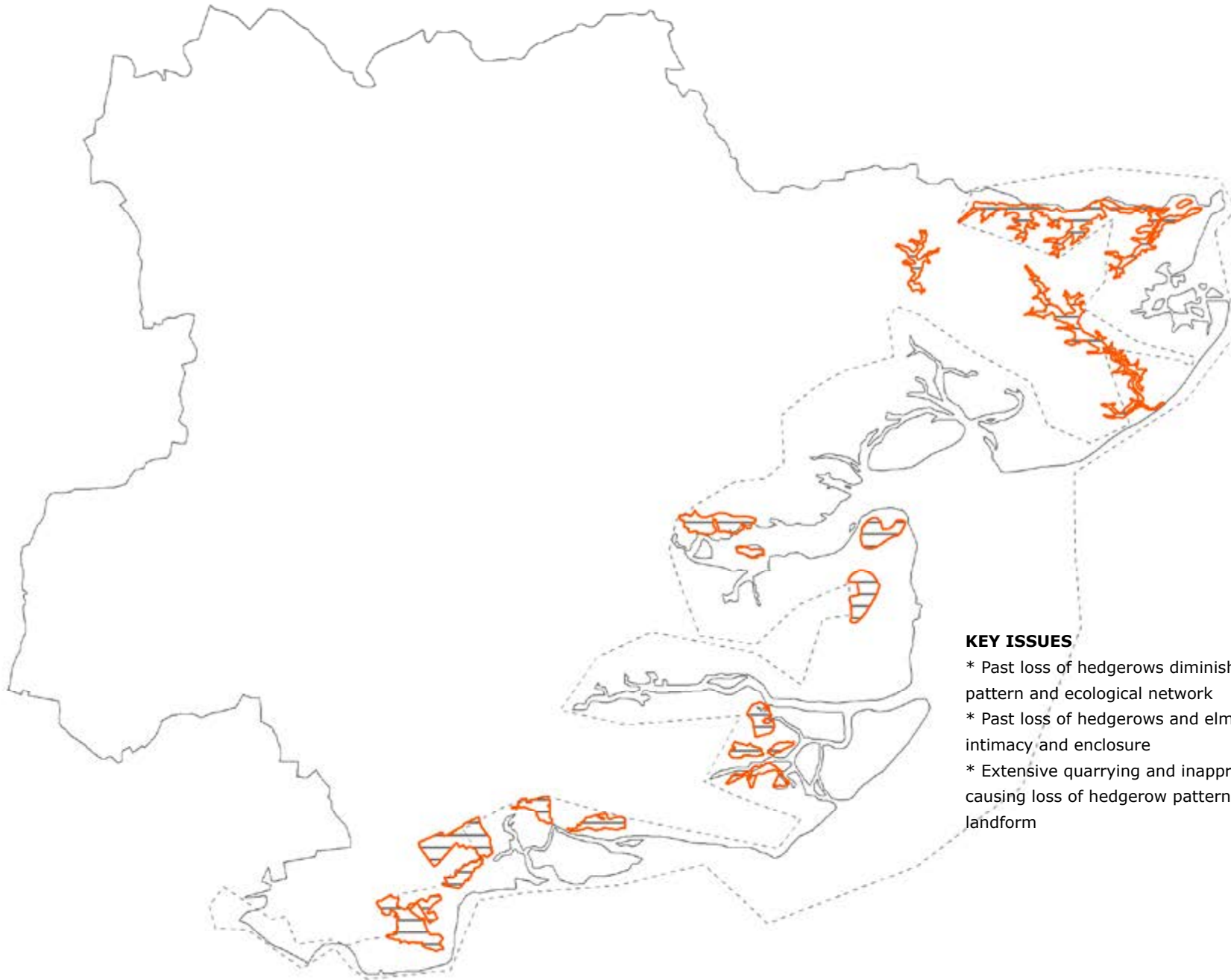
- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
  - Unvegetated Foreshore
  - Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
  - Diverse Coastal Marshland
  - Uniform Coastal Marshland
  - Urban Fringe Marshland
  - River Terrace Farmlands**
  - Mixed Marshland Edge
  - Rolling Clay Farmlands
  - Vale-Top Farmlands
  - Enclosed Valley-Sides
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

**River Terrace Farmlands**

South Essex	Sand/Gravel Terraces	East Tilbury
		W Canvey / Shellhaven
		Canvey Island / Benfleet
Mid Essex	River Terrace Farmlands	Rochford Mixed Farmlands
		Tillingham Ancient Terrace Farmlands
		Upper Blackwater Estuary
		Maldon Mixed Farmlands
North Essex	River Terrace Farmlands	Stour Estuary

Sand/Gravel Terraces (South Essex)

River Terrace Farmlands (Mid Essex)



**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Past loss of hedgerows diminishing historic landscape pattern and ecological network
- \* Past loss of hedgerows and elms reducing sense of intimacy and enclosure
- \* Extensive quarrying and inappropriate restoration causing loss of hedgerow pattern and uncharacteristic landform

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## River Terrace Farmlands



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Well-drained soils
- \* Low-lying, flat or gently rolling
- \* Intensively-farmed arable landscapes
- \* Distinctive ancient co-axial elm-dominated hedgerows and associated lane pattern
- \* Hedgerow oaks and elms
- \* Scattered small villages, hamlets and farmsteads
- \* Extensive quarrying locally



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

    Unvegetated Foreshore

    Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

    Diverse Coastal Marshland

    Uniform Coastal Marshland

    Urban Fringe Marshland

    River Terrace Farmlands

    Mixed Marshland Edge

    Rolling Clay Farmlands

    Vale-Top Farmlands

    Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**River Terrace Farmlands**

This is a flat or gently rolling arable landscape lying between 5-20 ms AOD, formed on the better-drained soils of the brickearths and gravels that adjoin the coastal marshlands in several places. Agriculture is predominantly arable in these free-draining stony soils. The occasional small orchard may have been a more common feature in the past, as evidenced by the relic shelterbelts.



This landscape is distinctive because, although the traditional field size is variable, the overall pattern appears to have a distinct co-axial nature, a trait found in much of the coastal hinterlands of south east Essex. This pattern is indicative of an ancient planned system that may pre-date the Roman era.

MAFF studies in the late 1990s showed that a large proportion of remaining hedgerows are more than 75% continuous and are more likely to be found adjoining land under grazing. Nearly all the remaining hedgerows

are mechanically trimmed although some showed previous evidence of coppicing, and less frequently of laying. A large proportion of these hedgerows contain trees, usually oak. The hedgerows create a generally linked habitat network in an otherwise intensively managed landscape. Views out of the area are restricted to framed vistas to the higher Clay farmlands or long views over the marshlands to the sea beyond.

This is a settled landscape with small villages and scattered farmsteads linked by the narrow right-angled lanes that tack round the distinctive field boundaries. Occasionally one of these lanes hikes down into the marshland to connect an otherwise isolated farmstead, old barn or long-lost quay. The older villages have been suburbanised at their perimeters.

Irrigation reservoirs are often found at the boundary with the marsh, features not found in the Clay Farmlands. In places the land use has changed over a wide area through exploitation of the underlying sands and gravels. This activity again distinguishes it from the Clay Farmlands. Much of this quarried land is now restored to grassland, wetland, woodland and scrub, which whilst not in character provides a new and useful habitat for wildlife as well

as a recreational facility for fishermen. Where the restored land rises above the sea wall, however, a disturbing effect on landscape character results.



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Unvegetated Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

Uniform Coastal Marshland

Urban Fringe Marshland

River Terrace Farmlands

Mixed Marshland Edge

Rolling Clay Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

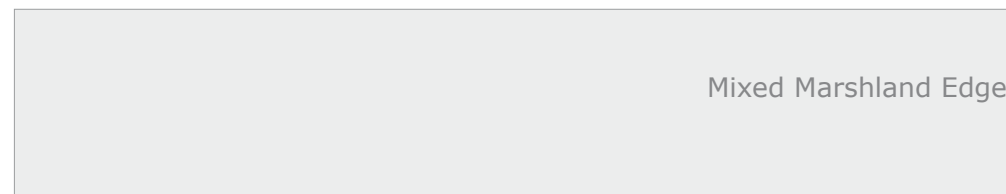
Bibliography

Consultees

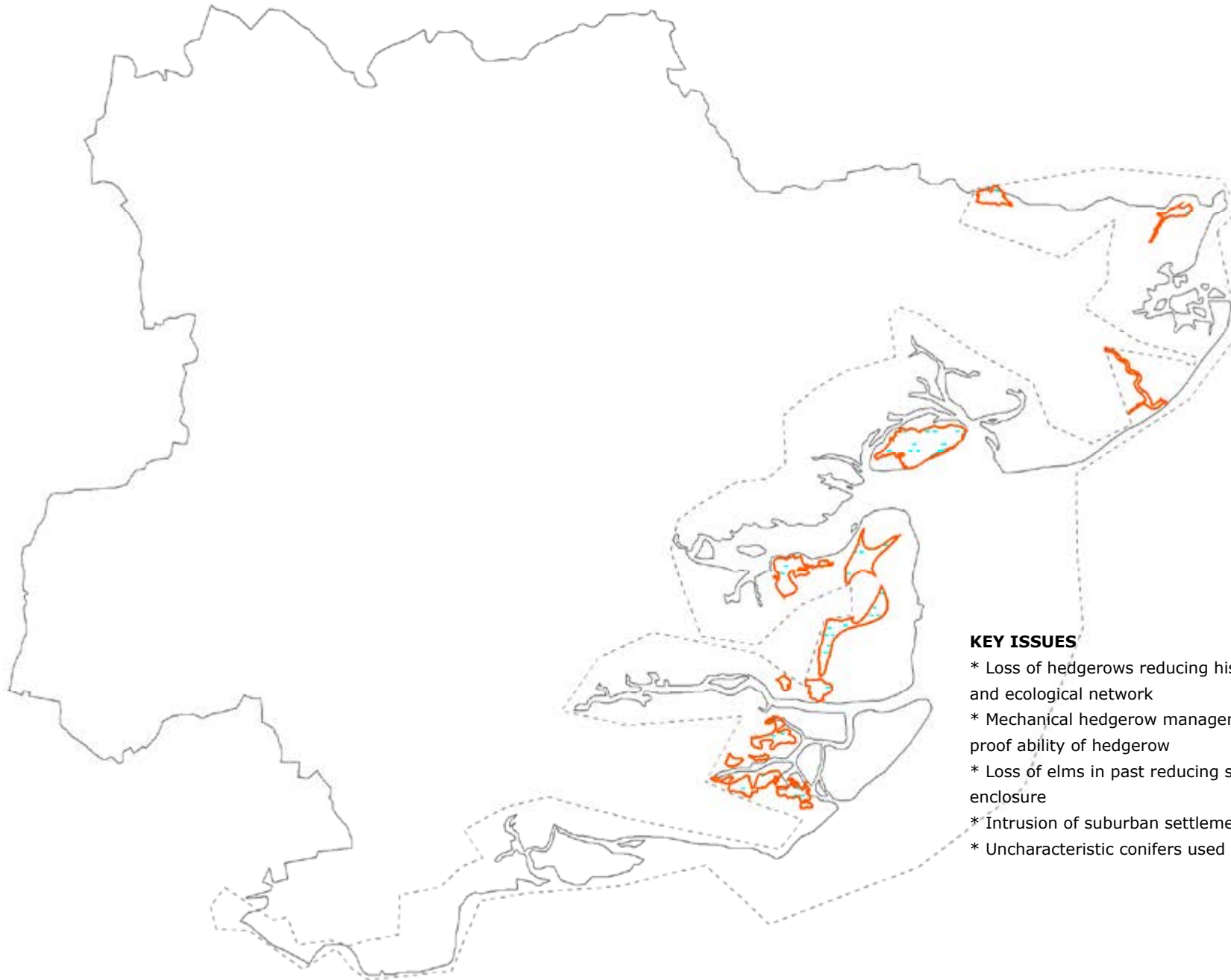
Appendices

**Mixed Marshland Edge**

Mid Essex	Mixed Marshland Edge	Rochford Mixed Farmlands
		River Roach
		Burham Sloping Claylands
		Tillingham Ancient Terrace Farmlands
		Dengie Ancient Farmlands
		Lower Blackwater Estuary
North Essex	Mixed Marshland Edge	Mersea Island
		Holland Coastlands
		Stour Estuary



Mixed Marshland Edge



**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Loss of hedgerows reducing historic landscape pattern and ecological network
- \* Mechanical hedgerow management reducing stock proof ability of hedgerow
- \* Loss of elms in past reducing sense of intimacy and enclosure
- \* Intrusion of suburban settlements into the rural fringe
- \* Uncharacteristic conifers used in ornamental plantings

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

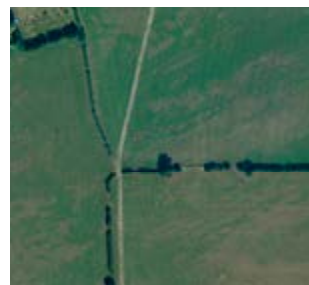
Appendices

## Mixed Marshland Edge



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Poorer-drained loams on clay drift deposits
- \* Low-lying, flat or gently rolling
- \* Intensively-farmed arable landscapes
- \* Distinctive co-axial hedgerow and associated lane pattern
- \* Hedgerow trees
- \* Scattered small villages, hamlets and farmsteads



## CONTENTS

Preface
Executive Summary
Landscape Framework
Part One. Landscape Character Types
Unvegetated Foreshore
Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
Diverse Coastal Marshland
Uniform Coastal Marshland
Urban Fringe Marshland
River Terrace Farmlands
Mixed Marshland Edge
Rolling Clay Farmlands
Vale-Top Farmlands
Enclosed Valley-Sides
Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
Bibliography
Consultees
Appendices

**Mixed Marshland Edge**

This farmland landscape is predominantly and traditionally under cereals, but in the past contained the occasional orchard. Some vegetables and sugar beet are also grown. The field pattern is consistent with the ancient co-axial system of small to medium-scale fields prevalent in most of these coastal hinterlands. Like the River Terrace Farmlands this landscape has been fragmented mainly by post-war hedgerow loss, associated with the intensification of agriculture.

It differs from Terrace Farmlands in the general absence of quarrying. These gently undulating or sloping farmed landscapes developed on poorly drained clay loams. They are characterised by arable fields and tall bushy hedgerows, predominantly of elm. The sense of enclosure in these landscapes is enhanced by scattered copses and farmstead trees.

The field pattern has given rise to the distinctive system of right-angled bends in the lane network throughout this type.

Where the hedgerows remain the landscape is enclosed and views contained, but where they have been lost it gives rise to dramatic long vistas. Derelict and remnant hedgerows can make the landscape appear disjointed and fragmented locally, especially where this occurs along main access routes.

Settlement is generally limited to large scattered farmsteads with isolated rows of disparate suburban dwellings along the main connecting lanes or hidden down the side-turnings that lead down to the marshland below.

Planting around farmsteads and dwellings can include columnar ornamental conifers that form discordant features

among the looser-formed native hedgerows and trees. Where stock is kept or the fields used as paddocks, the hedgerows are usually reinforced with fencing.

Cultural change is limited to localised hedgerow loss and suburbanisation, but the overall enclosed rural character is generally intact, with the farmlands generally well-served by a footpath network.

**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Unvegetated Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

Uniform Coastal Marshland

Urban Fringe Marshland

River Terrace Farmlands

Mixed Marshland Edge

**Rolling Clay Farmlands**

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

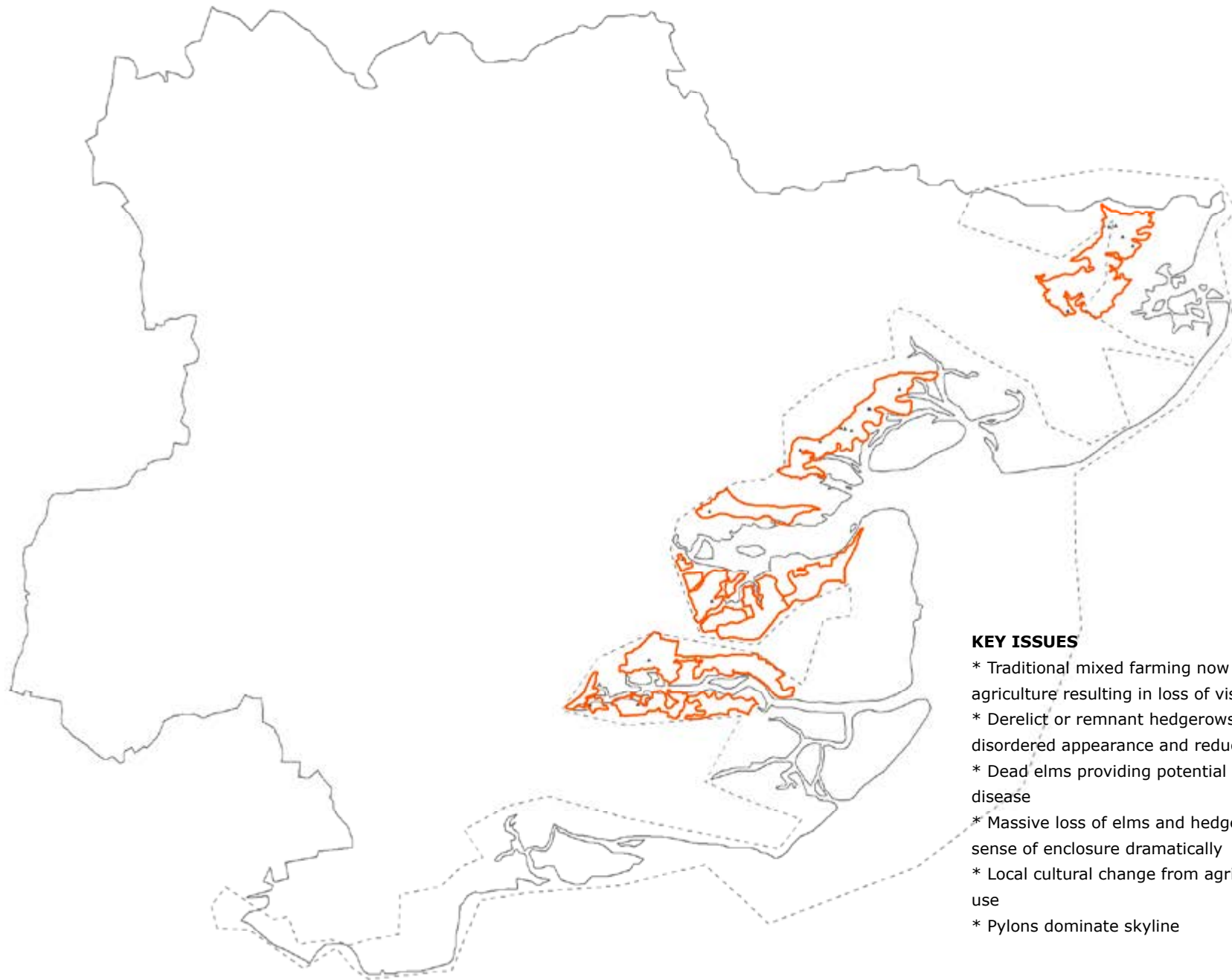
Consultees

Appendices

**Rolling Clay Farmlands**

Mid Essex	Rolling Clay Farmlands	Canewdon Sloping Claylands
		Burnham Sloping Claylands
		Dengie Ancient Farmlands
		Maldon Mixed Farmlands
		Tollesbury Coastlands
North Essex	Rolling Clay Farmlands	Colchester Claylands and Marshlands

Arable Clay Footslopes (South Essex)
Rolling Clay Farmlands (Mid Essex)
Rolling Clay Farmlands (North Essex)



**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Traditional mixed farming now dominated by intensive agriculture resulting in loss of visual variety and habitat
- \* Derelict or remnant hedgerows with dead elms giving disordered appearance and reduced ecological network
- \* Dead elms providing potential reservoir for Dutch elm disease
- \* Massive loss of elms and hedgerow oaks has reduced sense of enclosure dramatically
- \* Local cultural change from agriculture to recreational use
- \* Pylons dominate skyline

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Rolling Clay Farmlands



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Gently rolling or sloping landscape up to 35m AOD
- \* Varied medium to large scale agricultural landscape dominated by cereals on poorly-drained clay soils
- \* Distinctive co-axial field pattern of mature, tall, elm-dominated hedgerows but with extensive hedgerow loss in places
- \* Hedgerow elms or oaks characteristic, with dead elms common
- \* Localised small copses
- \* Scattered farmsteads, villages and more recent suburban development
- \* Small lanes with distinctive right-angled bends accommodating ancient field pattern
- \* Locally enclosed but with frequent long views over marshlands and coastal landscape



## CONTENTS

Preface
Executive Summary
Landscape Framework
Part One. Landscape Character Types
Unvegetated Foreshore
Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
Diverse Coastal Marshland
Uniform Coastal Marshland
Urban Fringe Marshland
River Terrace Farmlands
Mixed Marshland Edge
Rolling Clay Farmlands
Vale-Top Farmlands
Enclosed Valley-Sides
Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
Bibliography
Consultees
Appendices

## Rolling Clay Farmlands

This gently rolling or sloping landscape up to 35m AOD has developed on the clay soils of the extensive London Clays and clayey drifts that form the hinterland of much of the marshland, and which occasionally comes to the river's edge itself as at Fambridge, forming low promontories. Traditionally an enclosed landscape of mixed cereals and dairying it is now one of medium to large, generally arable fields with long views over the marshlands and estuary landscapes. The crops are usually cereals with some vegetables and more unusual crops such as maize and borage.

The lanes and tracks dog-leg around the distinctive field margins. Where hedgerows have been lost the landscape is open, verging on large-scale. This gives extensive views out over the marshes and estuary, The overall effect of the broken and fragmented hedgerow network sometimes gives the countryside a disordered character in which the landscape pattern is hard to read.

Locally cultural changes have taken place where farmland has been given over to recreation use, and golf courses and pylons stand out.



