

# **GLEMSFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

## **LANDSCAPE CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

February 2025



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# Contents

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## **Introduction**

- 1 Background
- 2 Methodology and Approach
- 3 Purpose and Scope of the Assessment

## **Policy Context**

- 4 Policy Context Introduction
- 5 European Landscape Convention
- 6 National Planning Policy Framework
- 7 Local Development Framework
- 8 Local Plan: Saved Policies
- 9 Local Plan: Core Strategy
- 10 Development Management: Issues & Options
- 11 Supplementary Planning Documents
- 12 Other Designations & Categories

## **Evolution of Glemsford**

- 13 Influencing Factors
- 14 Geology
- 15 Post Glaciation
- 16 Early Occupation: Clearance and Cultivation
- 17 The English Settlement & the Normans
- 18 Medieval Period & The Wool Trade
- 19 Woodland
- 20 Suffolk Historic Characterisation Maps
- 21 The Evolution of the Village

## **Landscape Character**

- 22 Introduction
- 23 National Landscape Character Areas
- 24 Suffolk Landscape Character Areas
- 25 Glemsford Landscape Character Areas

## **Built Environment**

- 26 Village Layout
- 27 Conservation Area
- 28 Built Environment: Character

## **Landscape Capacity**

- 29 Sites to be Assessed
- 30 Methodology
- 31 Landscape Value
- 32 Landscape Sensitivity
- 33 Visual Sensitivity
- 34 Capacity

## **Summary and Conclusions**

- 35 Summary and Conclusions

## **Appendix 1: Views**

# Introduction

## 1. Background

Following an application by Glemsford Parish Council the Parish was designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area on 27 October 2017 by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council under Regulation 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). On 25 July 2019 Ubiety Landscape + Urban Design was appointed by Glemsford Neighbourhood Plan Group to undertake a landscape character appraisal of the Parish. Glemsford Neighbourhood Plan area follows the parish boundary.

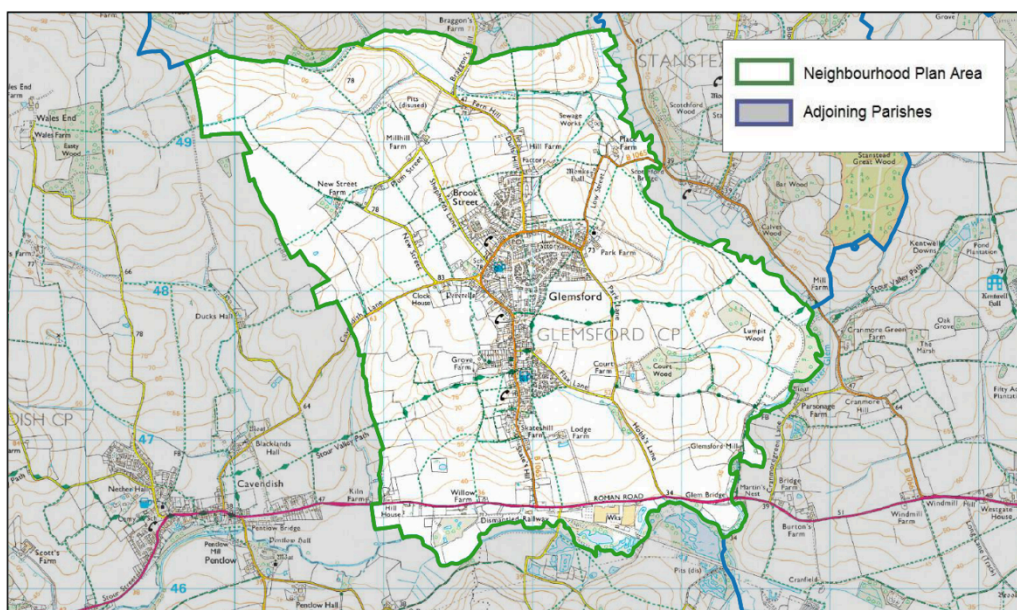


Figure 1.1 Neighbourhood Plan Area

The parish population at the time of the 2021 Census was 3,701. The village has a high level of services and facilities which also serve the residents of nearby smaller villages.

## 2. Methodology and Approach

Landscape Character Assessment is *“The tool that is used to help us understand, and articulate, the character of the landscape. It helps us identify the features that give a locality its ‘sense of place’ and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas”*.<sup>1</sup>

This appraisal has been carried out with reference to Natural England’s guidance<sup>2</sup> and comprises 4 steps:

- i) Defining the Purpose and Scope of the Assessment
- ii) Desk Study: this includes a review of the policy context, the historical development of the landscape and the settlement of Glemsford and physical environment data. Base map data included:
  - surface geology
  - soils
  - topography
  - drainage

<sup>1</sup> Swanick, Carys: Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England, Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2002

<sup>2</sup> Tudor, Christine, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (October 2014)

- land-use and landcover
- trees and woodland
- settlement

This was mapped at 1:10,000 scale and overlain with established County Landscape Character areas and Historic Landscape areas as well as other designations as shown on Figure 2. This data helped to prepare for and inform the field study.