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Unvegetated Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

Diverse Coastal Marshland

Uniform Coastal Marshland

Urban Fringe Marshland

River Terrace Farmlands

Mixed Marshland Edge

Rolling Clay Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

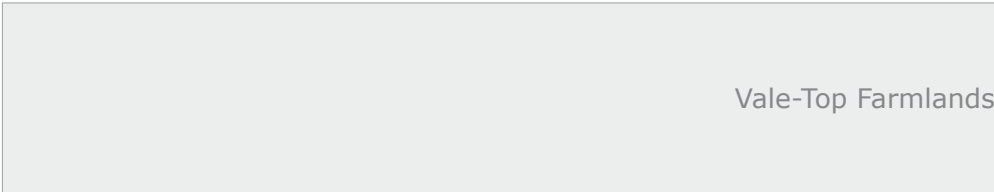
Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

Vale-Top Farmlands

Mid Essex	Vale-Top Farmlands	Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
North Essex	Vale-Top Farmlands	Upper Colne Estuary
		Brightlingsea Enclosed Valelands
		St Osyth Coastlands
		Holland Coastlands
		Hamford Water / Walton-on-the-Naze





**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Loss of hedgerows obscuring pattern of ancient hedgerows
- \* Loss of hedgerows reducing ecological network
- \* Mechanical management resulting in less stock-proof hedges
- \* Use of columnar conifers in settlement plantings not in character with landscape

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Vale-Top Farmlands



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Gently rolling arable landscapes on freer-draining soils
- \* Distinctive pattern of ancient elm-dominated hedgerows
- \* Small woodlands and planting around settlement increase sense of enclosure
- \* Scattered settlement including distinctive line of farmsteads at break in slope and right-angled bends in lanes
- \* Filtered views to coast



## CONTENTS

Preface
Executive Summary
Landscape Framework
Part One. Landscape Character Types
Unvegetated Foreshore
Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
Diverse Coastal Marshland
Uniform Coastal Marshland
Urban Fringe Marshland
River Terrace Farmlands
Mixed Marshland Edge
Rolling Clay Farmlands
Vale-Top Farmlands
Enclosed Valley-Sides
Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
Bibliography
Consultees
Appendices

## Vale-Top Farmlands

These are gently rolling, arable landscapes developed on freer-draining soils overlying the London Clay and forming part of the rising, vegetated hinterland to the Coastal marshlands.

Traditionally, this would have been a landscape of medium-sized fields surrounded by tall hedgerows, but locally these have been lost with the advent of large-scale, post-war mechanisation. In places there appears to be a semi-regular pattern to the hedgerows, but this is not co-axial. Where there are remnant shaggy elm-dominated hedgerows, a sense of the past landscape can be gained with filtered views out to the coast. Often the landscape is larger scale, however, with wide views out to sea over the marshland below. Clumps of trees associated with the farmsteads and other buildings, and scattered small woods add locally to the sense of enclosure.

These farmlands on their good quality soils have traditionally been cultivated. Much of the cropland is under cereals giving golden carpets of wheat in late summer, but other crops such as vegetables and feed-beans can also be found. Dramatic features of the farmlands in high summer are the large harvesters that grind relentlessly

up and down the fields well into the evening throwing up plumes of dust that can be seen for miles around.



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

    Unvegetated Foreshore

    Inter-tidal Salt Marsh

    Diverse Coastal Marshland

    Uniform Coastal Marshland

    Urban Fringe Marshland

    River Terrace Farmlands

    Mixed Marshland Edge

    Rolling Clay Farmlands

    Vale-Top Farmlands

    Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

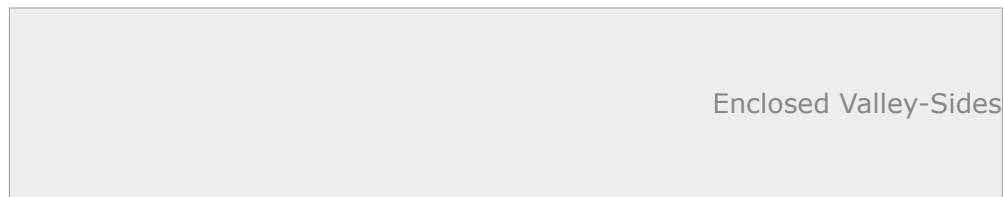
Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Enclosed Valley-Sides**

North Essex	Lower Roman River
	Lower Colne Estuary
	Brightlingsea Enclosed Valelands
	Brightlingsea Flag Creek
	St Osyth Coastlands



Enclosed Valley-Sides

**KEY ISSUES**

- \* Quarrying causing disruption to landscape locally especially adjoining Colne marshlands
- \* Scrub encroachment on underused military pastures
- \* Reduction of sea-land links through local ports

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Unvegetated  
Foreshore

Inter-tidal Salt  
Marsh

Diverse Coastal  
Marshland

Uniform Coastal  
Marshland

Urban Fringe  
Marshland

River Terrace  
Farmlands

Mixed Marshland  
Edge

Rolling Clay  
Farmlands

Vale-Top Farmlands

Enclosed Valley-Sides

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Enclosed Valley-Sides



### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

- \* Strongly sloping or undulating landscape founded on clay loams
- \* Dissected by small waterways
- \* Mixed farmlands with pasture on steepest slopes, prominent woodlands and occasional orchard
- \* Large estate-lands on valley slopes and tops
- \* Small settlements on higher land with local ports on banks of Colne
- \* Localised extensive quarrying and military activity
- \* Intimate landscape with contained views



## CONTENTS

Preface
Executive Summary
Landscape Framework
Part One. Landscape Character Types
Unvegetated Foreshore
Inter-tidal Salt Marsh
Diverse Coastal Marshland
Uniform Coastal Marshland
Urban Fringe Marshland
River Terrace Farmlands
Mixed Marshland Edge
Rolling Clay Farmlands
Vale-Top Farmlands
Enclosed Valley-Sides
Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
Bibliography
Consultees
Appendices

**Enclosed Valley-Sides**

This is a distinct sloping or undulating landscape type founded on the good quality clay loams of the drift deposits and incised by small watercourses some of which are tidal: these landscapes are generally farmed but also have a high percentage of other land-cover uses, notably quarrying, woodland and estate or parkland, including the occasional orchard. The enclosing vegetation and slopes give a small, even intimate landscape in which views are contained or framed where they look out over the marsh.

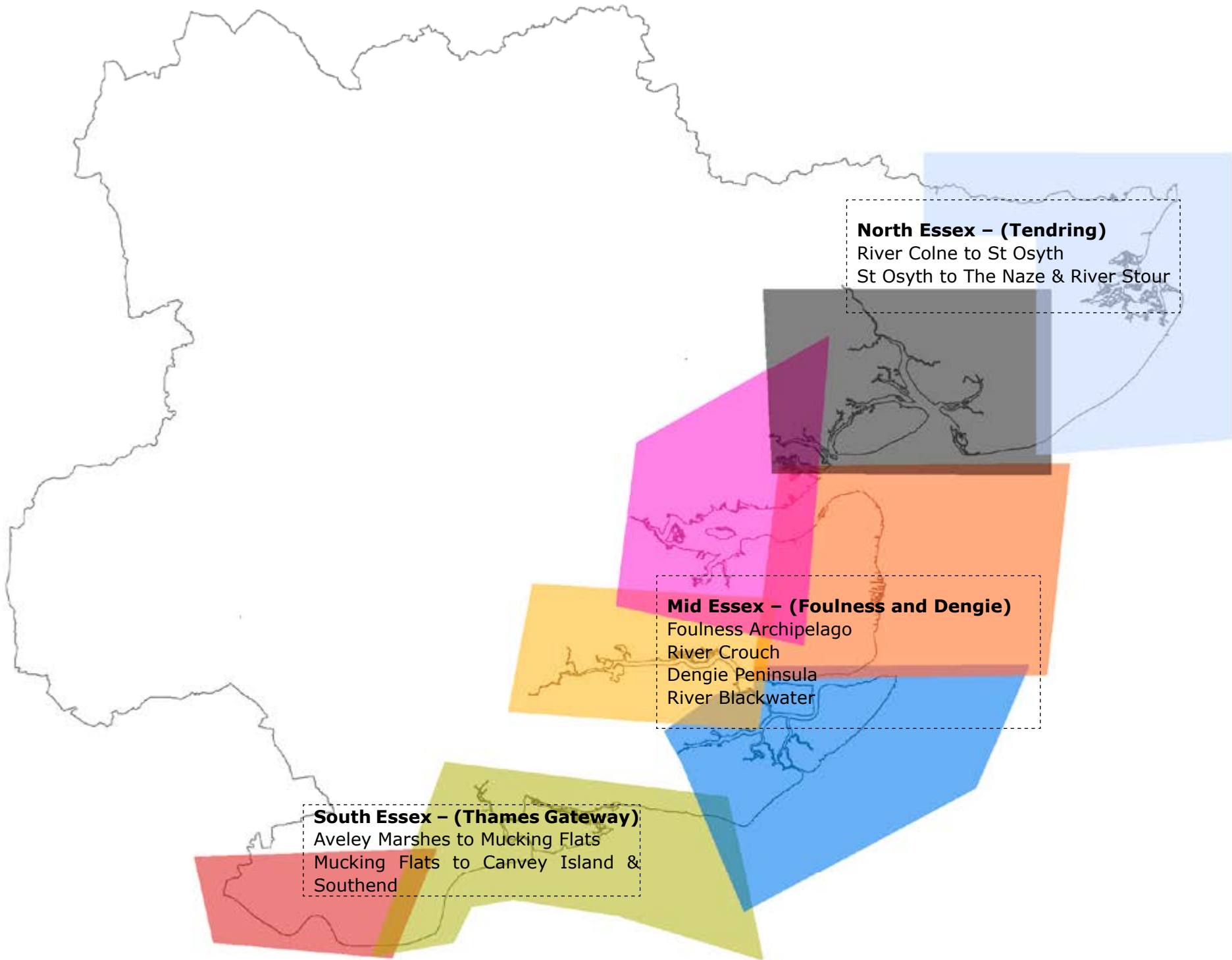
The extent of woodland gives a landscape of framed and filtered views both within and looking out of the landscape type. There are also tall, remnant hedgerows that increase the sense of enclosure and give a medium-scale landscape.

The field pattern is regular but not co-axial, the lanes winding along the valley tops with occasional crossing points for the creeks and streams. Locally this pattern is disturbed by sand and gravel quarrying on the edge of the adjoining coastal marshland, and military ownership. Settlement is scattered.



<b>CONTENTS</b>
Preface
Executive Summary
Landscape Framework
Part One. Landscape Character Types
Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
Introduction to the Historic Landscape Characterisation
Landscape Character Areas
Bibliography
Consultees
Appendices

	SECTION	CHARACTER AREA
SOUTH ESSEX	AVELEY MARSHES SECTION	Aveley, Wennington, Rainham marshes
		Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing marshes
	MUCKING / CANVEY SECTION	Chadwell and West Tilbury
		W. Canvey / Shellhaven
		Canvey Benfleet
	MID ESSEX	FOULNESS ARCHIPELAGO SECTION
Rochford Mixed Farmlands		
River Roach		
RIVER CROUCH SECTION		Canewdon Sloping Claylands
		River Crouch
		Burham Sloping Claylands
DENGIE PENINSULA SECTION		Dengie Coastlands
		Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
RIVER BLACKWATER SECTION		Dengie Ancient Claylands
		Upper Blackwater Estuary
		Lower Blackwater Estuary
		Maldon Mixed Farmlands
		Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
		Tollesbury Coastalnds
		ST OSYTH SECTION
Colchester Claylands and Marshlands		
Lower Roman River		
Lower Colne Estuary		
Upper Colne Estuary		
Brightlingsea Enclosed Valelands		
Brightlingsea Flag Creek		
THE NAZE SECTION	St Osyth Coastlands	
	Holland Coastlands	
	Hamford Water	
	Stour Estuary	
NORTH ESSEX	THE NAZE SECTION	Stour Estuary



### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
  - Introduction to the Historic Landscape Characterisation
  - Landscape Character Areas
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

The Essex coast falls principally in the Greater Thames Estuary character area identified by the Countryside Agency. The area described here extends landwards only where there are significant visual, topographical or cultural relationships with the coast. The broad South Essex, Mid Essex and North Essex groupings are loosely defined – and take account of geographical rather than district boundaries.

### Local Character Areas

Thirty distinct character areas have been highlighted along the Essex Coast.

Each local Landscape Character area is defined as a geographical entity, based on cultural and historical associations rather than the physical associations, which link the landscape types. Each local character area listed below is mapped and described. Reference is made to:

- specific issues which relate to the conservation, protection and enhancement of the natural beauty of the coast
- the landscape type or types they contain
- the ecological value of each area, in terms of the designated areas and habitat types
- public accessibility in the form of country parks, long distance walks and nature reserves. As public accessibility is a key objective, where access to country parks, long distance walks and nature reserves exist they are noted. Many of these sites are owned or managed by Essex County Council, Essex Wildlife Trust, the RSPB or the National Trust

•heritage features of architectural, historical and archaeological interest– including an introduction to the process of Historic Landscape Characterisation (outlined briefly in a synthesis of what can now be shown using these methods)

Consideration of these features would provide the basis for possible future Heritage Coast status.

But first, a brief introduction to the process of Historic Landscape Characterisation by Lynn Dyson-Bruce. An HLC has not been carried out on every character area.

## Introduction to the process of Historic Landscape Characterisation

### CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to the Historic Landscape Characterisation

Landscape Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

A synthesis of what is known about the landscape can now be shown through a process called Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC). HLC is a relatively new approach to a study of the landscape within Archaeology. The methodology has been developed from that used in the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) process.

Part of the reason for the development of HLC was due to a perceived imbalance between the information that heritage records indicate and the reality on the ground, reflecting a change of focus from 'sites' to 'landscapes'. Until recently heritage records – the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) now Heritage Environment Records (HER) - formed the primary resource for heritage management. Yet, no matter how excellent this resource, it is biased and limited, reflecting current and past areas of interest. Where development control has taken place along a bypass, for example, a concentration of SMR/HER records leads to a linear concentration of information, a fine reflection of work, but not of the true potential of the archaeological or historical content within the surrounding landscape. Current trends tend to look at heritage and culture at a total landscape level.

HLC attempts to redress this imbalance by assessing the rural landscape from the point of view of its historic origins. It is meant to be a 'broad-brush' approach and represents the first attempt by archaeologists to understand and record the landscape in such a manner. The HLC assesses the entire landscape and does not concentrate on 'important' areas nor attach degrees of value to specific areas: it is universal in approach.

In England, English Heritage (EH) spearheaded this approach in 1995 in Cornwall (Herring 1996). The methodology has developed over the years, and application in England is approaching 50%. The coverage is by county; the HLC being applied in partnership between EH and the county involved. (See English Heritage website – characterisation, for further information)

### HLC – East of England

As part of this national initiative EH, in conjunction with the relevant local authorities, initiated an East of England regional project. Started in 1998 in Suffolk, it is now nearing completion, finishing with Norfolk where work began in 2004. The six counties involved in this project are Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

The unitary authorities of Thurrock, Southend-on-Sea and Peterborough have also been included.

### Methodology

The HLC uses readily available sources (mainly maps), which must be universally available across the region. These comprise current OS maps; the 1950 OS series and the 1st edition OS (mid-19th century). These sources reflect prime changes within the landscape and are available across the region – either as paper or in digital form. The HLC records not only the forms of field systems and their historic origin but change within the landscape. Seminal landscape changes since 1950 in the post-Second World War years appear due to mechanisation, changes in farming practice and socio-economic/political reforms (e.g. CAP). The 1st edition records the effects of the Parliamentary Acts and other 19th century agricultural reforms – unfortunately earlier maps and sources are parish based and thus there is no consistent coverage across the counties. However further research could fill in this information on a parish rather than county base, creating a more detailed, if patchy resource.

## Introduction to the process of Historic Landscape Characterisation

### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
  - Introduction to the Historic Landscape Characterisation
  - Landscape Character Areas
  - Bibliography
  - Consultees
  - Appendices

The HLC is now a digital record within a Geographic Information System (GIS) i.e. intelligent digital mapping. This enables much complex information to be attached to the map and has been fundamental in the development and success of HLC.

Past landscapes and forms of management may help inform future management strategies, providing guidance in conservation, preservation, restoration or in ways to develop new 21st century landscapes.

#### **HLC & LCA**

The origins of HLC lie in LCA, in both approach and methodology. LCAs assess landscapes with regard to topography, aspect, visual criteria, building types/forms etc. whereas HLCs assess landscape as to its historic origins. Although the original methodology is derived from LCA, HLC is now developing its own approach and methodology. For further information, please visit: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/>.

Both approaches are complementary: the HLC attempts to inform LCA about historic development in parallel with the natural environment. The scale may differ – LCA is often studied at a smaller scale than HLC.

The HLC process has informed various national LCA's as well as those within

the East of England.

#### **HLC & SAIL**

For the purposes of this SAIL project a few ideas have been illustrated here to show how HLC information may be used and applied.

The SAIL project fits within the broader remit of LCA and the HLC can inform the SAIL project as to the historic origins of the wider landscape. The HLC enables smaller units of focus such as Special Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Scheduled Monuments (SM), Conservation Areas, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Area (SPAs) etc. to be placed within their wider historic context. This may help inform how they have come about or how they may best be managed to ensure their future survival. One can assess past management strategies and /or impacts upon these smaller landscape components, which may have significance either in ecological or historic terms. Their historic development may have contributed to their current status, form and designation.

#### **HLC and Essex**

The HLC in Essex is still under review, currently being audited and edited, with reports coming out in late 2005. However initial analysis has indicated several major trends within the

landscape.

In general the Essex landscape has early origins. The majority of Essex is 'anciently' enclosed as described by Rackham.

The Thames Gateway HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISATION PROJECT can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/thames-gateway-historic-environment-characterisation-project-final-report/>.

But there are traces of Parliamentary style enclosure in the north, as seen on the Chilterns, which rationalised the large common arable fields under strip cultivation, and there are other small pockets of enclosed grazing commons across the county.

The balance of the county can be divided into a broad north-east to south-west division roughly along the A12. North of this, various forms of pre-18th century irregular field systems predominate, thought to be mainly arable. To the south a range of various co-axial field systems, also pre-18th century, are paramount and these are thought to be predominantly grazing. The origins of both are thought to be early, some mediaeval or earlier.

## Introduction to the process of Historic Landscape Characterisation

### CONTENTS

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
  - Introduction to the Historic Landscape Characterisation
  - Landscape Character Areas
  - Bibliography
  - Consultees
  - Appendices

It is important to remember that East Anglia has been the grain bowl for the UK for centuries and was in the past one of the most densely populated and intensively farmed areas in the UK, although current and recent rural depopulation would attest otherwise.

Since the Second World War there have been radical changes across the county: agrarian changes have meant many alterations within the landscape in the form of field boundary loss or gain. But the over-riding factor is that the inherent historic character and form of enclosure still holds true and dominates more recent change.

There has also been much urban and industrial development within the county. This includes urban expansion of current settlements such as Southend-on-Sea, or new towns such as Harlow. Industrial and commercial development for example in Thurrock made use of former gravel extraction areas with development taking place on reclaimed lands.

### Case Studies

Case studies will attempt to place the dynamics of change within the landscape into some form of context. As an initial indicative study various 'key-holes' or scenarios have been selected to illustrate key landscape

forms in terms of historic development and significance – rather akin to 'keyhole' surgery - to afford small windows looking into or out of the landscape to inform wider initiatives. It is hoped that in the future these 'key-holes' or scenarios will be expanded in number, nature and form to provide more diverse applications and interpretations of the landscape in historic terms.

In the selection of HLC examples here, a few ideas will be highlighted showing how the historic background of the coastal regions in Essex can be demonstrated in HLC terms. The history is complex: much has changed socially, economically and topographically, by erosion.

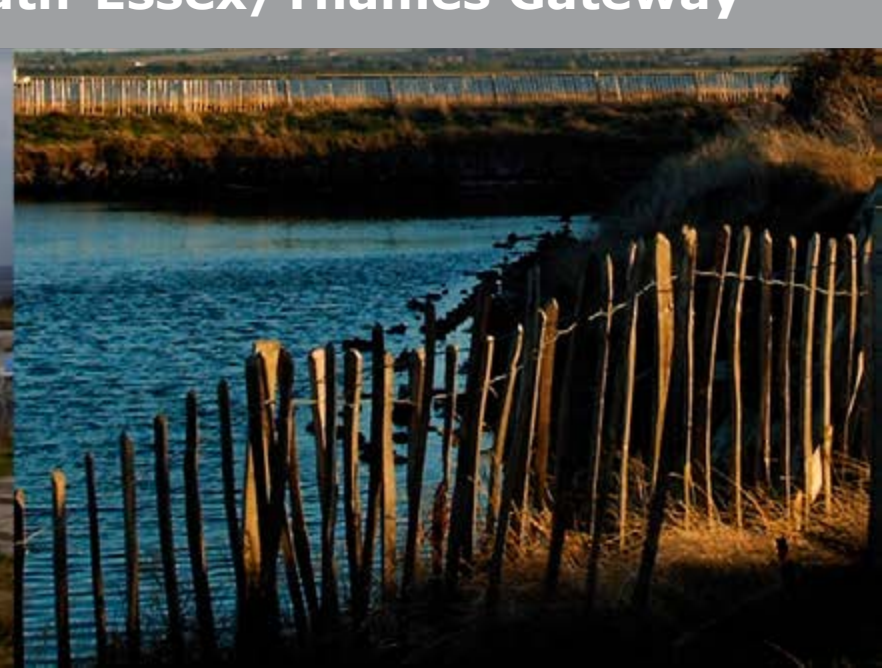
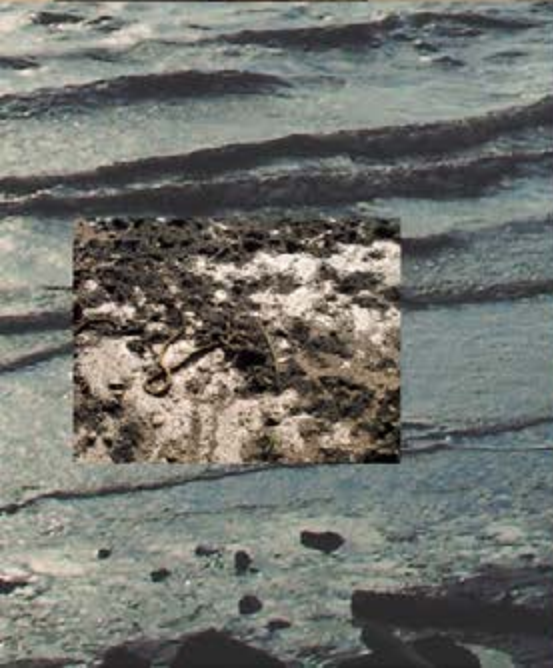
The common themes within the HLC are those of:

- Urban expansion since 1st edition maps – primarily since the Second World War
- Industrial expansion and development -primarily since the Second World War
- Increased mineral exploitation in recent years
- Coastal change – erosion, changes in drainage – pre-18th century curvilinear and 19th century rectilinear

- Coastal exploitation – saltings, oyster beds, ports
- Agricultural change and diversity
- Diverse field systems and distinctive patterns of enclosure
- Most enclosure is very early – pre-18th century in origin
- Recent changes in field boundaries – losses and gains since the 1950s
- Woodlands - a mix of ancient woodlands with limited small more recent plantations



**South-Essex/Thames Gateway**



CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

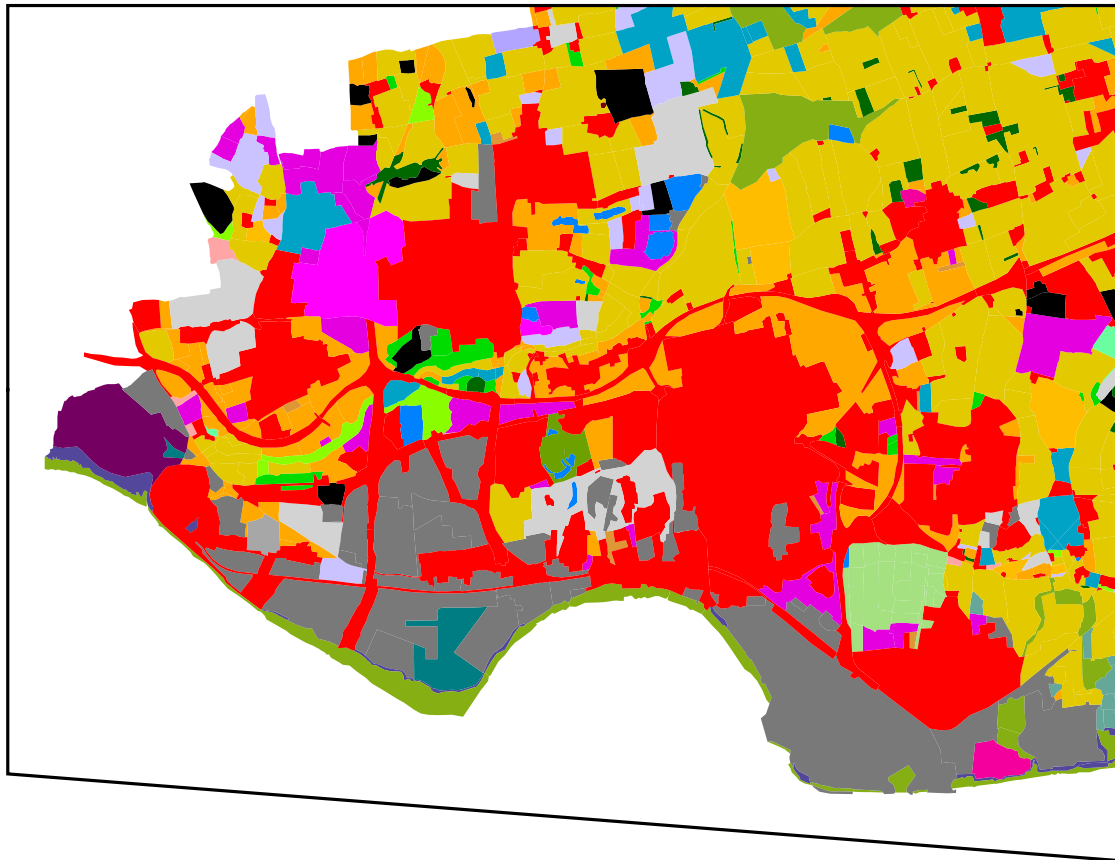
North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Aveley Marshes - Historic Landscape Characterisation**



Recent boundary loss

Urban

Industrial development

Map with the current features

Here one can identify significant historic details by examining the HLC displaying the current features as recorded on the GIS layer i.e. all that has survived historically, and also those features altered by more recent changes. We see a highly modified landscape with much recent boundary loss (yellow), urban (red) and industrial development (grey).

What lies hidden within this landscape, beneath this modern veneer? Is it as modern as first appears?

CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

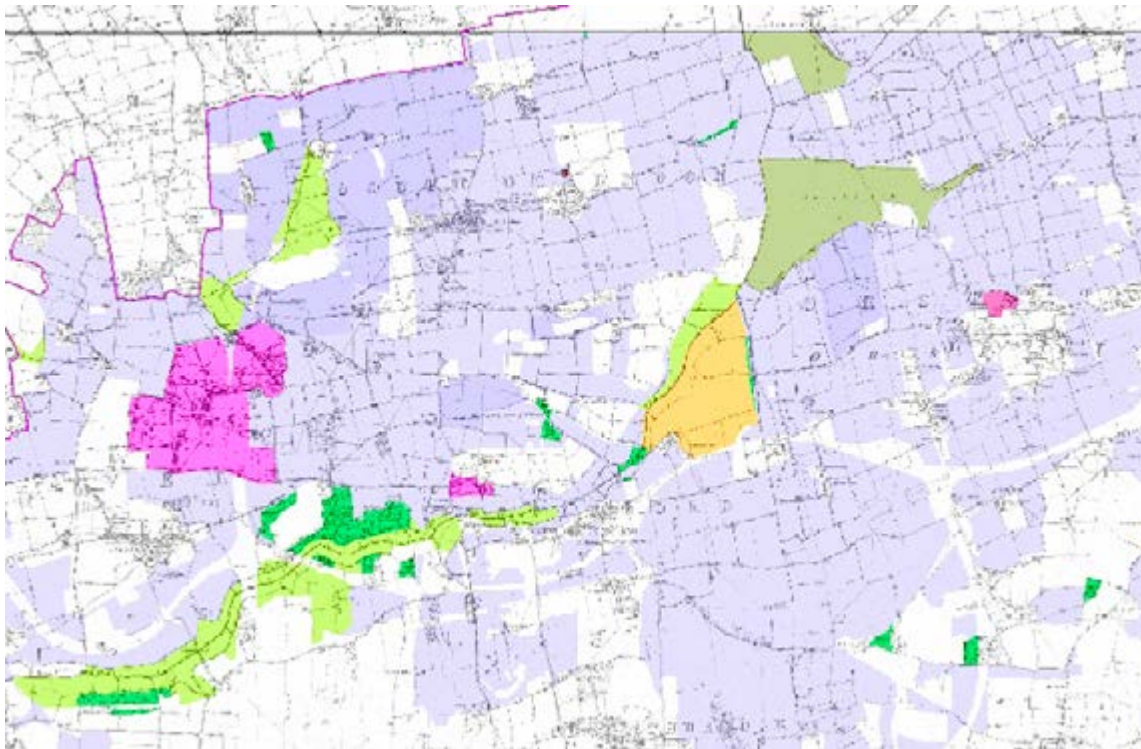
North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Aveley Marshes - Historic Landscape Characterisation**



origins of the landscape

This map illustrates the historic, albeit altered, but still visible origins of the landscape (pale blue) – one that is pre-18th century in origin – of sinuous and coaxial fields – which some think date back to the Romans and are evidence of Roman Centuriation i.e. rectilinear Roman field systems, a form of field enclosure pattern dating from that period – an early form of cadastral land reform.

Also within this 'sea of change' is the historic parkland of Belhus Park – important historic parkland within the area.

To illustrate the context of the HLC, the First Edition map gives you an idea of the pattern of fields upon which this landscape is based. It highlights the importance of the pockets of surviving rural landscape within this very built-up area and how it forms the historic landscape context, adding a time-depth, richness and diversity to the wider urban and industrial landscape.

CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/ Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

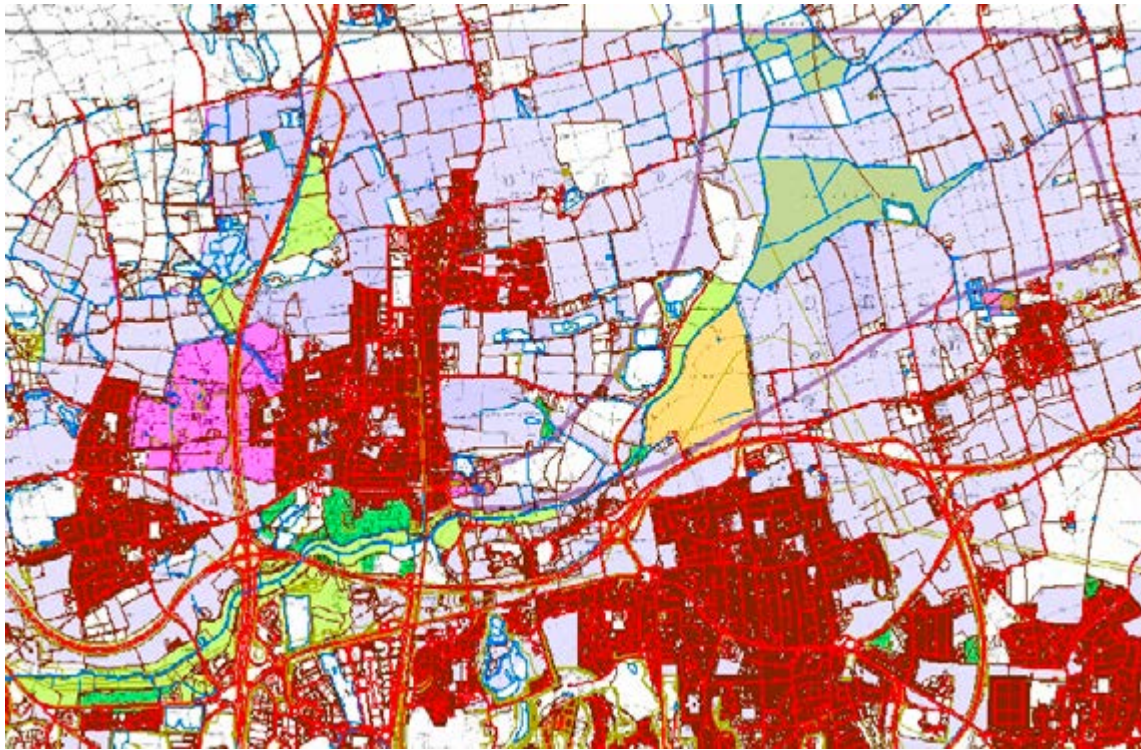
North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Aveley Marshes - Historic Landscape Characterisation**



Origins of the landscape

Special Landscape Area

This map illustrates this historic information with the modern map overlaying it – highlighting how important these remnant historic landscape areas are. The Special Landscape Area (purple outline) actually encompasses some of these historic field systems.

CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/ Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes**



**Generally:** Apart from a former Ministry of Defence site, this character area includes the shoreline from Purfleet following the Thames under the Queen Elizabeth Bridge past West Thurrock Marshes and Grays as far as Tilbury docks.

This flat urban fringe estuarine marshland survives and a SSSI designation includes the former MoD site and runs along the connecting foreshore to the marshes at West Thurrock. Elsewhere, the land is heavily urbanised behind the sea wall, mostly by previous port-side related industries (quays and warehousing) and therefore major traffic and railway routes cross the marshland. Views across the estuary and up and down river are over significant distances.

The inner and outer estuaries of the Thames are described as follows:

- Wide estuary mouth extending out to open sea
- There are large expanses of tidal mudflat and sands, with patches of fringing salt marsh
- Expansive views are dominated by water and sky
- The Southend Pier is a distinctive landmark of the area

For further information, please go to: <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/new-local-plan-for-thurrock/evidence-to-support-local-plan>.

- A tidal estuary comprised of broad sweeping meanders and narrow band of mudflats exposed at low tide
- Sea walls along the edge screen views and create a sense of separation from adjacent marshlands and areas of development
- The channel is dominated by passing river traffic and the urban / industrial edge

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Potential flooding

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Unvegetated foreshore  
 Urban fringe marshland  
 Diverse Coastal marshland

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Inner Thames Marshes SSSI

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

Hulks, intertidal remains



CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

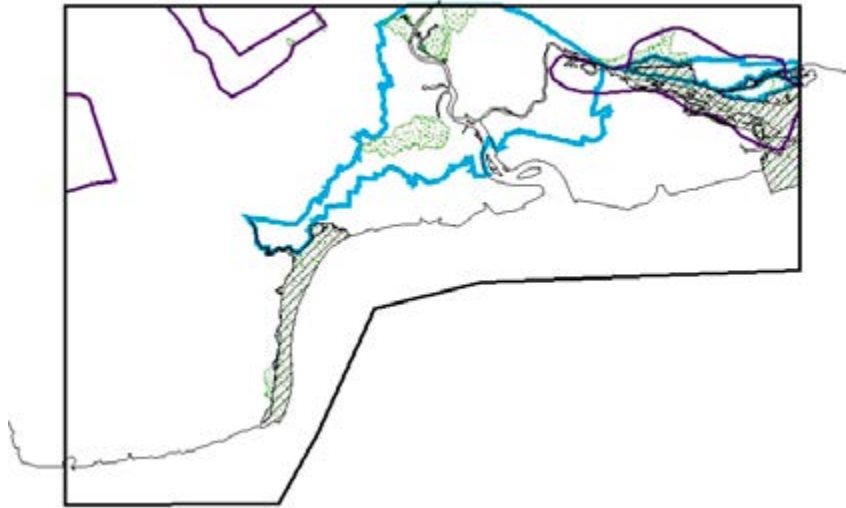
North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Tilbury - Historic Landscape Characterisation**



The plan on the left shows how some designations relate to the HLC areas.

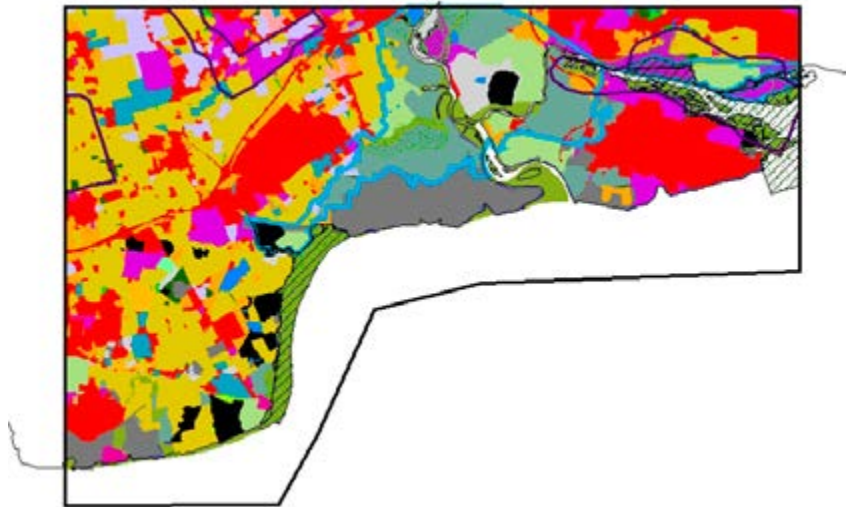
The dark purple outlined area is the Special Landscape Area (SLA)

The diagonal hatched area is the Ramsar area

The pale green spotted areas are the SSSIs

The pale turquoise outlines are the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA).

These areas focus on the low lying areas – subject to coastal flooding, and reflect a more marine environment



With the HLC illustrated, underlying these designated areas one can see that the HLC areas of drained curvilinear (pre-18th century drainage), drained rectilinear (19th century drainage), unimproved intertidal land largely supports and informs these areas – they represent areas with more limited human intervention, which have not undergone major agricultural modification – hence the historic background supports these special designations. Again as in the neighbouring Aveley Marshes the underlying historic background of the field systems is the same – that of pre-18th-century coaxial or irregular fields, with a 20th century veneer of alteration.

The Special Landscape Area, inland to the central northern area of this map reflects a higher more divided area of landscape: a greater survival of ancient woodlands with an isolated area of pre-18th-century irregular field systems on this higher part. The fields are co-axial/sinuuous in the low lying areas.

**CONTENTS**

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Introduction to HLC
- Landscape Character Areas
- South Essex Coast
  - Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
  - Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
  - Chadwell and West Tilbury
  - West Canvey/Shellhaven
  - Canvey Benfleet & Southend
- Mid Essex Coast
- North Essex Coast
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

**Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes**



This LCA consists of Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes.

For further information, please go to:  
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/new-local-plan-for-thurrock/evidence-to-support-local-plan>

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Potential flooding

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Unvegetated foreshore  
 River terrace farmland  
 Diverse coastal marshland

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Mucking and Tilbury Marshes SSSI  
 Environmentally Sensitive Area  
 Coastal protection belt  
 Ramsar site

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

Hulks, intertidal remains



CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/ Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Chadwell and West Tilbury**



•[Link to Historic Environment Character Area map in Thames Gateway HLCA, Fig4.1](#)

•[Link to map showing Archaeological areas in Thames Gateway HLCA, Fig6.4](#)

•[Link here to Chadwell and West Tilbury descriptions in Thurrock LCA, page 12](#)

There now follows a series of descriptions of the HLCAs that are within this LCA. Follow the link below for their location For further information, please go to <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/thames-gateway-historic-environment-characterisation-project-final-report/finalreporttextonly/>.

- A low lying ridge elevated above the Thameside Marshes to the south and, to the north, the historic cores of Stanford-le-Hope/Corringham/Fobbing on the

edges of extensive 20th century.

development.

- The fieldscape of the area is dominated by large fields and regular fields partly resulting from 20th century boundary loss and partly reflecting the historic field pattern.

- The area contains a small number of farm elements of the historic dispersed settlement pattern now located on the outskirts of the settlement.

- The track network runs across the area linking between the inland areas and the marshes, which were once part of an integrated economic system. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 308)

- Undulating land between the settlements at Stanford-le-Hope/Corringham and Basildon.

- The area is largely devoid of settlement, with the exception of the rows of houses on the ridge to the east.

- The arable fields are generally regular and there appears to have been some 20th century boundary loss, resulting in some prairie fields.

- The dominant NW-SE alignment of fields, common to this area of Essex,

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

River terrace farmland



CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Chadwell and West Tilbury**

can still be traced in the landscape.

- Hedgerows are generally low with few trees.
- The hard urban edges and the A13 intrude visually and acoustically into the area. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 309)
- Ridge of Thames terrace gravels, with panoramic views across the Thames. The ridge is broken by valleys and bounded to the north and south by marshland and to the east and west by settlement.
- The high ground reaches out to the Thames as a promontory between the marshes and at its tip is the historic Coalhouse Fort and dismantled battery.
- Modern uses include recreation, such as golf courses, gravel pits and disused workings and nurseries.
- Historically the settlement pattern was, with the exception of small settlements sited on high knolls in the north, dispersed.
- This settlement pattern broadly

survives, with the addition of some ribbon development and a settlement at East Tilbury created between the wars in the Czech modernist style to serve the Bata factory.

- The historic field pattern is complex, in the north the pattern is strongly rectilinear, roughly NW/SE, with considerable variation in field size. In the centre, fields were very large and less rectilinear, perhaps the result of early enclosure of heathland. In the south there is again a rectilinear pattern either side of and aligned on the possible Roman road to East Tilbury. Despite disruption through modern development, and some boundary loss these patterns survive.
- The fields are used for arable and pasture and horse grazing is common. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 304)
- This area of flat reclaimed land comprises the largely undeveloped section of Tilbury Marshes, between the ridge of character area 304 and the River Thames.
- The Tilbury Power Station dominates the visual landscape of the area and creates a dramatic contrast to the surrounding marshland.

- The fields are generally regular (straight bounded) and of a variety of sizes, historically grazing marsh now predominately in arable use.
- The area also contains active and disused gravel workings.
- There is no settlement in this area.
- The HLC describes most of the fields as prairie. This description does not reflect the nature of the fieldscape although some fields may have lost internal boundaries. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 305)
- An area consisting of reclaimed land that has been subject to sand and gravel extraction, this has left an open and exposed landscape largely denuded of historic features.
- With rare exceptions such as surviving counter walls, and the relatively intact area of Stanford marsh, the historic landscape features have been removed, few fields survive, and a series of lakes and ponds mainly created by recent extraction remain.
- The historic settlement pattern comprised the church/hall complex at Mucking, which survives, and the

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley,  
Wennington &  
Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking  
and Fobbing  
Marshes
- Chadwell and  
West Tilbury
- West Canvey/  
Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet &  
Southend

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Chadwell and West Tilbury

wharf at Mucking Creek.

- The HLC describes most of this area as prairie field, whilst much of the land appears to be disused or active extractive industry. It is probably this activity that has resulted in the removal of field boundaries, not agricultural rationalisation. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 307)

**CONTENTS**

- Preface
- Executive Summary
- Landscape Framework
- Part One. Landscape Character Types
- Part Two. Landscape Character Areas
- Introduction to HLC
- Landscape Character Areas
- South Essex Coast
  - Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
  - Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
  - Chadwell and West Tilbury
  - West Canvey/Shellhaven
  - Canvey Benfleet & Southend
- Mid Essex Coast
- North Essex Coast
- Bibliography
- Consultees
- Appendices

**West Canvey / Shellhaven**



- This area is occupied by an oil refinery with associated oil storage and works.
- It is set on the Thames floodplain on the banks of the estuary, and has several jetties leading out to the water. (Thames Gateway Appendix1, Archaeological Context, HECA 96)
- This is an area of grazing marsh on the Thames floodplain.
- Small pockets of arable exist within the mix of blocks of regular and irregular fields.
- The fields are bounded by drains and interspersed with several marshy creeks, medieval/early post-medieval origin resulting from the creation of the grazing marsh. Earlier saltmarsh creeks can be

discerned. Earthwork counter walls and other flood defences survive in places.

- The industrial complex at Shellhaven is prominent in views from the area. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 319)
- The northern part of this area is mainly secondary scrub woodland in an area of early 20th century industrial land now a country park.
- The southern part is an area of disused modern extraction used for tipping. The area lies in the middle of reclaimed marshes of area 319.
- The extraction has removed the historic field structure from this area. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 320)

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Future of oil refinery  
Potential flooding

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Urban fringe marshland  
Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Diverse coastal marshland  
Uniform coastal marshland  
River terrace farmlands

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

SSSI, Ancient Landscape, Special Landscape Area, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Metropolitan Green Belt



**CONTENTS**

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/ Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Canvey Benfleet**



- A varied landscape between South Benfleet, Leigh and Canvey comprising reclaimed land, grazing marsh, saltmarsh, and creeks with an intricate maze of marshy islands.
- The area is used for recreation, with caravan sites, golf courses and country park and nature reserve.
- Historically the area was largely devoid of settlement as it is today.
- The reclaimed fields are generally bounded by drains and mostly regular, but some incorporate formers saltmarsh creeks. The boundaries are mostly of early post medieval origin, in places earthworks survive.

- The area has an open exposed feel, with broad view of the Thames estuary, Southend , Canvey Island and north Kent. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 322)
- An area of steeply rising ground between the creekside marshes and the urban spread of South Benfleet.
- The area contains some settlement, mostly in the form of farmsteads, reflecting the historic pattern of sparse dispersed settlement.
- The area is divided between agriculture and leisure, with the golf course and country park to the west, and prairie fields to the north.
- The area contains some woodland, and a handful of ponds.
- The area also contains the historic site of Hadleigh Castle which is a dominant feature. (Thames Gateway Appendix2, HLCA 323)

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Potential flooding

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Unvegetated foreshore  
 Inter-tidal salt marsh  
 Diverse coastal marshland  
 River terrace farmlands

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, SSSI, Coastal Protection Belt, Ancient Landscape, Special Landscape Area, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, National Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland



CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas

South Essex Coast

- Aveley, Wennington & Rainham Marshes
- Tilbury, Mucking and Fobbing Marshes
- Chadwell and West Tilbury
- West Canvey/Shellhaven
- Canvey Benfleet & Southend

Mid Essex Coast

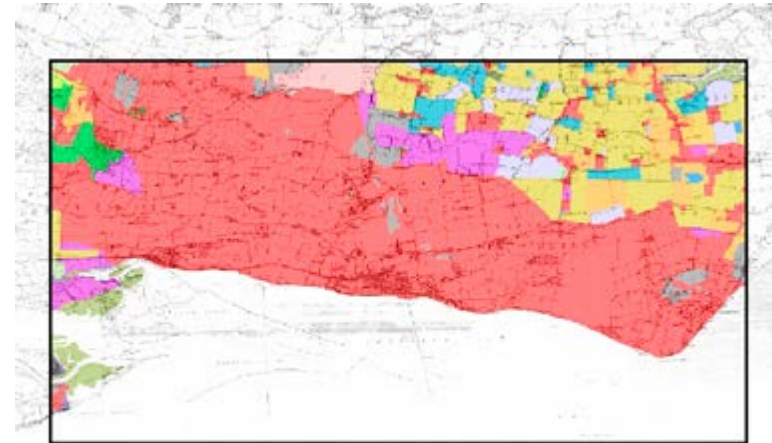
North Essex Coast

Bibliography

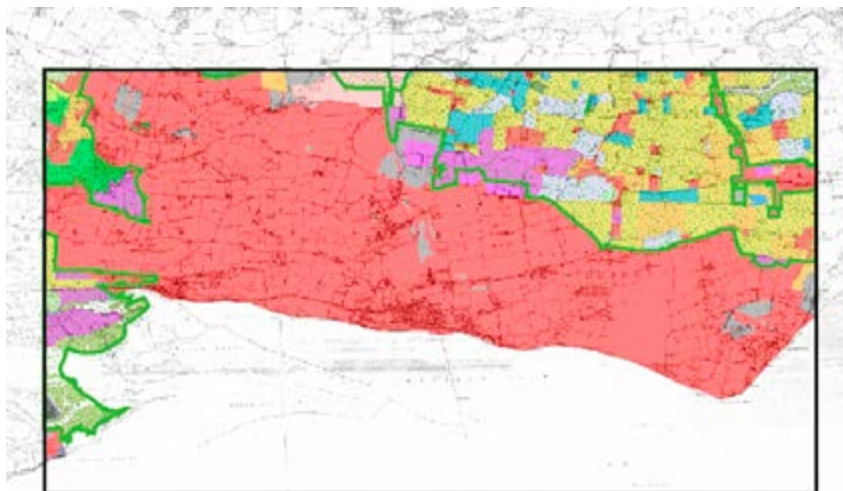
Consultees

Appendices

**Southend - Historic Landscape Characterisation**



For this area only two things are currently highlighted: the urban change in Southend-on-Sea and how greatly the community has expanded since the 1st edition (left hand side) mid-19th-century OS map – note the change between the urban areas on the 1st edition to current mapping (right hand side).



Secondly, the extent that the Metropolitan Green Belt (green outlined) conforms to the surviving areas of field systems – again a landscape based on predominantly pre-18th-century co-axial field systems.



**Mid-Essex/Foulness and Dengie Peninsula**



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

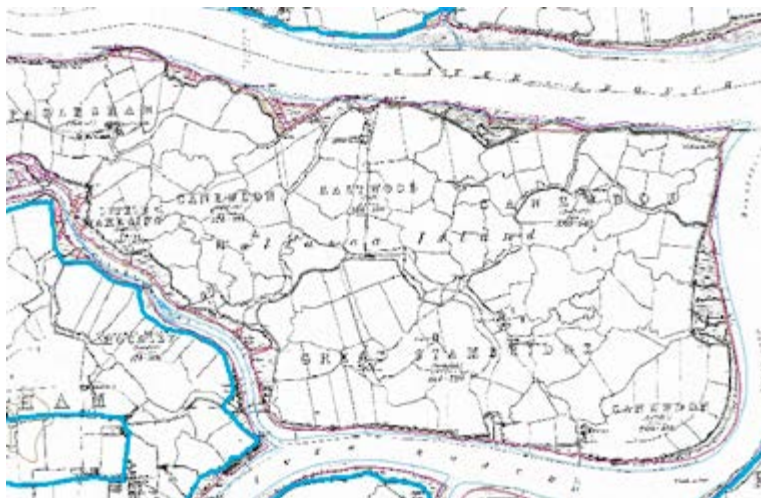
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

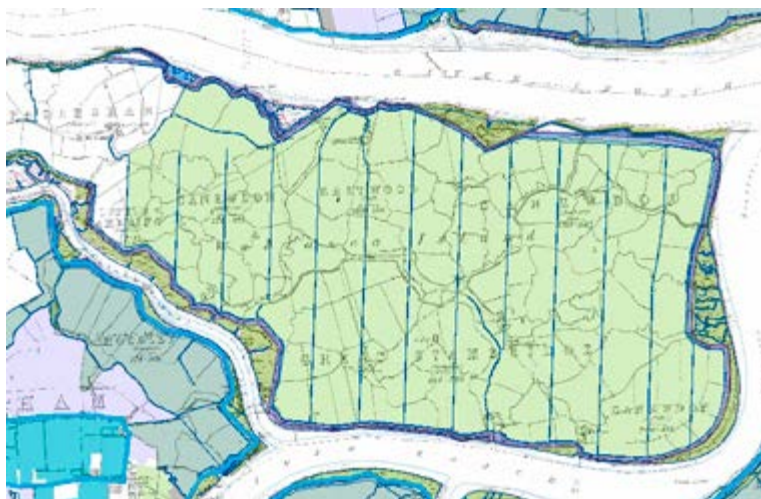
North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

**Crouch Estuary and Foulness - Historic Landscape Characterisation**



1st Edition, Wallasea Island



1st Edition later, Wallasea Island



1st Edition 18th Century, Wallasea Island

This area is mostly low lying coastal floodplains – with the military area of Foulness – almost the sole exclusion area for the metropolitan green belt.

However here it is important to see the reasons why some areas were designated as Environmentally Sensitive (ESA). For instance, one could ask the question why the island of Wallasea has been excluded.

It has a history of drained and rectilinear drainage as evident on the First Edition map. However since then the drainage for the island has been almost completely modified and a 20th century pattern imposed, almost wiping out all earlier patterns. When one overlays the current mapping one sees the new drainage pattern, which, together with modern agricultural practises, has obviously altered the environment.

CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas  
 South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

**Crouch Estuary and Foulness**



Generally: The Crouch widens gently from Burnham downstream to the mouth of the Crouch Estuary, a distance of five miles or so. To the south the marshlands are broken into a scattered archipelago of low-lying islands and narrow creeks. These include the Ministry of Defence (MOD)-owned Foulness and Potton Islands, the neighbouring farmed land of Wallasea and Rushley Islands, and the lower reaches of the Roach.

The most characteristic feature of this varied landscape is the extensive mudflats of the estuaries and creeks, often deeply incised by the moving tide. At low tide these muds, glistening with retreating sea water, form shimmering landscapes of eerie beauty, occasionally revealing the long-hidden remains of ancient human activity or the more recent wreck of a working barge or smack.

*Into the narrow little creek between Foulness and Potton Islands we thrust our way, just able to lay our course, while our wash followed us along the muddy fringe of the banks...*

Maurice Griffiths, 1932

The Foulness and Maplin Sands extend seawards at low tide in a seemingly endless succession of broad flats over which the sea rushes in dangerously with the returning tide.

*To see the angry seas breaking on the cruel granite-like sands on a breezy day in summer is to give one only a glimpse of the horror of such a place on a winter's night, when a snow-laden gale screams down out of the frozen north and lashes the Estuary into a frenzy of black waters frothing with madness.*

Maurice Griffiths, 1932

These sands at low tide are home to basking seals as well as large numbers of wildfowl and feeding waders. This intertidal zone is within the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) reaching as far as Shoeburyness. The SAC includes all the little creeks in the archipelago. The distinctive sands, the shell-covered banks at Foulness Point and the salt marshes are also a SSSI, Ramsar site and Special Protection

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

- Scattered military development over MOD-owned land
- Military debris on sand flats exposed at low tide
- Loss of features on Wallasea
- Restricted public access over much of marshland
- Flood Risk

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

- Unvegetated foreshore
- Inter-tidal salt marsh
- Diverse coastal marshland
- Uniform coastal marshland

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

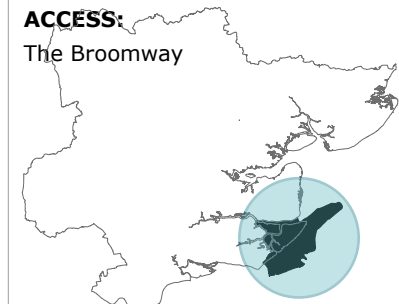
- Foulness, Crouch and Roach
- Estuaries SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex
- Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

- Counter-walls, The Broomway

**ACCESS:**

The Broomway



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Crouch Estuary and Foulness

Area (SPA). This is one of the most isolated and inaccessible landscapes of the Essex coast. The marshlands are either cut off by narrow creeks, as at Rushley Island, have access limited by military use, as on Foulness and Potton Islands or by private ownership. Even the sea wall is only accessible to pedestrians in a few places.

Military ownership seems to have resulted in reduced loss of features such as the natural winding ditches of the ancient marshlands and the older sea defences.

Much of the irregular field pattern remains, notably on Potton Island, but much has been straightened since 1948, and on Wallsea the original intimate network of creeks and old counter-walls has completely disappeared and been replaced by an extraordinary engineered landscape of deep, straight ditches.

Despite the extensive military ownership there is a relatively long history of arable cultivation within the recent Coastal Marshland because of the good quality silty soils. Clay soils west of the spine road on Foulness were grazed into the 20th century as they were harder to work.

As most of this area lies below the mean high water mark, the risk of flooding is a constant concern. Foulness was inundated in the 1953 flood when many people died in Essex. This incident forms only one of a sequence of documented flood events going back through the centuries. As sea levels rise, similar events could occur in the future. Options to deal with the potential for future flood events include abandoning some sea defences and the farmland they protect and, over time, allowing this land to return to salt marsh.

On the areas of diverse coastal marshland, there is a pattern of scattered established farmsteads, found within the older marshlands, well below 5m AOD, with private lanes and tracks linking one to another. Access for vehicles is limited, as narrow trackways and lanes link these settlements and only a limited number of farm trackways give private access to the sea wall. Public access by foot is also restricted across the marshlands, although the sea wall itself is generally accessible. The Foulness archipelago is generally sparsely occupied with scattered farmsteads and a small village at Churchend. The general pattern is confused, however, where

MOD activity over a hundred years has resulted in extensive military roadways, significant trackways and scattered military settlement over much of the archipelago.

Views inland are cluttered by this scattered development, although the essential open character of Foulness remains. On this island there is also a greater proportion of scrub and unfarmed strips, linked to the area's military use, obscuring the marshland character. Military debris litters the foreshore by the ranges. The earlier sea defences/ counter-walls remaining in the landscape often carry tracks or lanes, such as the lane to Ridgemarsh from Courtsend on Foulness (similar to the one between Sandbeach and Glebe Farms on the edge of Bradwell Marsh, on the Dengie).

At Foulness Point shingly and shelly spits are at their most dramatic. The shell banks are also found along the seaward edge of some of the salt marshes up the estuaries themselves, where the vast numbers of cockles and other shellfish provide the material for these spits.

Public access to some of the foreshores is restricted due either to military ownership or to conservation

## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary  
 and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed  
 Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping  
 Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping  
 Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient  
 Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient  
 Claylands
- Upper Blackwater  
 Estuary
- Lower Blackwater  
 Estuary
- Maldon Mixed  
 Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling  
 Farmlands
- Tollesbury  
 Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Crouch Estuary and Foulness

management. Most are inaccessible except by private access from the public highway to the sea wall or by boat, however there are few pleasure craft for hire or charter around the Essex shores. Inappropriate usage of the creeks and shorelines can still be a problem, however – and military debris litters the foreshore by the ranges at Foulness.

On Foulness several groups of masts provide local focal points, however, in an otherwise remote and unspoiled landscape, Bradwell power station forms an imposing and brooding structure that decreases the sense of remoteness over a wide area, lighting up the night sky in stark contrast to its surrounds.

On Foulness, where all the marshlands are scattered with the buildings, roads and structures necessary for military use, features such as telegraph poles do not impinge on the view. Though these structures makes the landscape seem disordered they do not affect its essentially open character. However, pylons do intrude in the vistas above the Crouch marshlands.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Rochford Mixed Farmlands



Generally a gently rolling or sloping arable landscape, within which in the past occasional orchards or horticultural crops took advantage of the well-drained soils. The ancient pattern of co-axial fields can also be distinguished. The original field pattern is most noticeable all over the Rochford peninsula on old OS maps. The pattern is considerably eroded due to massive hedgerow loss since the Second World War. This loss has also caused considerable reduction in the sense of enclosure and seclusion. It has also made detailed identification on the ground near impossible, although the strong rectilinear pattern prevails.

Where retained the hedgerows are tall and bushy, dominated by elm and blackthorn, enhanced by the occasional oak tree, giving a distinctly enclosed feel. Dry ditches that run parallel to

the hedgerows enhance the distinctive pattern that they make. Where paddocks have been created, the hedgerow system is supplemented by fencing.

Small villages and hamlets hug the slightly higher, drier land of the Rochford Farmlands above the Roach marshlands - Little Wakering, Barling, Stambridge and Paglesham - each small settlement in the Barling farmlands straggles out from its distinctive church, with often a church spire giving the first sign of the proximity of the settlement. The older villages have been suburbanised at their perimeters.

*The red sun was approaching the tree-tops behind Barling village, while above them, silhouetted against the sky, a group of barges sprits and topmasts told where the quay lay beyond the meadows.*

Maurice Griffiths, 1932

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Loss of hedgerows has eroded the historic pattern, sense of enclosure and ecological integrity of farmland

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

River terrace farmlands  
Mixed marshland edge

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:

Conservation Area, SSSI, Special Landscape Areas, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Ramsar site and Special Protection Area, Metropolitan Green Belt

### ACCESS:

River Roach Way



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape Character Types

Part Two. Landscape Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character Areas  
 South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

**River Roach**



Generally: From Rochford down Paglesham Reach, the River Roach once formed an important waterway linking Rochford and its neighbouring villages and hamlets to the River Crouch and the sea. Nowadays pleasure craft still use the quay at Paglesham Eastend to access the old village and its pub.

*Next to Pin Mill, I believe Paglesham to be the prettiest village on the East Coast accessible to the yachtsman. Hidden in the midst of a little wood, it is approached from the hard by a winding lane, and to a stranger its presence is not suspected till a sudden turn in the lane reveals its quaint cottages and their thatched roofs.*

Maurice Griffiths, 1932

The small creeks at Barlinghall and Little Wakering are bordered by areas of salt marsh that fringe hummocky mudflats at low tide. The broad marshlands that abut the river are generally arable, disturbed in several places by quarrying and landfill activity. This has created a pitted and cratered landscape, with an uncharacteristic mounded form in an otherwise level environment.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Restricted public access over much of marshland  
 Potential flooding

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Mixed marshland edge  
 River terrace farmlands  
 Diverse coastal marshland

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Crouch and Roach Estuaries SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation, Environmentally Sensitive Area



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Canewdon Sloping Claylands



Generally: The Canewdon Claylands stretch from Hullbridge to Paglesham, forming the backdrop to the marshlands on the southern bank of the Crouch. Similar to the Burnham Claylands, this is a generally sloping landscape of arable farmland where the ancient co-axial field pattern is still visible in places, and appears to defy both the lay of the land and the barrier of the Crouch itself. Huge hedgerow loss, especially north of Canewdon, has obliterated this striking feature and revealed the smooth sculpted mounds of the London Clay hills beneath.

Traditionally, settlement follows the higher land, so that the wooded hills at Hockley give way to a more open landscape at Canewdon. South Fambridge sits on its low rise jutting out into the surrounding marshland, providing the setting for a

bridging point in the past. A strongly right-angled pattern of lanes reflects the co-axial pattern of the fields. In the 20th century a straggle of more suburban properties has gradually spread along the Hullbridge to Canewdon road.

The hedgerow pattern is strikingly co-axial, notably on the Rochford plains, of which the higher land above the river Crouch forms a part. It has been claimed that the pattern of the hedgerows crosses even the boundary of the river itself, but this is no longer evident on the ground. Where the London Clay forms low rounded hills or a distinct valley-side slope as along the Crouch, the topography shows the hedgerow pattern to be particularly striking, running at right angles to the slope in an almost north south direction. This makes the hedgerow loss particularly noticeable, around Canewdon.

The settlement consists of scattered farmsteads, small villages and, locally, small groups of suburban properties. The latter are often hidden down back lanes amongst the remaining hedgerows and small copses or scattered along the main local routes, as from Peldon to Wigborough. The lanes and tracks dog-leg around the distinctive field margins. It is thought that a Roman road led along the Crouch down to a crossing point at

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Loss of hedgerows has eroded the historic pattern, sense of enclosure and ecological integrity of farmland  
Redevelopment pressures at leisure and caravan parks

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Rolling clay farmlands  
Diverse coastal marshland

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:

Environmentally Sensitive Areas,  
Special Landscape Areas

### ACCESS:

River Roach Way



## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary  
and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed  
Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping  
Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping  
Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient  
Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient  
Claylands
- Upper Blackwater  
Estuary
- Lower Blackwater  
Estuary
- Maldon Mixed  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury  
Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Canewdon Sloping Claylands

Fambridge (from 'Fen-bridge'), and at Hullbridge a medieval bridge was in use until the 17th century.

Locally small pastures are used for sheep or horse grazing, notably on the north bank of the Crouch, and here most hedges have been retained but in association with the arable fields they have sometimes been lost. Where stock is kept the hedges are supplemented with post-and-wire or rail fencing. The remaining hedges are shaggy and often fragmented, generally dominated by elm and blackthorn but locally enriched with hawthorn and ash. Often both live and dead elm trees remain in the hedgerow and hedgerow oaks can also be found. The sense of enclosure in the landscape is enhanced locally by small copses.

Where hedgerows have been lost the landscape is open, verging on large-scale. This gives extensive views out over the marshes and estuary, from the Burnham and Canewdon roads along the Crouch; where still continuous, the hedges give an enclosed landscape with areas of scrub, copses and shelterbelts intensifying this locally. The overall effect of the broken and fragmented hedgerow network sometimes gives the countryside a disordered character in which the landscape pattern is hard to read.

To the south of the Crouch, from Hullbridge to South Fambridge, the backdrop of the wooded Hockley Hills forms a distinctive setting for this farmed landscape.

Pylons stand out at the margins of both the north and south banks of the Crouch.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas  
 South Essex Coast

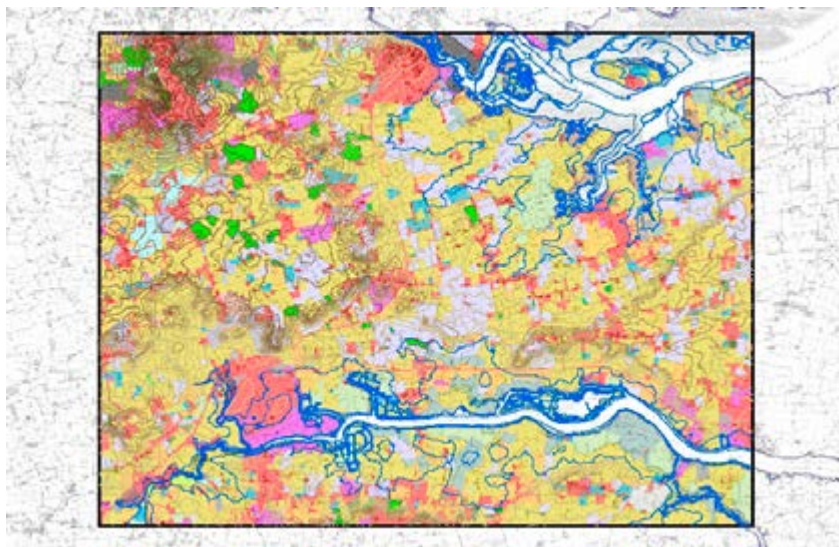
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## River Crouch - Historic Landscape Characterisation



Topography



Infrastructure

This area is adjacent to the Dengie. The early field systems described on the Dengie continue into this area, and represent an adjoining part of that landscape. The fields systems subtly change when running up onto the Danbury ridge – and become more irregular in nature – a different form of enclosure but still pre-18th century in origin, and the change may be due to topography rather than field typology.

In this area one can see how this co-axial enclosure pattern has dictated the infrastructure of roads and urban development – ribbon development is seen bordering these roads and lanes which run around these co-axial field systems in a dog-leg fashion. One has influenced the other – hence the roads and lanes are similarly ancient in origin, as are the fields. Additionally one can see how this early co-axial field system, literally runs across the landscape.

In this area, one also sees one of the ‘highest’ areas topographically in Essex – Danbury – where the settlement is aligned on the ridge, following the topography. Maldon is a port located on the coast, which has been a significant port for centuries, trading with the coastal ports along the western seaboard of Europe.

Significantly the surviving patches of Ancient Woodland are primarily located on the higher areas, on the spur to the SE of Danbury.

**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

**River Crouch**



Generally: The River Crouch character area includes all the intertidal area from Battlesbridge to a line approximately level with Burnham and Paglesham Creek, and the associated marshlands behind the sea wall. The river narrows west of South Woodham Ferrers losing qualities of enclosure and remoteness.

The Crouch has a significantly different character from the Colne and Blackwater because of its narrowness and the relatively steeply rising land along most of its bank side, which enhances its sense of enclosure. This also allowed it to be bridged at both Hullbridge and Fambridge in the past.

*We had enjoyed our gentle drift down the winding river from Fambridge before the fluky cat's-paws, and were now brought up off Burnham waterfront in the pleasant sunshine of this Sunday afternoon.*

Maurice Griffiths, 1932

The marshlands are wide in relation to the channel. Extensive grazing marsh remains on the Northern shore. Several areas of salt marsh, notably Bridgemarsh Island and the marshes south-west of North Fambridge have redeveloped on old grazing marsh that was overwhelmed in the floods of 1953 and subsequently abandoned. At North Fambridge the lines of old drainage channels are still evident.

Characteristic of the landscape are the mudflats of the river and creeks, from the gently shelving river's edge at Burnham to the hummocky margins of the Upper Crouch, exposed at low tide.

On the river, several sailing clubs, marinas, pontoons and river moorings provide a facility for numerous sailing boats and leisure craft. Burnham is the main focus for sailing in the Crouch, however, and the lower reaches are significantly busier.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Access to sea wall from the public highway

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Diverse coastal marshland

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Crouch and Roach SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate, Special Area of Conservation, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Coastal Protection Belt, Special Landscape Areas

**HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS:**

Bluehouse Farm, Marsh Farm



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Burham Sloping Claylands



Generally: This character area forms the backdrop to the River Crouch and its marshlands, from South Woodham Ferrers, past North Fambridge and Althorne to the West side of Burnham; a landscape of rolling arable land with occasional pastures enclosed by dense, bushy elm-dominated hedgerows and copses, which all gently fall towards the River Crouch. The fields are variable in size and shape, in part due to hedgerow loss, but in places the co-axial pattern found elsewhere on the Dengie Peninsula is still strongly evident. Hedgerow loss is most noticeable on the steepest slopes.

Settlement is concentrated along the B1010 in the form of a scattering of farmsteads, hamlets and newer suburban properties that have spread along the lane. Beyond Althorne the B1010 demonstrates the distinctive

dog-legs as it reflects the ancient field pattern. From this main access route, several tracks lead down-slope, serving the local stations at North Fambridge and Althorne, farmsteads, traditional crossing-points of the river and new yacht harbours. The railway to Burnham is a well-hidden feature in the landscape. Pylons, however, running north of the B1010, stand out prominently on the skyline as far east as Stamfords Hill.

At the marshes adjoining North Fambridge the vegetation is deeply dissected and eroded, leaving mud mounds, and as elsewhere brushwood groynes are used to try to prevent further loss. This soft engineering technique, originating in Holland, is a feature of a 1980s attempt to stop erosion, but has not proved so successful in this country.

Large areas of unaltered grazing marsh can be found close to North Fambridge, now grazed by cattle and not sheep, where some of the best preserved earthworks relating to historic salt production can be found.

The fringes of larger settlements at Burnham, and some caravan sites on the marshlands, intrude into the landscape where there has been hedgerow loss or where ornamental planting has not taken place. The railway to Southminster

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Loss of hedgerows has eroded the historic pattern, sense of enclosure and ecological integrity of farmland  
Loss of elms has destroyed treed character of the farmlands  
Redevelopment pressures at leisure and caravan parks

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Rolling clay farmlands  
Mixed marshland edge

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATION:

Environmentally Sensitive Areas,  
Metropolitan Green Belt, Coastal Protection Belt, Ancient Woodland, Special Landscape Areas



## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary  
and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed  
Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping  
Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping  
Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient  
Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient  
Claylands
- Upper Blackwater  
Estuary
- Lower Blackwater  
Estuary
- Maldon Mixed  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury  
Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Burham Sloping Claylands

is generally well hidden, however.

Planting around farmsteads and dwellings can include columnar ornamental conifers that form discordant features among the looser-formed native hedgerows and trees. Pre-20th century it was exceptional to see more than a barn in these landscapes, and even today built form is rare except at the margins of the larger suburban fringes such as South Woodham Ferrers.

At many points along the B1010, there are impressive views across and down the Crouch, over its marshes and the Canewdon Farmlands as far as Southend. These views are particularly notable from the highest land around Althorne.

CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Dengie Peninsula - Historic Landscape Characterisation

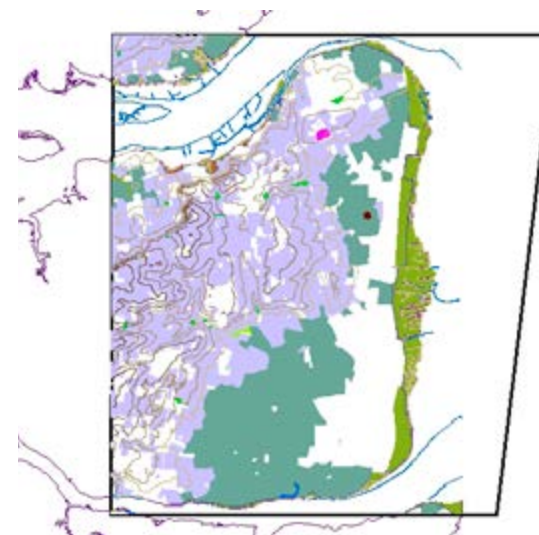
The Dengie is a very significant area in historic terms which, in conjunction with the neighbouring area of the River Crouch, represents the core area of a highly distinctive form of enclosure – a co-axial pattern that not only runs EW but NS as well – forming a block-type pattern of enclosure. This pattern has an early date some think possibly dating to the Roman period – representing Roman Centuriation.

Its true origins are disputed – but it is accepted that these represent an early form of enclosure pattern and may even date from prehistory. What is significant in this area is that this form of enclosure is limited to the higher, drier land, with early and later forms of drainage and reclamation in the low lying areas. The area by Bradwell-on-Sea illustrates clearly the change in enclosure pattern – the coaxial fields on the ‘highland’ and sinuous and later drainage patterns on the lowlands.

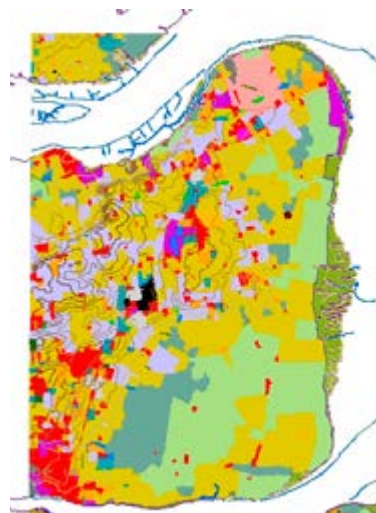
When one illustrates the contours with the pre-18th century HLC types, the relevance of how enclosure patterns are related with topography is apparent,

similarly when one adds the 19th century changes. The pale greens, representing these early periods of coastal drainage are limited to these low lying areas. These areas largely conform to the SLA (turquoise outline). The Ramsar and SSSI sites are on the littoral coast – and impinge on the unimproved strip of land running along the coast – the slightly darker olive.

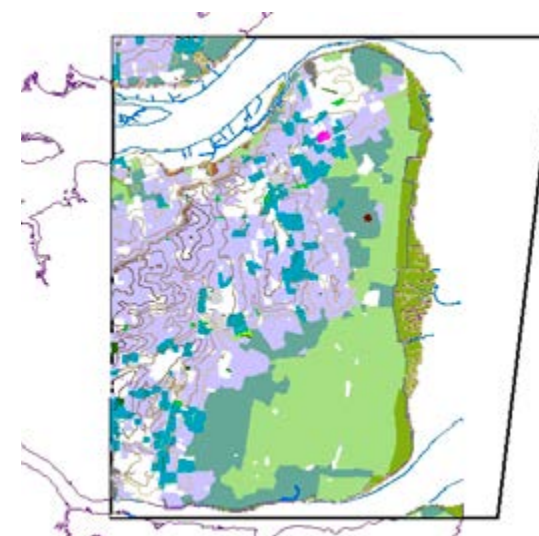
On the current HLC map – the large pale pink area in the north represents one of the Second World War airfields, which are scattered across the Essex countryside in various forms of preservation.



18th Century



Current HLC



19th Century

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Dengie Coastlands



Generally: This large distinctive character area extends from the small remnant of marshland east of Bradwell to the broad tracts of polder several miles in extent between Burnham and the sea. It includes the fringing salt marshes and the broad sweeps of the Dengie Flats and Ray Sand, which at low tide forces all but boats of the shallowest draft well offshore.

The figures for salt marsh loss in the recent past are significant – a 10% loss was measured between 1973 and 1988 on the Dengie peninsula, where the average rate of retreat during this period was an alarming 2.6m per year. New methods to prevent further loss include use of wave-breaks such as the Thames Lighters at Sales Point and near Marsh House, Tillingham.

*It was wide-open country. The silence of the place was thick and palpable; the level sweep of fields under a giant sky made it feel oddly suspended and provisional, a shimmering trick of the light.*

*This thin, pale water didn't look like sea, and nor did the land around it look like land. It was wide-open, flat and boggy, only by a few degrees less liquid in its constituency than the stuff which was officially designated as water on the chart.*

Jonathan Raban, 1987

Generally settlement is not characteristic of the diverse coastal marshland, but scattered established farmsteads such as Middlewick and Turncole farms, are found within the older marshlands on Dengie, well below the 5m AOD level, with private lanes and tracks linking one to another.

The boundary between the uniform marshland and the more diverse coastal marshland is generally aligned along the change in soil type from the good quality silts of the uniform marshland, to the harder-to-work clays of the older diverse marshland, much of which remained as grassland until the Second World War. A notable traditional settlement is the chain of farms visible along this boundary.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Lighting and future use of Bradwell power station in north of area.  
Access to sea wall from the public highway.

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Unvegetated foreshore  
Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Diverse coastal marshland  
Uniform coastal marshland

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:

Dengie SSSI, Ramsar site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation, Coastal Protection Belt, Special Landscape Areas

### HERITAGE FEATURES:

Decoy ponds, red hills, intertidal remains, crop marks, pill boxes, counter-walls and boundaries

### ACCESS:

St Peter's Way National Trail



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Dengie Coastlands

The uniform coastal marshland was intensively farmed and mainly converted to arable before the Second World War, reflecting the quality of the soils. There is little of ecological value now except in the remaining ditches and dykes, isolated patches of scrub or hedgerow and occasional tree, but the farmland within 1.5km of the sea wall forms part of the extensive feeding grounds for the important numbers of Brent Geese that frequent the Essex coast.

The Dengie Marshlands are marked at the northern end by the pylons that march across the peninsula from Bradwell power station, but otherwise the only striking structures are modest telegraph poles, or occasional telecom masts that have an impact close to.

Access for vehicles is limited: on Dengie it may be necessary to walk up to 10km to reach the nearest public highway from the sea wall, even though this is little more than 1.5km away as the crow flies.

The marshland furthest inland is the oldest, enclosed along the lines of natural drainage channels and fleets that were still substantially intact until the second half of the 20th century. Small pockets of this ancient

drainage pattern can still be seen in Bradwell Marsh, around Marsh House in Tillingham parish. Massive ditch removal and straightening has occurred in Southminster and Burnham parishes, and other features such as decoy ponds and counter-walls have disappeared. These more ancient marshlands, enclosed before the 17th century, have a higher percentage of woody vegetation such as scrub, isolated trees and short lengths of hedgerow. Most were still grazed until well into the 20th century because of their heavier clay soils, but are now mostly arable.

Uniform marshland describes the large areas of marsh which were inned and drained generally to a regular pattern. They are found on the seaward side of the older coastal marshlands on Dengie, each inning still separated by counter-walls in places and visibly higher than the older land.

The more recent innings immediately behind the sea wall are on lighter soils and have consequently been cultivated for a longer time. They were enclosed after the 17th century with the help of Dutch engineers. The boundary ditches were always straight and the field size larger. They are devoid of woody vegetation except in

association with old decoy ponds and along some counter-walls through lack of maintenance. Farm tracks occasionally run along these old sea defences.

Whilst the older marshlands are scattered with occasional farmsteads and public highways, there is no settlement on the more recent innings, just farm tracks and barns. Public access of any kind, by foot or vehicle, is severely restricted except along the sea wall itself. Just four public rights of way give access to the sea wall from a public highway over the 15km length of the Dengie coast, one of them St Peter's Way. The landscape has an extraordinarily remote and unsettled quality, particularly in its southern half – buildings, people or animals are rarely visible in the landscape, especially in an east coast mizzle.

Exceptionally, the massive presence of Bradwell power station and its pylons dominate its rural setting locally. The station strangely dominates the landscape, more from a distance than close to, and it is a landmark far out to sea where it is a welcome marker for maritime traffic on an otherwise one-dimensional coastline. Set in a remote and unspoiled landscape, Bradwell power station forms an imposing and

## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary  
and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed  
Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping  
Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping  
Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient  
Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient  
Claylands
- Upper Blackwater  
Estuary
- Lower Blackwater  
Estuary
- Maldon Mixed  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury  
Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Dengie Coastlands

brooding structure that decreases the sense of remoteness over a wide area, lighting up the night sky in stark contrast to its surroundings. The landscape character around the station had been substantially altered by the creation of a military airfield there during the Second World War. Telegraph poles are widespread but do not intrude.

On a clear day there are long views from the sea wall over the marshes and Dengie Flats to Foulness, the North Kent coast and north to the Tendring coastline.

Looking inland, the Tillingham Terrace Farmlands provide a low tree-lined backdrop, with Bradwell power station a landmark to the north, and the crop processing works at Asheldham dominating the southern marshlands.

**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

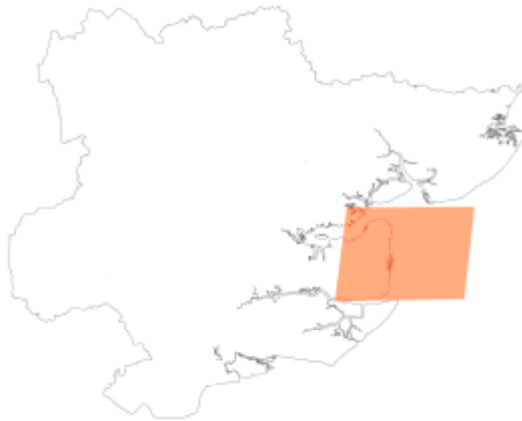
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

**Tillingham Ancient Farmlands**



Generally: A narrow character area running approximately north to south from Bradwell to Burnham forms a low ridge backing the extensive Dengie levels and marshes to the east. This flat or gently rolling landscape of medium-sized arable fields is derived from the sands and gravels of the old river terraces that overlie the clay on this ridge, giving soils of mixed quality and drainage. Occasional orchards, now mostly disappeared, and horticultural crops were grown in places on better-drained soils. The landscape was divided by elm-dominated hedgerows in a discernible rectangular pattern, enhanced by scattered small copses and plantations which gave a sense of enclosure. However, this has been reduced by the loss of the hedgerows and elms which fringed the small lanes.

The original pattern is most noticeable on old O.S. maps all over the Dengie Peninsula.

Scattered farmsteads mark the break of slope with the marshlands, and a line of villages - Bradwell on Sea, Tillingham, Asheldham, Southminster and Burnham - marks the top of the ridge itself. Red brick structures are interspersed with a high proportion of clapboard dwellings. The villages are linked by lanes with their distinctive dog-leg bends, and the railway reaches as far as Southminster. A long-distance trail called St Peter's Way, linking the historic St Peter's Chapel at Sales Point to other religious sites nearby, crosses through the north of this character area.

Sands and gravels have been extensively extracted, leaving many residual pits and lakes, followed by additional tree-planting as part of mitigation and restoration measures. Whilst being of benefit to wildlife, the results are often out of character with the landscape, and have caused the extinction of historic features such as the distinctive field pattern.

Looking inland, the Tillingham Terrace Farmlands provide a low tree-lined backdrop, with Bradwell power station a landmark to the north of the character

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Loss of hedgerows has eroded historic pattern, sense of enclosure and ecological integrity of farmland. Mineral extraction and restoration causing cultural and character change along the terrace ridge. Re-use or redevelopment of Bradwell power station.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Mixed marshland edge  
River terrace farmlands

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Conservation Areas, Special Landscape Areas, Coastal Protection Belt, Environmentally Sensitive Area

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

St Peter's Chapel, Othona Fort, Crop marks, pill boxes

**ACCESS:**

St Peter's Way



## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary  
and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed  
Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping  
Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping  
Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient  
Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient  
Claylands
- Upper Blackwater  
Estuary
- Lower Blackwater  
Estuary
- Maldon Mixed  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury  
Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Tillingham Ancient Farmlands

area, and the crop processing works at Asheldham dominating the southern marshlands.

Bradwell Power Station and its associated pylons are dominant over the north of the character area.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

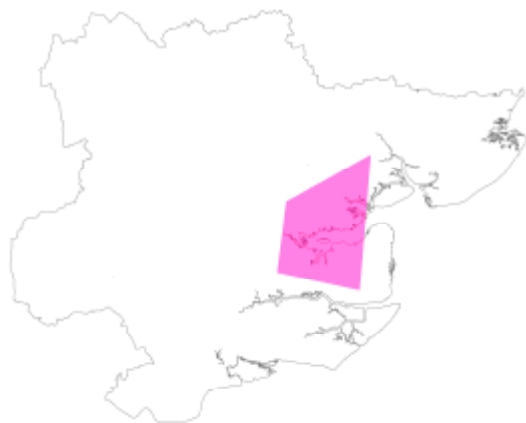
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Dengie Ancient Claylands



Generally: This varied landscape of clays and poorly drained terrace deposits. extends south of Maldon, providing the hinterland to the south shore of the Blackwater. Close to Maldon, the mainly gently rolling or sloping claylands merge indiscernibly with the marshland. These ancient farmlands form part of a broader character area that covers the centre of the peninsula. South of Mayland, Steeple and St Lawrence, the land rises steeply up to 30 or 40m AOD forming land that is highly visible from the sea wall and estuary.

This is an arable landscape on clay soils with distinctive tall, elm-dominated hedgerows punctuated by the occasional tree and the skeleton or stump of a dead elm. The remnants of dead elms are particularly noticeable all over Dengie.

The loss of this tree has had a particular impact on both the character and ecology of this landscape. A large number of telegraph poles cross the farmlands but are not too obtrusive in the open landscape. However, pylons do intrude in the vistas above the Dengie marshlands.

A distinctive small to medium co-axial field pattern can be discerned over much of the Dengie Peninsula outside the marshlands. This has ancient origins, possibly Roman. Hedgerow loss since the Second World War has eroded much of this pattern, and reduced the ecological value of the landscape. The loss is particularly noticeable on the steeper slopes.

Large farmsteads are sited on low rises in the flatlands, as at Lawling and Mundon Hall. Trees or shelterbelts are usually associated with these farmsteads. Moated houses are an occasional feature. A higher percentage of clapboard buildings can be found in the older villages on Dengie than in inland Essex, a consequence of both a lack of other building materials and easy access to imported timber from Scandinavia through ports such as Maldon.

The field pattern has given rise to the distinctive system of right-angled

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Loss of hedgerows has eroded the historic pattern, sense of enclosure and ecological integrity of farmland. Loss of elms has destroyed treed character of the farmlands. Re-use or redevelopment of Bradwell power station. Suburbanisation of plotland villages. Redevelopment pressures at leisure and caravan parks.

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Rolling clay farmlands  
Mixed marshland edge  
Diverse coastal marshland

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATION:

Special Landscape Areas, Coastal Protection Belt, Environmentally Sensitive Areas

### HERITAGE FEATURES:

Crop marks, Mundon Church

### ACCESS:

St Peter's Trail



## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary  
and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed  
Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping  
Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping  
Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient  
Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient  
Claylands
- Upper Blackwater  
Estuary
- Lower Blackwater  
Estuary
- Maldon Mixed  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury  
Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Dengie Ancient Claylands

bends in the lane network in mixed marshland edge. Traditional small villages such as Steeple, set back from the estuary, are reached by lanes that zigzag round the rectilinear field margins. Although most of the lane network is intact the B1021 between Latchingdon and Bradwell is distinguished by a series of lay-bys where the distinctive bends have been smoothed out to accommodate the traffic used in the construction and servicing of Bradwell power station. Until the 20th century small hamlets and individual farmsteads would have used water-borne transport via small creeks to the estuary, rather than wheeled transport, for moving goods and people. Most farmers of the land farmed the sheltered waters of the estuary too.

Between the two world wars agricultural co-operative workers from the east End of London changed traditional settlement patterns by creating small plotland villages behind the sea wall at Maylandsea and St Lawrence, Maylandsea. Easy access by train and depressed land values were incentives for this development. Although not in keeping with the building style of the peninsula, these plotland dwellings had their own idiosyncratic character.

Recently, however, these chalets and bungalows have been increasingly replaced or supplemented by two-storey suburban homes, often in strident brick, that are more conspicuous in this low-rise landscape.

Development has eaten into the cultivated plots, and leisure parks and caravan sites have spread east along St Lawrence Bay into the marshland. Associated tree-planting is not in character with the treeless marshland landscape.

The long distance trail, St Peter's Way, crosses much of this character area and the landscape is free of major roads, yet well served by small historic lanes, which enhance its remote, rural feel.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

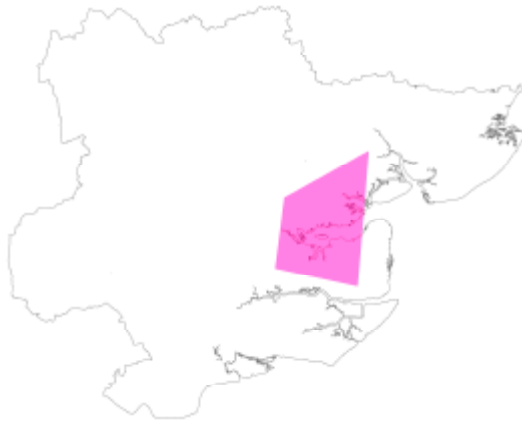
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Upper Blackwater Estuary



Generally: The narrower upper reaches of the Blackwater Estuary include all the marshland and intertidal zone between Gore Saltings, Steeple Creek and The Hythe. The intertidal areas are characterized by broad mudflats, winding creeks, fringing salt marshes and the distinctive islands of Osea and Northey, both accessible from the mainland at low tide. At the boundary with the salt marsh, irrigation reservoirs are often found.

Close to Maldon the land use has changed over a wide area through exploitation of the underlying sands and gravels. At the landfill site of Maldon Saltings the restored land rises above the sea wall, and has a disturbing effect on landscape character.

Methods of managing the dynamics of sea-level rise by working with nature have been pioneered in Essex through the process of managed retreat. Northey Island, the base camp for the Vikings before the Battle of Maldon in the 10th century, was farmed until the end of the 19th century. It is the site of the first managed realignment trial commenced in 1991 under National Trust management. Where it was already being undermined by erosion of the salt marsh in front, a small breach of the sea wall was made. The partial removal of the wall has allowed the farmland behind to flood up to a new sea defence 75m away. Salt marsh is re-establishing slowly.

The island forms part of the Blackwater Estuary SSSI, designated for its important intertidal habitats and associated bird life, which covers all the intertidal areas in the estuary, and several grazed marshland sites. The intertidal areas are also designated as a Ramsar site, an SPA and SAC, which extend below the low-water mark. Much of the northern marshland of the estuary is scattered with the remains of red hills and several decoy ponds. The hulks of a number of 19th-century barges can be found rotting in the marsh. These wrecks are gradually eroding with each winter storm.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Salt marsh erosion, exacerbated by inappropriate boating activity.  
Lighting and future use of Bradwell power station.  
Appropriate treatment of redevelopment sites in The Hythe.  
Access to sea wall from the public highway.

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Unvegetated foreshore  
Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Diverse coastal marshland  
River terrace farmlands

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:

Blackwater Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation

### HERITAGE FEATURES:

Decoy ponds, red hills, hulks, intertidal remains, crop marks, historic battlefield

### ACCESS:

Northey Island, National Trust  
St Peter's Way national Trail



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Upper Blackwater Estuary

Osea Island remains as farmed land and is in private ownership. It is linked to the mainland by a mile-long causeway, accessible for four hours each tide. There is evidence of occupation since Neolithic times. The causeway was first built by the Romans, and the island had a defensive role in both World Wars. The remains of Saxon fish traps discovered off Osea Island are vulnerable to damage by pleasure craft.

*Stand on the quay and look out down the tide-way where Northey and Osea Islands hang in their ever-present blue hazy drift. At full tide water gleams through masts and rigging. Water shines in flat streaks and broad vistas. Salt water that glints and burns in the sun, rippled by the wings of gulls. The saltings go under, and little flat islands show purple with sea-lavender.*

Hervey Benham, 1948

The large tracts of marshland on both banks of the Blackwater are extensively arable, with scattered farmsteads, narrow farm tracks and the occasional historic fishing village. The flatness of the landscape dominates, with open views extending throughout the marshland to the rising Clay Farmlands beyond, notably on the south side of the Blackwater

where the hinterland rises relatively steeply and close to the shore.

The quayside at Maldon Hythe provides a lively contrast to the quiet rural farmlands of the estuary. The Hythe, or landing-place in Anglo Saxon, dominated this small town from the 10th century, when the town of Maldon itself was built to defend the important crossing-point of the Blackwater and Chelmer rivers. The port was initially a centre for the fishing of oysters and other shellfish, which colonised the muddy creeks. This was a carefully managed business which ensured conservation of the stock, but still supported many traditional wooden brigs and other vessels. In winter the smaller boats - winkle-brigs - were often fitted with guns and used to hunt wildfowl.

Trade developed through the 16th century when coal and chalk were imported and agricultural products and seafood exported. In the 19th century it was at its busiest with hundreds of sailing-barges, designed for the shallow estuarine and coastal waters of the east coast, plying their trade from The Hythe to London.

The most common barge in these waters was the stackie, built to carry literally a stack of hay or straw, to supply the many horses used in London at that time. Nowadays half a dozen of these old barges, restored and available for charter, can still be seen tied up at the quayside. Races of old barges and smacks are held annually.

The waters of the upper estuary provide safe and sheltered waters for a range of sailing and motor-craft activities. Speed limits are in force around Collier's Reach and much of the south shore of the Blackwater and its creeks. Even so, in the highly sensitive marshes, pleasure boating exacerbates existing erosion and disturbs wildlife. Several sailing clubs are based in these waters and moorings are focused around The Hythe, Collier's Reach, Mill Beach and Mayland Creek. Apart from the barge charters, organised pleasure boat excursions are not generally available.

Northey Island is open once a year to the public and otherwise by arrangement with the National Trust. Pedestrian access is available along most of the sea wall, although access to the wall from a public highway and

## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary  
and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed  
Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping  
Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping  
Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient  
Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient  
Claylands
- Upper Blackwater  
Estuary
- Lower Blackwater  
Estuary
- Maldon Mixed  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling  
Farmlands
- Tollesbury  
Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
 Consultees  
 Appendices

## Upper Blackwater Estuary

parking are very limited, making short circular walks difficult. Whilst this has conserved the remote and unspoilt qualities of the estuary shore it limits public appreciation of its special qualities and distinctiveness. On the south shore, part of St Peter's Way runs through the marshlands.

There are long views of Bradwell power station over much of the Upper Estuary. Its lighting marks it out after dark. There are potential redevelopment sites around the estuary near The Hythe, Maldon, that could also affect the setting.

**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

**Lower Blackwater Estuary**



Generally: The broad Lower Blackwater Estuary includes all the marshland and intertidal areas from near Pewitt Island and Tollesbury Wick Marshes to Gore Saltings and Steeple Creek. Compared to the Upper Estuary the low water channel is broad, with small salt marsh islands and fewer creeks.

The marshland is largely arable, with uniform acres of cereals emphasising the flat landscape. Residual ditches and dykes, and the enclosing sea wall, all illustrate its origins.

The estuary is an area of high ecological, archaeological and recreational value. Not only is it a designated SSSI for its intertidal and grazing marsh sites, but also a Ramsar, SPA and SAC.

There is a particular concentration of archaeological features in the marshlands on the north shore around Decoy Farm and Rolls Farm, but decoy ponds and red hills are found in the Dengie Marshlands too. Most of these features are not accessible to the public.

The broad estuary is particularly suited to boating, being both sheltered and deep. Problems arise with the use of powered craft in shallow waters near sensitive salt marshes and mud flats. Sailing boats from all the clubs in the Blackwater use these waters extensively for cruising and racing. Larger yachts visit from elsewhere in the U.K. and from Europe in the summer months. Pedestrian access to the sea wall is possible along much of the shore, but in common with most of the Essex coast and estuaries, short circular walks are not generally possible.

Bradwell power station, and the line of pylons that march away from it, dominate the lower estuary, forming a landmark to both sailors and shore-based traffic, particularly at night. Proposals to re-use or redevelop the power station site could have a significant impact on local character. There are also long views past Tollesbury down to Mersea and the Tendring Coast and up to Osea Island and Maldon.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Salt marsh erosion and wildlife disturbance, exacerbated by inappropriate boating activity. Lighting and future use of Bradwell power station. Protection of caravan sites and leisure parks at St Lawrence from inappropriate redevelopment. Access to sea wall from the public highway.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

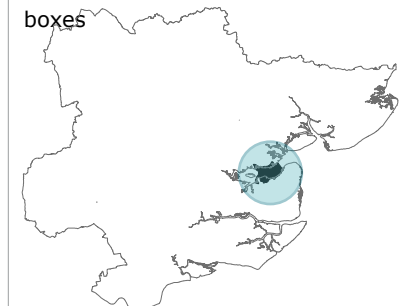
Unvegetated foreshore  
Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Diverse coastal marshland

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Blackwater Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

Decoy ponds, red hills, hulks, intertidal remains, crop marks, pill boxes



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

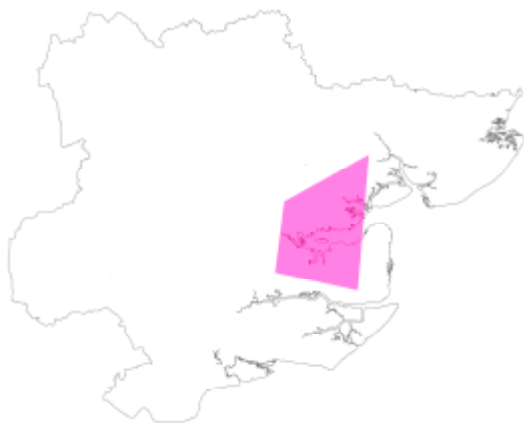
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Maldon Mixed Farmlands



Generally: A varied mixed farmed landscape of medium to large arable fields developed on the sloping clay soils between Goldhanger and Tollesbury and the flatter, well-drained marshland edge between Maldon and Goldhanger. They differ from the Tollesbury Farmlands in their general slope down towards the Blackwater. Bushy semi-regular hedgerows enclose mainly cereal-based arable farmland interspersed by borage, maize and small orchards. In places large-scale hedgerow removal has taken place, reducing the sense of enclosure, although some enclosure is retained with a scattering of small plantations. This allows long views across the marshlands and Blackwater to the Dengie Peninsula. Maldon is not dominant in the landscape from this area.

Settlement here is in the form of scattered farmsteads, except for the village of Goldhanger which has spread along the B1026 concealing the historic centre, situated down a cul-de-sac linked to a small quay on the Blackwater River. There are public rights of way down several farm tracks through the marshlands to the sea wall.

Beyond Goldhanger the geology changes to sands and gravels, which close to Maldon, have been extensively exploited since the Second World War. This has changed the landscape character over a wide area between Chigborough Farm, Little Slough House and Saltcote Hall. Much of the restored landscape contains a variety of water bodies now used for recreational fishing.

Beyond Vaulty Manor the landscape has been suburbanised close to the B1026 by the creation of caravan sites and residential development along Mill Beach and Heybridge Basin.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Loss of hedgerows has reduced sense of enclosure and ecological integrity in farmland.

Mineral extraction and restoration, causing cultural and character change close to Maldon.

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

River terrace farmlands  
Rolling clay farmlands

### HERITAGE FEATURES:

Crop marks, scheduled ancient monuments



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

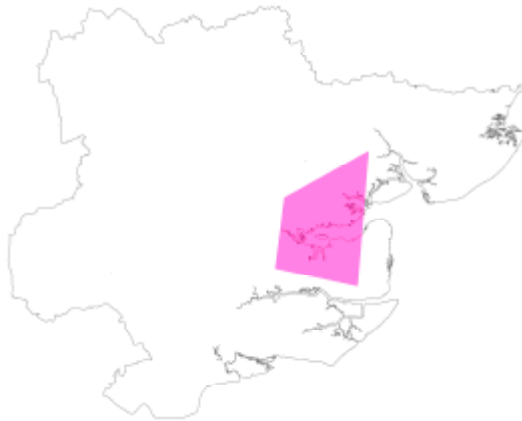
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

**Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands**



Generally: This gently rolling, predominantly arable landscape on freely draining soils has a semi-regular pattern of tall hedgerows, small copses and shelterbelts although many hedgerows have been removed. In the past this land-cover was enhanced by occasional orchards but these have generally been removed and replaced by cereals and other crops.

Settlement is composed of the villages of Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D’Arcy and scattered farmsteads. Tollesbury grew in size when connected to the rail network by the ‘Crab and Winkle’ line, the route of which can still be seen in the landscape, and forms the boundary to development to the north-west.

Development at Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D’Arcy is not prominent in the landscape because of the well-distributed trees and remaining hedgerows. The farmsteads sit on the break of slope above the Coastal Marshland and form key landmarks viewed from that level. The landscape is open enough, however, to allow wide or filtered views towards Salcott and the landscape of the Colchester Coastlands, to Old Hall Marshes, and from the southern boundary of the area across the Blackwater to the Dengie Peninsula. The intense agriculture and loss of hedgerows has reduced the ecological integrity of this landscape.

Suburbanisation has occurred at the fringes of Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D’Arcy but these settlement margins are generally well-vegetated with ornamental species which soften the impact of the built form on the rural landscape. Some columnar conifers have been used for screening, both at farmsteads and in domestic gardens that appear out of context in this character area.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Loss of hedgerows reducing sense of enclosure and ecological integrity.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Vale-top farmlands

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

Tolleshunt D’Arcy Hall



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

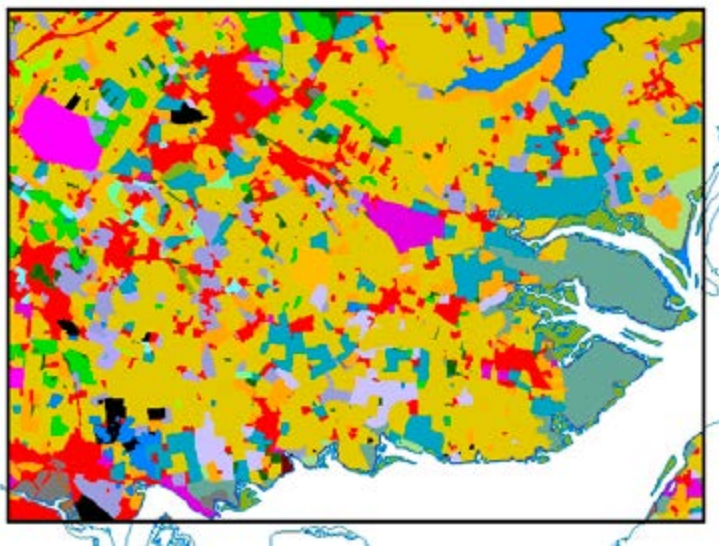
## Tollesbury - Historic Landscape Characterisation

This area lies immediately north of the River Crouch and Dengie peninsula – and many similar historic patterns may be seen here.

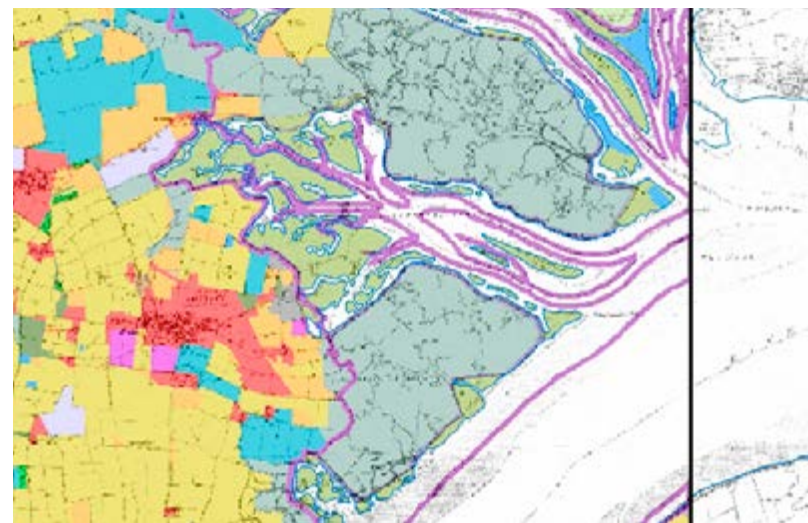
Here it is significant that the settlements (red) are focused along the ridge of higher land and the remaining areas of Ancient Woodland are also focused along the ridge (bright green), a similar pattern to that seen at Danbury.

Great Braxted Park is located along this ridge affording views across the valley towards the Crouch and the coastal plain.

Abberton Reservoir a modern water reservoir in the north (bright blue) also represents the focus for the Ramsar site in the north.



The other area of the Ramsar site along the coast – is reflected in the HLC as an area of early pre-18th century curvilinear drained landscape, focusing on Old Hall Marsh and Tollesbury Wick Marshes. Both are relatively unchanged, which is rare within the coastal zone of Essex, as most areas have had later 19th century or 20th century alterations, straightening the drainage channels or simply losses.



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas  
South Essex Coast

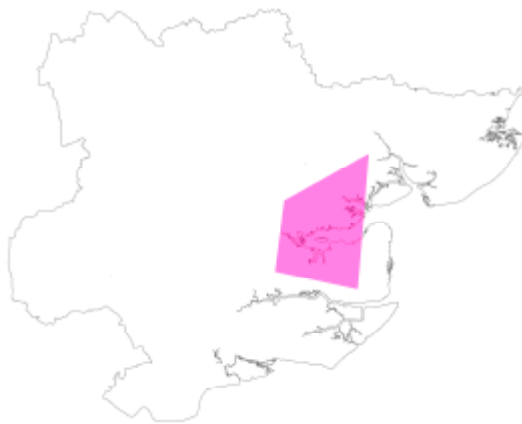
Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

**Tollesbury Coastlands**



Generally: Some of the best-conserved grazing marshes around the Essex coast can be found within this varied coastal landscape of rolling claylands, level marshland, salt marsh and muds. These marshes are a haven for wildfowl and provide some of the most accessible sites for walking and bird-watching along this coast.

A mature and important heritage asset, Old Hall Marshes and Tollesbury Wick have some of the best examples of this unaltered grazing marsh, with ant hills and tussocky grasses providing drier spots among the damp grassland. Close to Old Hall Farm, improved grassland has been created specifically for feeding geese, the fleets and other areas of standing water attracting both wildfowl and waders.

At Old Hall, many of the grazed ditches are now supplemented with post-and-wire fencing, which has led to scrubby margins where sheep and cattle cannot reach. Scrapes created for the benefit of wildfowl have resulted in incongruous drainage patterns. Scrub along sea walls and field margins gives a spotted and muddled pattern in places. In time some of the land may return to salt marsh as part of the managed retreat projects nearby. Where pasture does remain, it ranges from species-rich unimproved grassland, the surface of which is often dotted with ant hills, to a mosaic of wet areas associated with old drainage channels. Old Hall Marshes has some of the best examples of this unaltered grazing marsh. Grazing usually results in the ditches being supplemented with post-and-wire fencing, which can lead to scrubby margins to the ditches where the grazing animals cannot feed.

An early realignment project, now in its fifth year, has been trialled at Tollesbury Fleet marshes. Monitoring in the early years has shown there is erosion in the adjoining creeks, but deposition in the areas of breach. The sheltered position is highly attractive to wading birds and wildfowl. It is a popular gathering place for lapwing, golden plover, redshank and dunlin, amongst others.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

- Salt marsh erosion.
- Habitat improvements out of character with landscape.
- Lighting and future use of Bradwell.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

- Unvegetated foreshore
- Inter-tidal salt marsh
- Diverse coastal marshland
- Rolling clay farmlands

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

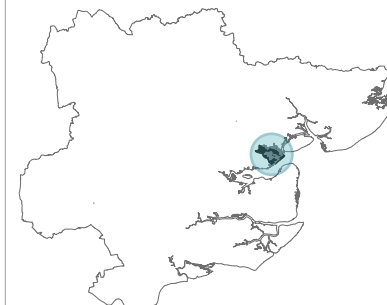
- Blackwater Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area,
- Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

- Oyster pits, decoy ponds, red hills, hulks, intertidal remains

**ACCESS:**

- Old Hall Marshes, RSPB
- Tollesbury Wick Marshes, Essex Wildlife Trust



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

- Crouch Estuary and Foulness
- Rochford Mixed Farmlands
- River Roach
- Canewdon Sloping Claylands
- River Crouch
- Burham Sloping Claylands
- Dengie Coastlands
- Tillingham Ancient Farmlands
- Dengie Ancient Claylands
- Upper Blackwater Estuary
- Lower Blackwater Estuary
- Maldon Mixed Farmlands
- Tollesbury Rolling Farmlands
- Tollesbury Coastlands

North Essex Coast

Bibliography  
Consultees  
Appendices

## Tollesbury Coastlands

At Old Hall the salt marsh vegetation is deeply dissected and eroded leaving mud mounds. Measures have been taken to try to prevent further loss using brushwood groynes. This soft engineering technique, originating in Holland, is a feature of a 1980s attempt to stop erosion, but has not proved so successful in this country.

A larger area of managed retreat can also be found at Tollesbury Fleet, and an extended area is now managed at Abbot's Hall by the Essex Wildlife Trust.

On the south shore of the Blackwater, however, the topography is most suited to managed retreat as it rises steeply behind the existing salt marsh, thus decreasing costs of realigning sea defences.

The village of Tollesbury, on the vale-top farmlands above the marsh, extends down to the waterfront where the distinctive sail lofts, old lightship and many sailing boats form features at the waterfront. Tollesbury's prosperity has long been based on yachting as well as fishing. Until 70 years ago the fishing fleets would sail to harvest oysters, shrimps and even starfish, the latter ploughed-in direct to the fields as a fertiliser. The route of the former 'Crab and Winkle'

line which used to link Tollesbury and its seafood harvest to the main line at Kelvedon can still be traced in the landscape.

In many places in Essex, but most notably in the Blackwater and Colne estuaries, the rectilinear remains of oyster pits, probably from the 19th century, mark the salt marsh. A notable group occurs off the Old Hall Marshes. The marshes are also marked by the remains of the extensive maritime activity that predominated in this watery landscape until the middle of the 20th century - old jetties, wharves and trackways that bear witness to the busy export of shellfish, cereals and straw, the import of lime, coal and London 'muck' for the fields.

From the Tollesbury Coastlands, the power station at Bradwell is widely visible, especially at night when its lights contrast with the surrounding farmland and dark waters of the estuary.

A constant feature of much of the marshlands in winter is the large number of wildfowl and waders that roost and feed there. A survey within the ESA in the late 1990s found 35 species of wildfowl and waders using the ESA farmlands, including

nationally important numbers of Brent geese. At Old Hall Farm, improved grassland has been created specifically for the feeding geese. Fleets and other areas of standing water are attractive to both wildfowl and waders.

Localised cultural changes include management for wildlife at Old Hall Marshes. Here scrapes have been created for the benefit of the wildfowl, producing an untypical drainage pattern with scrub allowed to generate along sea walls and field margins. It is anticipated that in years to come some of the land may be allowed to return to salt marsh through managed retreat. At Marsh Farm the land is managed for both wildlife and recreation. The use of extensive fencing to create paddocks for varieties of animals clutters the landscape locally. Apart from the use of fencing, the pylons on the higher land above the Crouch are the main man-made structures that intrude into the remoteness of these landscapes.



**North Essex/Tendring**



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Mersea Island**



Generally: The hump-backed bulk of this island gets its character from the underlying London Clays, making it more like the Isle of Sheppey in North Kent than the polders of the Foulness Archipelago closer to. The topographical spine of the island is marked by the zigzag road linking West and East Mersea.

This character area also includes the intertidal zone from low water to the high water mark along the Strood and Pyefleet Channels with their characteristic mudflats and extensive salt marshes at Maydays Marsh, Bonner's Saltings and The Ray, home of Baring-Gould's Mehalah.

*This latter is a hill of gravel rising from the heart of the marshes, crowned with ancient thorn trees [...] even at ebb, the Ray is not approachable by land*

*unless the sun or east wind has parched the ooze into brick; and then the way is long, tedious and tortuous, among bitter pools and over shining creeks.*

Sabine Baring-Gould, 1808

The wrecks of 19th-century sailing barges, most completely surveyed in the Blackwater estuary, are gradually being lost with each winter storm. With so few of these striking vessels still operating today, these wrecks could provide a valuable record of their own history and that of the goods that they carried.

To the south are the broad, hard muddy sands of the Mersea Flats and the many fleets and channels that give access from the River Blackwater to the moorings close to West Mersea village itself. These channels are divided by small muddy and marshy islands, many dotted with old oyster pits. The remains of Saxon fish traps have been discovered off Nass Head, which are vulnerable to damage by modern-day boating.

On the coastal shores themselves it is possible to find smooth, hard or pebbly sands, such as those south of Mersea and most famously at Maplin. These sands can be extensive and flat as at Maplin or the Dengie flats, or narrower and more steeply-shelving as at Mersea or off Colne Point. These coastal flats form

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Erosion of salt marsh.  
Degradation of oyster pits in intertidal zone and decoy pond in marshland.  
Pressure for boating and mooring in highly sensitive areas.  
Prominent caravan park on rising land adjoining Strood Channel.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Unvegetated foreshore  
Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Diverse coastal marshland  
Mixed marshland edge

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

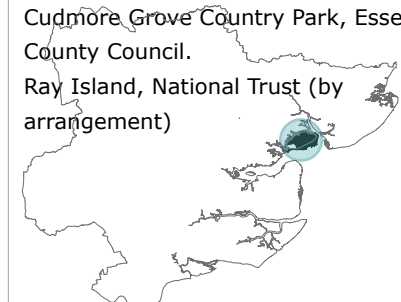
Colne Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

Oyster pits, hulks, intertidal remains, decoy pond, red hills, tumulus

**ACCESS:**

Cudmore Grove Country Park, Essex County Council.  
Ray Island, National Trust (by arrangement)



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Mersea Island

some of the most remote wilderness areas not only of Essex but Britain too. These places of extraordinary natural quality are wild, potentially hazardous and inaccessible to all but the more experienced sailors, basking seals and feeding waders.

The character of the island is full of contrasts. The secluded, timeless marshlands of the north and east coasts are remote and difficult of access. Where the hedgerows remain, the landscape is enclosed and views contained, but where they have been lost it gives rise to dramatic long vistas out to sea or across the wide marshlands surrounding the Pyefleet Channel.

The fringes of larger settlements such as West Mersea, and some caravan sites on the marshlands, intrude into the landscape where there has been hedgerow loss or where ornamental planting has not taken place. This tranquil landscape is exclusively agricultural, and settled only by a few large, historic farmsteads and a scattering of suburban homes. It wears a very different face from the gregarious seaside beaches of the south of the island with their bright mobile homes, colourful beach huts and the clamorous lanes of West

Mersea. The spirit of the old fishing village lies behind the brash façade of this seaside town, though; smacks and trawlers still bob at their moorings off the Hard, the shellfish landed at the causeway are available to eat at The Company Shed. Mersea has always been predominantly an oyster-dredging port, served in the past by the traditional Mersea smacks, which also brought in eels, herring, flounders and winkles.

The tiny clapboard cottages and lanes of 'Mersea City' have changed little since the shipwright William Wyatt was building and racing traditional flat-bottomed punts in the early 20th century, one or two of which can still be seen today.

At Seaview Holiday Park at West Mersea, the foreshore is backed by brightly-coloured beach huts that add their own distinctive character to the coastline. Old barges, yachts and lighters berthed in the muddy creeks of the marsh south-east of the causeway have long been used as houseboats and holiday homes. The caravans, holiday homes, and small settlements behind the sea wall can clutter views from the shoreline, decreasing the night-time sense of remoteness with inappropriate lighting.

There is pressure for increased moorings in Strood and Salcott Creeks and other sailing facilities elsewhere. Increasing use of the channels and creeks by powered craft causes disturbance to both wildlife and other users, especially around the Strood, Ray Island and Bonner's Saltings. Boat hire or charter is not usually available without membership of a club and pleasure trips are not available.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester Claylands and Marshlands
- Lower Roman River
- Lower Colne Estuary
- Upper Colne Estuary
- Brightlingsea Enclosed Valelands
- Brightlingsea Flag Creek
- St Osyth Coastlands
- Holland Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Colchester Claylands and Marshlands



Generally: Extending in an arc from Langenhoe to Salcott, this gently sloping agricultural landscape varies between the traditionally mixed farmed countryside of the claylands, now predominantly arable, and the marshlands and saltings of Pyefleet, Thorn Fleet and the Salcott Channel.

The claylands have lost some of their elm-dominated hedgerows so there are quite open views over the marshlands, salt marshes and numerous creeks. Looking inland, the view is enclosed by the rising land to the north-west, along the crest of which the small villages of Great Wigborough and Peldon are sited. Their churches form landmarks from the sea wall. Settlement is scattered along the Peldon-Wigborough road, but elsewhere is infrequent. Salcott-cum-Virley, for example, forms a small

low-lying hamlet at the head of its own small creek running to the River Blackwater.

Salcott, renowned for being one of the small centres of the smuggling trade in the mid 19th century, like many other creek-side hamlets, has now lost its pub.

The marshlands are scattered with decoy ponds and red hills, notably around the Ray Channel. These archaeological features have been extensively damaged in the past by ploughing of the marshlands. At Copt Hall and Abbott's Hall Farm surviving archaeological remains should now be protected from future damage as the land-holdings are managed with recreation and conservation in mind. Proposal plans for Abbott's Hall, however, show that two red hills and one decoy pond may be on land scheduled for managed realignment.

The land at Abbotts Hall, recently purchased by the Essex Wildlife Trust with help from other agencies, will be used in part to allow the re-creation of salt marsh. Grazing marsh will also be reintroduced, although much of the land will stay under arable crops with hedgerows, copses and ditches restored. Creation of new fleets and lagoons should follow the drainage pattern and

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Erosion of existing salt marsh.  
Loss of red hills and decoy ponds in past over a wide area.  
Intrusive caravan-park at West Mersea on rising land.  
Past loss of hedgerows in claylands reducing sense of enclosure.  
Demand for moorings in remote creeks such as Salcott Channel.  
Use of powered vessels in Ray Channel causing disturbance to wildlife.

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Unvegetated foreshore  
Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Diverse coastal marshland  
Rolling clay farmlands

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:

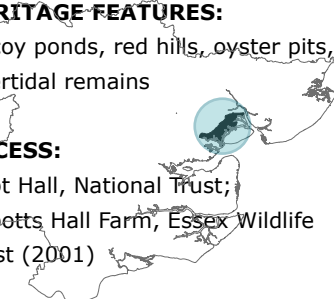
Blackwater Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation

### HERITAGE FEATURES:

Decoy ponds, red hills, oyster pits, intertidal remains

### ACCESS:

Copt Hall, National Trust;  
Abbotts Hall Farm, Essex Wildlife Trust (2001)



## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Colchester Claylands and Marshlands

form characteristic of the marshlands, so that these new features are in keeping with the traditional marshland character.

Long views extend from much of the character area over West Mersea, where the ranks of pale caravans to the north of the village stand out starkly on the rising ground there. Bradwell power station forms a landmark over a wide area.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Lower Roman River - Historic Landscape Characterisation

The sections named St Osyth and The Naze are in Tendring District. The hinterland is composed of complex early landscapes of pre-18th century irregular enclosure patterns, enclosed heaths and commons. It is a complex area requiring further research.

St Osyth is focused on the estuary of the river. The HLC reflects this with areas of saltings (light brown area and pale sage green along the coastal strip) – an historically important zone that runs along the coastal strip of Essex where salt was extracted and many of the early red hills are found (evidence of early salt extraction). Rat Island just off the peninsula is now a Nature Reserve, and originated in saltings.

Fingringhoe and its environs are again areas of pre-18th-century irregular enclosure, but these patterns have been destroyed in some areas by recent gravel extraction – (dark brown – restored land (former extraction areas) or black – current extraction areas). On the other side of the river are further areas of extraction – all posing a threat to the survival of historic landscapes.

St Osyth with the contours overlain illustrates a more divided hilly landscape than seen further south. The pre-18th-century map shows the predominance of these early field systems. Settlement is often in the higher ground as at Abberton, Weeley, Alresford, Elmstead Market, with Clacton and Mersea along the coast. Again in comparison to the distribution of settlement on the first edition Ordnance Survey map there have been marked areas of expansion, as at Clacton-on-Sea, Colchester, Mersea, Brightlingsea to name but a few.

LCA Generally: The St Osyth coastlands form a distinct parcel of land segregated from the rest of the Tendring coastlands to the north by Brightlingsea Creek, and bounded to the east by the rambling seaside developments of Jaywick and Seawick.



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Lower Roman River**



Generally: This small, distinctive character area is part of a wider belt of distinct sloping or undulating landscape on the clay loams running south-south-west of Colchester, cut by the Roman River. The land use is generally pasture in small to medium-sized fields, with prominent woodland and intact hedgerows with oak and ash standards. More open mixed farmlands lie south of Fingringhoe. Farming is combined with other land uses, quarrying, woodland and estates or parkland, with the occasional orchard. Enclosing vegetation and slopes give a small, even intimate landscape with views contained within the valley. Estates such as East Donyland Hall take advantage of the better-drained soils, elevated position, and intimate scale of the landscape. The field pattern is semi-regular, the lanes winding along the ridges with occasional crossing points over the stream.

This pattern is disturbed by sand and gravel quarrying on the edge of the adjoining coastal marshland, and military ownership. Quarrying has left a disfigured and pitted landscape, but one that is generally well-screened by tree belts and copses from the landward side. From the estuary, however, works and excavated material can intrude on the views. At Fingringhoe, parts of the disused quarries have been turned into a nature reserve managed by the English Wildlife Trust. Mitigation and restoration measures at quarries are not necessarily in keeping with landscape character.

Settlement is scattered except at Rowhedge and the mixed, fragmented development of Fingringhoe with its handsome church. Settlement does not appear prominent from the landward side because of the extensive network of woodlands and hedgerows. The water frontage at Rowhedge is undergoing extensive redevelopment, reflecting the loss of maritime traffic and connected trades that used to be associated with this small port. The tide mill at Fingringhoe has recently been converted for residential use.

Military-owned pastureland adjoining the north bank of the Roman River is being colonised by weedy species and scrub.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Visual intrusion of sand and gravel workings from estuary.  
Inappropriate mitigation and restoration of workings.  
Loss of cultural link between Rowhedge and the river.  
Weed species becoming prominent in pasture in Roman River valley.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Enclosed valley sides  
Inter-tidal salt marsh

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Roman River SSSI, Coastal Protection Belt, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Conservation Area, Special Landscape Areas



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Lower Colne Estuary**



Generally: This is a broad landscape of marshland and salt marsh, prominent enough in a few places to form small islands, and voluptuous mounds of intertidal muds cut by narrow creeks. It extends from Wivenhoe and Rowhedge in the north, where the river is narrow, down to the broad Brightlingsea Reach that separates Mersea Stone from Stone Point.

From Colne Point round to Sandy Point at the mouth of the Colne, salt marsh stretches for 2.5km behind a protective sandy spit. This marsh is characterised by extensive marsh grasses and sea purslane, with localised tracts of colourful sea lavender, golden samphire and scattered clumps of shrubby seablite. Extensive salt marsh can also be found around the Colne at Geedon Saltings, adjoining the Pyefleet Channel, the

middle reaches of the Crouch and along the coastal shore of Dengie, to the south west.

The marsh includes the military lands of Langenhoe Marsh and the Fingringhoe Ranges, as well as the marshlands of Brightlingsea and Alresford. The Fingringhoe Ranges have undergone a restoration in the past ten years: conservation volunteers control the hawthorn scrub, grazing has been re-introduced and water levels in the ditches and dykes have been raised.

There are extensive salt marshes at Geedon Saltings and Fingringhoe Marsh, at Aldboro Point, and Rat and Pewitt Islands. Salt marsh erosion has been detected in the Colne as elsewhere along the Mid Essex coast. New methods which have been tried to prevent further loss of vegetation in the salt marsh include use of wave-breaks and recharging the sediment on the foreshore at Jaywick to provide surplus for accretion.

The Colne estuary is important historically for its fisheries and maritime trade, as well as its distinctive sailing barges. And the Colne is particularly famous for its oyster fisheries. The Romans introduced the salt industry, extracting sea salt on the unenclosed salt marshes of the Colne Estuary. The Colchester Fishery, off

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

- Redevelopment sites in prominent waterside positions.
- Loss of cultural association between the land and the sea.
- Increased pressure for pleasure craft use.
- Poor maintenance of grazing marsh.
- Scrub encroachment of grazing marsh resulting from reduced grazing

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

- Unvegetated foreshore
- Inter-tidal salt marsh
- Diverse coastal marshland

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

- Colne Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

- Oyster pits, decoy ponds, hulks, intertidal remains

**ACCESS:**

- Fingringhoe Wick, Essex Wildlife Trust
- Rat Island, Essex Wildlife Trust



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Lower Colne Estuary

Brightlingsea has been worked since Roman times, its current limits being defined as long ago as 1189. The Romans introduced a trading culture which relied on the many waterways for transport. Sailing vessels took goods to London, up and down the coast and across the North Sea. In the 17th century, the coast became important for shipbuilding, fisheries and trade. In the 1700s fishing and harvesting of oysters was very popular after oyster beds were enclosed in the Colne Estuary. The development of navigable waterways and quays helped to increase the amounts of cereal crop and shellfish transported in flat bottomed barges. For example, Beaumont Quay was built in 1832 on the edge of Hamford Water. (Tendring LCA Vol 1, 2001)

Barge traffic to Colchester began in the middle of the 19th century serving the mills upstream, but their heyday was just before the First World War. Even after the Second World War sailing barges still served The Hythe. Using the smaller ports in the Lower Colne, the distinctive stackies carried straw to London and the same from the coastal hinterlands of Essex to the paper mills of Kent.

*From this fishery comes the Pyefleet Native, the most highly prized oyster aristocrat in the world, which had become so popular in the seventeenth century that an inquiry in 1638 laid down that not more than one thousand barrels a week should be taken from the Essex common grounds – and that exports should be confined to the Prince of Orange and the Queen of Bohemia!*

Hervey Benham, 1948

All over the Lower Colne, as around Mersea, the marshes are scattered with disused oyster pits, once used to hold the fattened shellfish before they were sent to market. Extensive pits can be found on Pewitt Island, in the Pyefleet Channel.

The decline in the fishing industry, maritime trade and associated industries has left several redevelopment sites in prominent waterside positions that need careful site planning and building design to complement both the character of the surrounding built landscape and the estuarine landscape. Prominent development on rising land outside the natural settlement limits can be markedly incongruous. The foreshore at Westmarsh Point is backed by

colourful beach huts. Although the Lower Colne is now used for recreational boating, including sailing, wind-surfing, and use of powered craft, pleasure boat trips are not generally available, and sailing craft are difficult to hire or charter without club membership. However, inappropriate usage of the creeks and shorelines can still be a problem. There is pressure for new moorings on smaller, sheltered creeks from increasing numbers of private craft owners. Powered craft do not always respect speed limits or spatial restrictions: four-wheeled drive vehicles are driven out onto the shingle at Colne Point.

**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Upper Colne Estuary**



Generally: The tidal Colne narrows from Wivenhoe and Rowhedge up to the outskirts of Colchester and Essex University at Wivenhoe Park, and the neighbouring landscape takes on some of the character of the town. This flat urban fringe coastal marshland differs from the diverse marshland in being significantly urbanised, either by previous port-side related industries (quays and warehousing) on The Hythe, or by the elevated Essex University buildings to the east. Remnant marshland can be found at Hythe Marshes, part of which is an SSSI with small pockets of saltings fringing the river channel from place to place. Even though it is grassland, some of this character area appears weedy and under-managed. However, a few of the essential characteristics of the undeveloped marshlands remain, notably its flatness, the big views of the

sky and, where undeveloped, an open, treeless landscape with an occasional creek or dyke. The railway crosses the marshland to the north of the river and a cycle trail follows the sea wall back from Colchester to Wivenhoe. One or two boats or hulks remain tied at the quayside including an old Trinity House lightship, now used by the Sea Scouts.

A significant portion of the area is now either awaiting or undergoing redevelopment. New buildings vary in style, a recent B&Q store creating a significant addition to the landscape, generally long and low and muted in colour, much as the old warehouses used to be. However, the change from a port to a mixed-use regeneration zone represents a huge cultural change for the area.

*Wivenhoe: An Essex Village  
Fishing, sailing, art and tillage...*

*Part-suburbia, part-bohemia  
With a dash of academia.*

*Martin Newell and James Dodds, 1997*

Both Wivenhoe and Rowhedge have long maritime histories. Wivenhoe was a renowned yacht-building centre from early in the 19th century, as well as turning out the local smacks for the fishing business. Colliers were also a familiar sight. Having unloaded their

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

Loss of cultural association between the Colne ports and the sea.  
Loss of the cultural role of The Hythe, once the port of Colchester.  
The impact of redevelopment of waterside sites at The Hythe, Wivenhoe and Rowhedge.  
Reduced management of urban fringe marshland sites.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

Unvegetated foreshore  
Inter-tidal salt marsh  
Urban fringe marshland  
Vale-top Farmlands

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

Colne Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

hulks, intertidal remains, tumuli

**ACCESS:**

Wivenhoe Trail, Wivenhoe Marsh, Colchester Borough Council



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Upper Colne Estuary

cargo they would load with ballast for their return journey at the sand and gravel workings, hence the name, Ballast Quays. In the 19th century sailing vessels from Wivenhoe went as far as Quebec and Jamaica.

The smacks were mainly employed in fishing for sprats in the winter (to be turned into manure for the land) and for mussels and scallops. It was said you knew you were in Wivenhoe with your eyes shut because of the smell! In summer, many of the fishermen would form the crews for the big racing-cruising yachts based in the village. Rowhedge seems to have had an altogether more rowdy heritage, with salvaging and wrecking supplementing the fishermen's income.

Yachtsmen still come ashore at Rowhedge quayside and commercial traffic arrives at the wharves at Ballast Quays. The Hythe at Colchester has not been used for commercial maritime traffic for nearly a decade, however, and is closed as a port.

The Upper Colne is dominated by the urban fabric of Colchester and the tall, dark towers of the University of Essex prominent on the skyline at Wivenhoe Park. There are long views of these tower blocks, even from the

Lower Colne and East Mersea. Recent residential development on the waterside at Wivenhoe contrasts discordantly in form, colour and details with the more mellow older buildings and the muted horizontality of the marshlands.

The river forms a significant feature in the landscape, with its extensive, glistening mudflats at low tide and occasional wading birds. In theory, there is public access along both sides of the river outside the main wharf areas. Views downriver are over significant distances, but to east and west these are constrained by rising land, the university buildings and parkland trees, and the suburbs of Colchester to the west.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Brightlingsea Enclosed Valelands



Generally: A gently-sloping mixed landscape of farmland, quarrying, small copses and the occasional orchard, this character area extends from the outskirts of Wivenhoe, the borders of Alresford, and the upper reaches of the creek down to the fringes of Brightlingsea.

The field pattern is regular but not co-axial: the lanes wind along the valley tops with occasional crossing points for the creeks and streams. Locally this pattern is disturbed by sand and gravel quarrying on the edge of the adjoining coastal marshland. Moverons Farm above Alresford Creek, is the centre of extensive quarrying for sands and gravels. This has left a disfigured and pitted landscape.

Though tall, bushy hedgerows are typical of these Valeland landscapes, many of these are now lost, either due to

agricultural intensification or through extensive quarrying. Small valley-side woodlands in the form of mixed plantations, shelterbelts and remnant hedgerows give this landscape an enclosed, often well-treed feel. The quarry workings are often well-screened by tree belts and copses from the landward side, but they can dominate the marshlands below. From the estuaries and creeks, the extensive conveyor belts and mounds of excavated material damage the views. At Fingringhoe, parts of the disused quarries have been turned into a nature reserve managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust.

Settlement is scattered except at the extensive margins of the old Cinque Port of Brightlingsea, at Rowhedge and the mixed, fragmented development of Fingringhoe with its handsome church. Settlement does not appear prominent from the landward side because of the extensive network of woodlands and hedgerows, but where it has expanded close to the marshes, they lose their remote quality. The large church at Brightlingsea Hall in its elevated position above Alresford Creek is a striking landmark over a wide area within the Colne Estuary.

Military pasture-land adjoining the north bank of the Roman River is undergrazed

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Loss of hedgerows reducing sense of enclosure.

Extensive quarrying visible from marshlands and changing character of landscape.

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Vale-top farmlands

Enclosed valley sides

Unvegetated foreshore

Diverse coastal marshland

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:

Colne Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Ancient Woodland, Conservation Area, Special Landscape Areas

### HERITAGE FEATURES:

Thorrington Tide Mill



## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Brightlingsea Enclosed Valelands

and is dominated by invasive weeds and some scrub. The Brightlingsea marshlands too are becoming scrubby and weedy.

Old Ordnance Survey maps indicate that this landscape once included estates like Wivenhoe Park and St Osyth's Priory, Alresford, Thorrington and Brightlingsea Halls, whose owners took advantage of the higher, drier slopes. Alresford Hall is renowned for the Constable painting of The Quarters House, a fishing lodge in the grounds of the hall.

Alresford Creek forms a secluded and contrasting feature within the character area. The narrow, sometimes enclosed waterway was once a busy tidal thoroughfare, sailing barges carrying grain, sand, straw and manure to and from small quays and docks, now disused, including the dramatic structure of Thorrington tide mill, now restored. The mouth of the creek was once spanned by the railway to Brightlingsea, the Whelk and Winkle line that used to run from Wivenhoe carrying the produce of the sea to London, and still forms a current footpath to Brightlingsea alongside the River Colne. The bridge over the creek was designed to swing out to allow barges to come through.

Over much of this character area, Brightlingsea Church, outside the town, forms a distinctive landmark, visible for some distance up and down the Colne. There is some visual intrusion of the outskirts of Brightlingsea into the character area.

## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Brightlingsea Flag Creek



Generally: This small secluded low-lying area of salt marsh and intertidal muds loops round south and east of Brightlingsea, on its island of higher, drier ground.

The marshlands vary from the holiday development at Point Clear, at the mouth of the creek, with its idiosyncratic chalets and ubiquitous caravan sites, to the wilder grazing land below St Osyth's Priory. The creek forms a wide, shallow, secluded valley but from which the view is disturbed by sand and gravel workings on the higher land in several places. Brightlingsea itself is generally well-concealed from the rural landscape, the most prominent face of the town to the marsh being the port side itself.

At Brightlingsea the foreshore is backed by brightly-coloured beach huts that

add their own distinctive character to the coastline, but this character is being eroded by the use of cedar-red stained garden sheds to replace the eclectic mix of colours and huts traditionally used.

Within the creek, the salt marshes, including Cindery Island, are dotted with disused oyster pits, testimony to the heyday of the fishery in the late 19th century. The inshore and deep-sea oyster smacks, or skillingers were often kept at moorings in the creek. The fishermen's income was supplemented until about 150 years ago by salvaging the wrecks of boats that came to grief on the treacherous sands of the Thames Estuary. Since then Brightlingsea has also been a centre of yachting and yacht building.

Recent closure of the James and Stone Shipyard has brought pressure for residential redevelopment on the port side. Proposals need to respect not only the eclectic mix of building type on the front but also the historic character of the town behind and the generally simple, muted horizontal character of the neighbouring marshlands. Built development should not encroach into the highly sensitive landscape of the intertidal zone itself.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Sand and Gravel workings visually dominant from creek.

Redevelopment of the James and Stone Shipyard.

Loss of cultural association between the creek and the land.

Salt marsh erosion.

Dominance of holiday centre at top of Flag Creek.

### LANDSCAPE TYPES:

Unvegetated foreshore

Diverse coastal marshland

### ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:

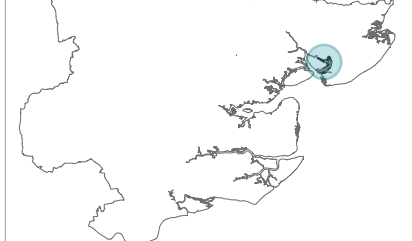
Colne Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Coastal Protection Belt, Special Landscape Areas

### HERITAGE FEATURES:

Oyster pits, hulks, intertidal remains

### ACCESS:

Howlands Marsh, Essex Wildlife Trust



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**St Osyth Coastlands**



This gently rolling arable landscape is to the east of the more tree-strewn landscape on glacial drifts forming an arc south of Colchester. Remnant shaggy elm hedgerows provide extensive or framed views over the level marshlands, Brightlingsea Creek or the dramatic shingle banks of Colne Point.

Enclosed valley sides form a distinct sloping or undulating landscape type on the good quality clay loams of the drift deposits and are incised by small tidal watercourses such as the Roman River, Alresford and St Osyth Creeks. The land use varies from small to medium-sized pasture along the Roman River with prominent woodland and generally intact hedgerows and hedgerow oaks and ash, to more open mixed farmlands east of the River Colne.

The enclosed landscapes of the Roman River extend beyond the boundaries of the coastal zone following the soil type south and west of Colchester. North and east of the River Colne these generally farmed landscapes also have a high percentage of other land-cover uses, notably quarrying, woodland and estate or parkland, but including the occasional orchard. The enclosing vegetation and slopes give a small, even intimate landscape in which views are contained or framed where they look out over the marsh.

Orchards are concentrated north of Alresford Hall, whilst the south and west facing aspects of the estuary have many attributes suitable for growing top-grade fruit, it is possible that the prevailing salt-laden winds have limited their spread down the slopes. Many such orchards could be found thirty years ago but have been converted to more profitable arable land more recently, in part due to EC subsidies.

Large estatelands such as East Donyland Hall and Alresford Hall have been located to take advantage of the relatively well-drained soils, elevated position, and intimate scale of the landscape. Most notable is the ancient parkland of St Osyth's Priory. This Priory is considered amongst the finest monastic remains in

**SPECIFIC ISSUES:**

- Loss of salt marsh at Colne Point Nature Reserve.
- Disturbance at Colne Point Nature Reserve by inappropriate recreation.
- Intensification of development at old plotland sites eroding distinct seaside character.
- Loss of enclosure in valelands.
- Inappropriate mitigation of development and caravan sites in marshland.
- Flood defence.

**LANDSCAPE TYPES:**

- Unvegetated foreshore
- Inter-tidal salt marsh
- Diverse coastal marshland
- Enclosed valley-sides

**ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS:**

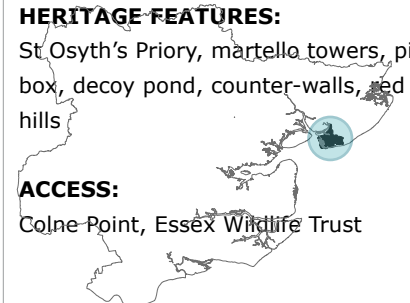
- Colne Estuary SSSI, Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area, Essex Estuaries candidate Special Area of Conservation

**HERITAGE FEATURES:**

- St Osyth's Priory, martello towers, pill box, decoy pond, counter-walls, red hills

**ACCESS:**

- Colne Point, Essex Wildlife Trust



## CONTENTS

Preface  
Executive Summary  
Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
Claylands and  
Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
River
- Lower Colne  
Estuary
- Upper Colne  
Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
Enclosed  
Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
Coastlands
- Holland  
Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## St Osyth Coastlands

Britain and is a significant feature. Originally an Augustinian Abbey, named after the martyred daughter of the first Christian king of the East Angles, and with origins pre-dating the 13th century, it has been in private hands since the dissolution of the monasteries. Its extensive grounds may be the remnants of an ancient deer park.

The flatness of the landscape dominates with open views extending throughout the marshland to the rising Rolling Clay Farmlands beyond and over all of which the varied skylines stand out. Where counter-walls exist, these provide both vantage points out to sea and a more intimate landscape locally, adding texture and variety in scale with the landscape. Pre-20th century it was exceptional to see more than a barn in these landscapes, and even today built form is rare except at the margins of the larger suburban fringes such as Jaywick and Brightlingsea. Suburbanisation has occurred at Point Clear, but these settlement margins are generally well-vegetated with ornamental species which soften the impact of the built form on the rural landscape. Some columnar conifers have been used for screening, both at farmsteads and within domestic gardens, and these do not enhance

the general character.

Areas of underused pasture and degraded marshlands adjoin the settled areas close to the holiday settlements of Jaywick, Seawick and Brightlingsea, where the ditches and dikes are dry or choked with vegetation and the water stagnant. Areas of hawthorn and brambly scrub are starting to encroach within the grassland, where traditionally they would be found only in association with old decoy ponds, and the boundary between the farmed and settled landscape can be scruffy, when extensive fly-tipping and other rubbish, scrub invasion and other signs of lack of maintenance mar the margins of some caravan sites or settlements. The brightness and reflectivity of their paintwork also means the regimented ranks of mobile homes stand out starkly in this distinctively flat landscape with its generally muted earth colours.

The original 1920s-1930s holiday settlement of Jaywick has expanded considerably since that time and the current planning policy is to allow for upgrading the area and permanent occupation. The varied mix of seaside holiday chalets is thus being replaced by more suburban brick homes and the distinctive character of the

original plotland site is being lost. This upgrading is also occurring at Lee-over-Sands on the seaward side of the sea wall. There are issues involving flood protection in all these developments within the sensitive marshlands. The marshlands retain many of the characteristics of the time when they would have been grazed by sheep with ditches, dykes and counter-walls all present. The counter-walls form local viewpoints and enclosure as well as being features in the flat landscape. The scrubby outline of an old decoy pond can also be discerned between Seawick and Jaywick.

From the sand bars of Colne Point views extend across the Colne and Blackwater mouths to Bradwell, down the Dengie coast as far as Foulness and even to the north Kent coast. Firing on the Foulness ranges some distance to the south is often audible.

Amongst the shingle are the remains of old commercial trackways used to transport gravel down to a small jetty that could be accessed at high tide by boat. The spit and the salt marsh are now a nature reserve managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust. Illicit access is gained from the sea and along the creeks in powered craft and along

## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## St Osyth Coastlands

the spit itself by vehicles driving from Seawick.

At Lee-over-Sands there are also extensive Second World War remains including a pill box. Mitigation where it occurs around holiday parks is often in the form of inappropriate tree-planting, not a characteristic of marshland.

Several martello towers can be found along this section of coast. At Seawick and Point Clear, they provide dramatic military features behind the sea wall and are seen far out to sea where they are a welcome landmark for maritime traffic on an otherwise linear coastline - the one at Seawick though hemmed in with caravans is destined for upgrading to a museum. The farmsteads, such as Lee Wick near Point Clear, sit on the break of slope above the Coastal Marshland and form key landmarks viewed from that level.

**CONTENTS**

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

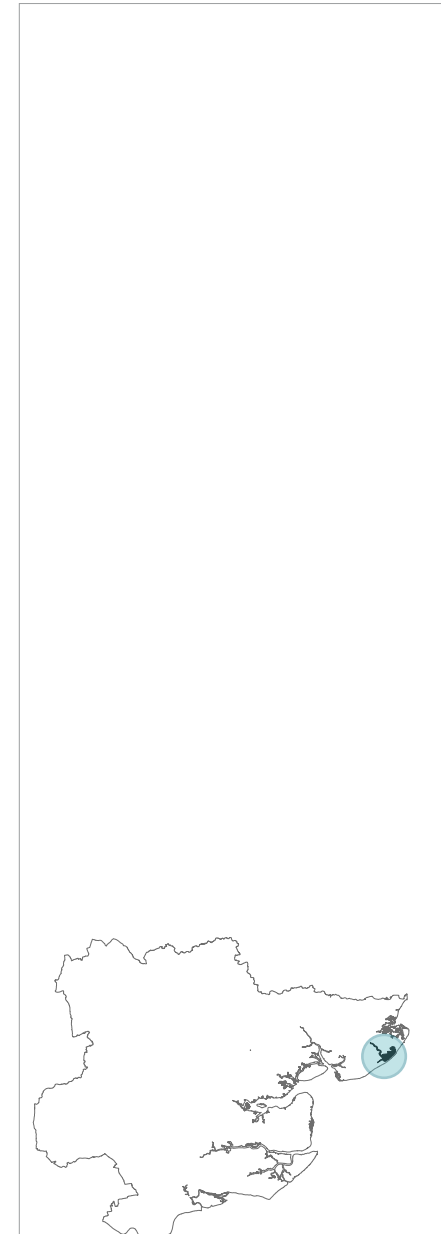
Appendices

**Holland Coastlands**



Holland Coastlands description in Tendring LCA, published in 2002.

- 2c Holland Haven - the coastal area –page 71
- 3d Holland Coastal Slopes – page 93
- 5a Holland Brook - the river valley – page 115



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

**Hamford Water - Historic Landscape Characterisation**

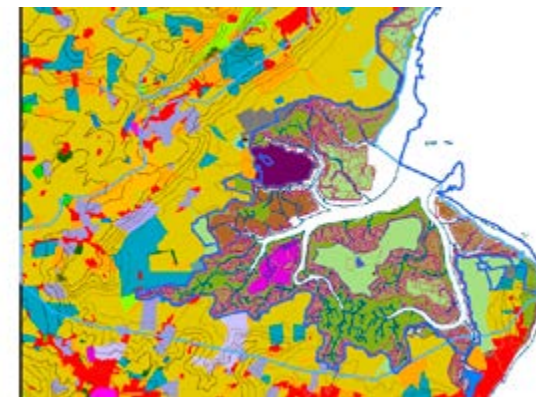
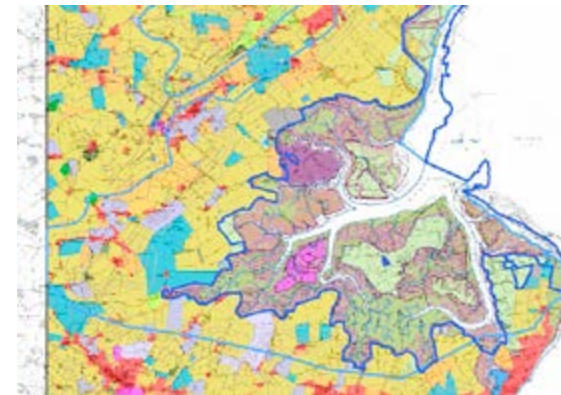
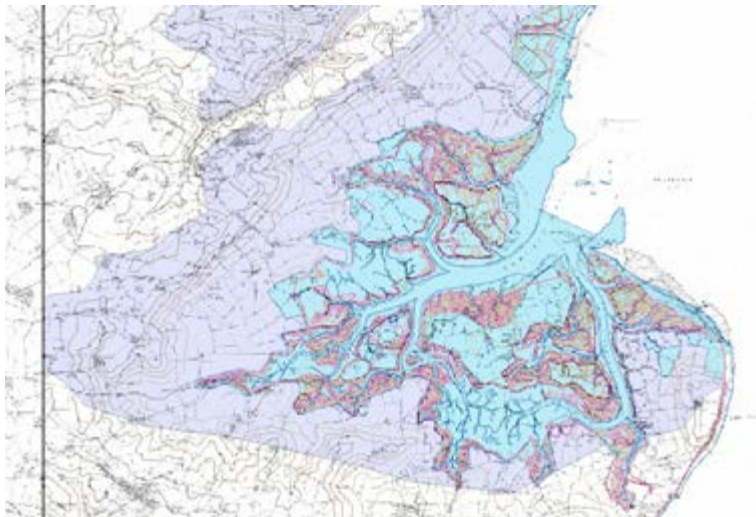
This represents the most northern area of the Essex coastline within this part of the SAIL project.

Urban settlement is concentrated along the ridges between the river valleys, and has seen major expansion in the latter part of the 20th century. Harwich, Walton-on-the-Naze and Clacton-on-Sea are the coastal settlements, which have expanded greatly in size in recent years. Harwich has seen major industrial and urban expansion and is, now a major port and ferry terminal to mainland Europe.

The low lying estuary is the focus of all the major designations: SPA, Ramsar site, SSSI. The Special Landscape Area takes in a wider area of the valley/estuary mouth, whereas the SPA covers the same areas as the SSSI and Ramsar site and focuses on the river mouth and in HLC terms the saltings, unimproved inter-tidal areas, and early curvilinear and later rectilinear drained areas – again reflect areas of less radical human intervention.

The hinterland is a mixture of various pre-18th century enclosure types ranging from co-axial, sinuous and irregular, beneath the later 20th century veneer of change. Again the field systems have suffered from varying degrees of boundary loss/gain across the area.

Coastal erosion can be seen along The Naze – as evident in the difference between the current mapping (bottom) and the First Edition (top).



## CONTENTS

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

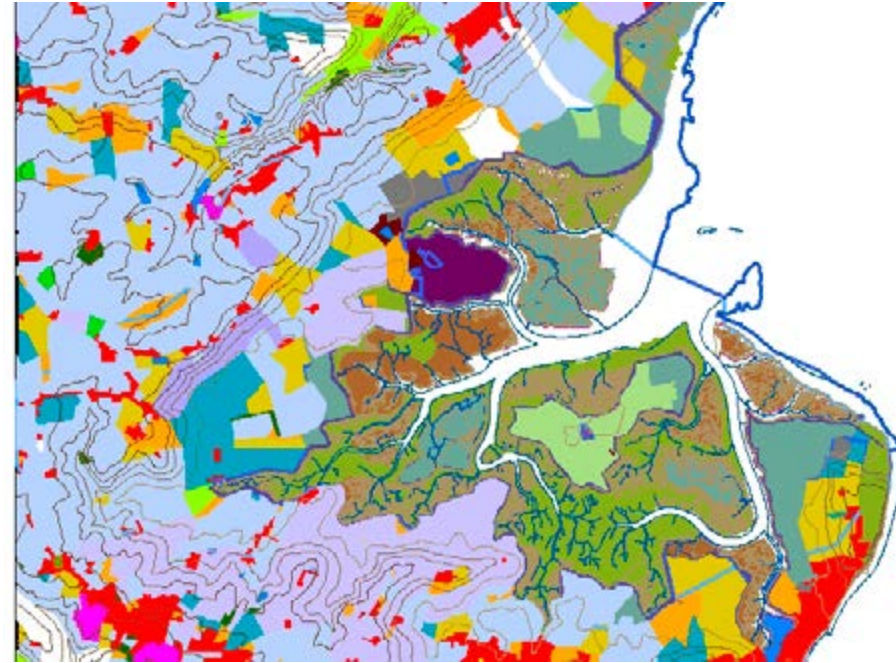
Consultees

Appendices

## Hamford Water - Historic Landscape Characterisation

The historic background can be seen on the 18th century map with the contours overlaid – the pre-18th century field systems (pale blues) are predominantly related to the topography – with drainage forms on the low lying areas.

If one zooms in and looks at the northern slopes of the estuary one can see how these early enclosure patterns follow the contour lines, with the settlements e.g. Great Oakley) being on the higher ground, between the small river to the north and the estuary to the south. The First Edition, overlaying the HLC map, shows the degree of earlier enclosure. Some of these boundaries have now been lost due to recent agricultural reforms and changes.



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

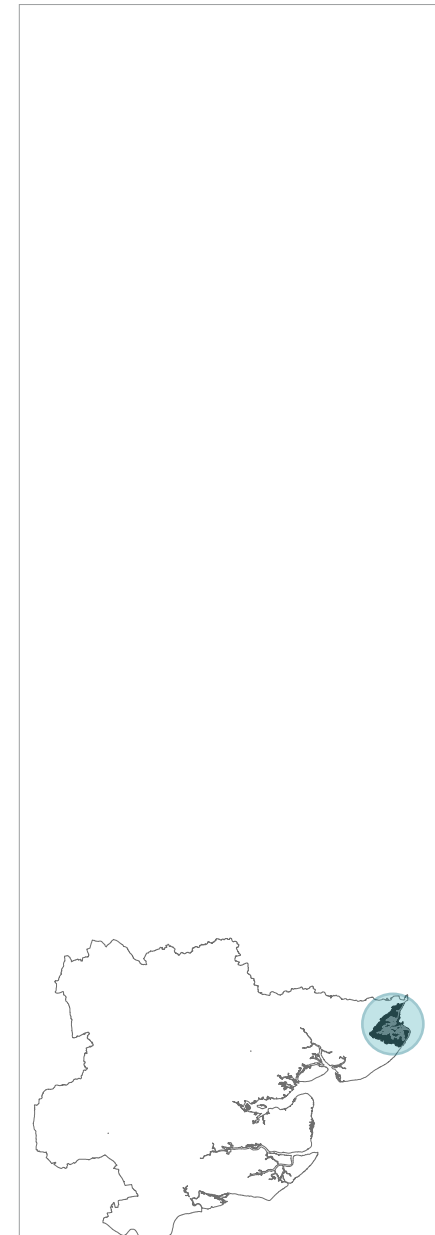
Appendices

**Hamford Water**



Hamford Water description in Tendring LCA, published in 2002.

- 1d Hamford Water marshes – page 51
- 2d Hamford drained marshes and islands - page 74
- 3a Hamford coastal slopes – page 84



**CONTENTS**

Preface  
 Executive Summary  
 Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
 Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
 Character Areas

Introduction to HLC

Landscape Character  
 Areas

South Essex Coast

Mid Essex Coast

North Essex Coast

- Mersea Island
- Colchester  
 Claylands and  
 Marshlands
- Lower Roman  
 River
- Lower Colne  
 Estuary
- Upper Colne  
 Estuary
- Brightlingsea  
 Enclosed  
 Valelands
- Brightlingsea  
 Flag Creek
- St Osyth  
 Coastlands
- Holland  
 Coastlands
- Hamford Water
- Stour Estuary

Bibliography

Consultees

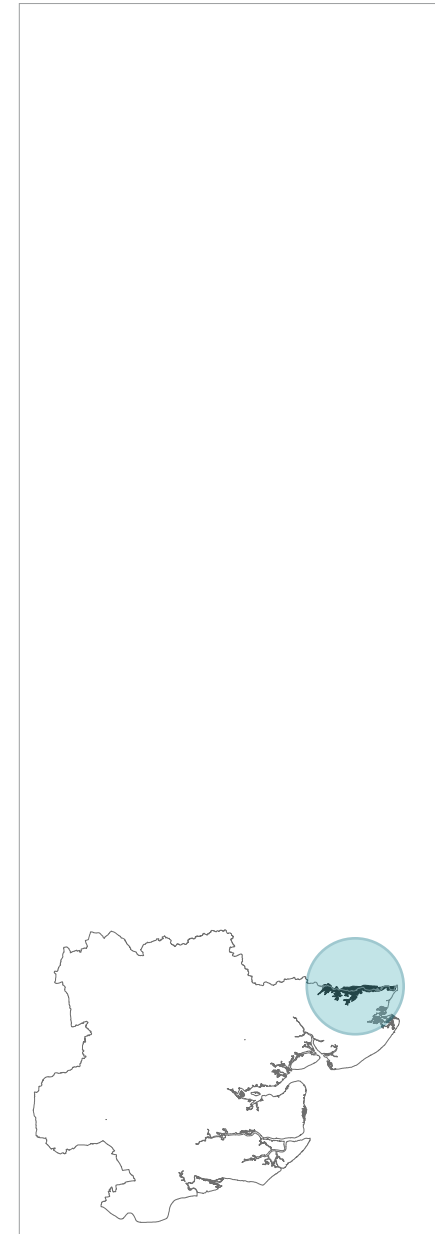
Appendices

**Stour Estuary**



Stour Estuary description in Tendring LCA, published in 2002.

- 1e Stour estuary marshes - page 54
- 5c Cattawade marshes – page 122
- 6a Stour valley system – page 132



## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Bibliography

- Baring-Gould, Sabine, 1880  
'Mehalah: A Story of the Salt  
Marshes'
- Benham, Hervey, 1948  
'The Last Stronghold of Sail'
- Defoe, D., 1724-6  
'A tour through the whole island of  
Great Britain' (reprinted in 1971,  
Harmondsworth: Penguin)
- English Heritage, 1996  
'England's Coastal Heritage'
- English Nature, 1999  
'The Essex coast; beyond 2000'
- Essex County Council and Essex  
Coastal Districts, 1994  
'Essex Coastal Strategy'
- Essex County Council, 1999  
'The Essex Landscape: in search of  
history'
- Essex County Council, 1998  
'Draft Deposit Plan'
- Firstsite Gallery, Colchester (quote by  
Ronald Blythe), 2000  
'This flat earth – Art of the East  
Anglian Landscape'
- Griffiths, Maurice, 1932  
'Magic of the Swatchways'
- Hunter, John, 1997  
'The Essex Landscape'
- John Betjeman, 1954  
'Essex'
- Maldon District Council and Colchester  
Borough Council, 1996  
'Blackwater Estuary Management  
Plan'
- Nature Conservancy Council, 1992  
'Research and Survey in Nature  
Conservation No. 42; Erosion  
and vegetation change on the salt  
marshes of Essex and North Kent  
between 1973 and 1988'
- Newell, Martin, 1999  
'Black Shuck; The Ghost Dog of  
Eastern England'
- Newell, Martin and Dodds, James,  
1997  
'The Wild Man of Wivenhoe'
- Raban, Jonathan, 1987  
'Coasting'
- Sagar, Peter, 1994  
'East Anglia'
- Smith, J.R., 1970  
'Foulness, A History of an Essex  
Island'
- Soil Survey of England and Wales  
'Soil map of England and Wales;  
South East England 1:250,000'
- Strachan, David, 1998  
'Essex from the air: archaeology &  
history from aerial photographs'
- Winsor, Terry, 2000  
'Essex Boys' (the movie)

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Consultees

Blackwater Project

BNFL at Bradwell power station

Colchester Borough Council

Natural England (former Countryside Agency)

DERA (Ministry of Defence) at  
Shoeburyness

English Nature

Environment Agency

Essex Estuaries Project

Essex Wildlife Trust

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Castlepoint District Council

Maldon District Council

Rochford District Council

Southend-on-Sea District Council

Tendring District Council

Thurrock District Council

SAIL

## CONTENTS

Preface

Executive Summary

Landscape Framework

Part One. Landscape  
Character Types

Part Two. Landscape  
Character Areas

Bibliography

Consultees

Appendices

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Detailed Character Area maps
- Appendix B: Field Survey Sheet template