- iii) Field Study: This was undertaken in the summer months only (July & August 2019) when trees and hedges were in leaf and therefore views more contained. Initial visits were made to record/photograph key views into and from the settlement providing an opportunity to test the County level character areas on the ground and formulate draft local character areas. Subsequent field surveys were undertaken to test and refine draft character areas and to inform written descriptions as well as help make judgements about the current condition of landscape areas and qualities not evident from desk information. The built-up-area boundary (see fig. 6) defines the inner mapping boundary to landscape character areas at 1:10,000 scale. The outer boundary is fixed at the perimeter of the parish although in practice character areas may extend beyond this boundary and be determined in part by features outside the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- iv) Glemsford benefits from a dense network of roads, by-ways and footpaths that give access to all parts of the parish. These were all traversed by bicycle which gave good visual access throughout and the opportunity to identify optimal survey locations in the field. Mapping was carried out in the field using a tablet which gave access to desk study layers and allowed for easy readjustment of boundaries to character areas. Notes were made of perceptual responses based on significant visual features including the arrangement of field boundaries, topography, permanent vegetation, drainage features, views obtainable and the general degree of openness or enclosure
- v) Classification and Description: Field records and photographs were cross-referenced with desk study data to jointly inform judgements about character area boundaries and their descriptions.

### **3. Purpose and Scope of the Assessment**

The scale, scope and level of detail of an assessment is largely determined by its purpose. The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of the character and qualities of the landscape (including the built environment) of Glemsford in order to provide a robust evidence base to support the development of policy within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. This study will help inform policy and assist in decision-making where it has a bearing on the character of the settlement and the landscape setting.

## Policy Context

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### 4. Policy Context Introduction

This Landscape Character Assessment is intended to inform policy at the level of the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in regards to development and management of the landscape. As such it sits within the context of a hierarchy of policy above it, from the international level down to the district level.

### 5. European Landscape Convention: guidelines for managing landscapes<sup>3</sup>

The European Convention is published by the Council of Europe, which includes members of the European Union as well as 19 other member states. It is endorsed by the British Government. The Convention requires *“landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape.”* Importantly, the convention provides an accepted and succinct definition of ‘landscape’ which is:

*“an area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/ or human factors”*

### 6. National Planning Policy Framework<sup>4</sup>

The NPPF sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It underwrites the authority of the Local Plan and of the Neighbourhood Plan. It also states that policies and decisions must reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements and that plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Paragraphs in the December 2024 NPPF of particular relevance to this Appraisal include:

74. Neighbourhood planning groups should also give particular consideration to the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites (of a size consistent with paragraph 73a) suitable for housing in their area.

135. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

139. Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.

Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or

b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

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

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

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<sup>3</sup> Natural England, European Landscape Convention: guidelines for managing landscapes (Nov 2010)

<sup>4</sup> HMSO Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government: National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019)

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

In addition the Planning Practice Guidance in support of the NPPF includes ‘Natural Environment’ (21 January 2016):

One of the core principles in the NPPF is that planning should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

## 7. The Development Plan

At a local level, the Local Plan provides the strategic policy framework for the consideration of development proposals in the parish. In November 2023, Babergh District Council adopted the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 . It provides ten strategic policies that the neighbourhood plan has to be in conformity with, and a number of more detailed policies covering housing, the economy, the environment, and healthy communities and infrastructure.

The Part 1 plan does not define a “settlement hierarchy” for the district or identify the location of future growth. This will be included in a new Local Plan, which is unlikely to be completed until 2029.

Adopted policies of particular relevance to this Assessment are:

Policy SP03 - The sustainable location of new development

Policy SP09 - Enhancement and Management of the Environment

Policy LP17 – Landscape

Specifically, strategic policy SP09 –Enhancement and Management of the Environment states that:

1) The Councils will require development to support and contribute to the conservation, enhancement and management of the natural and local environment and networks of green infrastructure, including: landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and the historic environment and historic landscapes.

The strategic policy is supplemented by Policy LP17, which states:

1. To conserve and enhance landscape character development must:

- a. Integrate with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforce the local distinctiveness and identity of individual settlements;
- b. Be sensitive to the landscape and visual amenity impacts (including on dark skies and tranquil areas) on the natural environment and built character; and
- c. Consider the topographical cumulative impact on landscape sensitivity.

2. Where significant landscape or visual impacts are likely to occur, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) or a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) must be prepared to identify ways of avoiding, reducing and mitigating any adverse effects and opportunities for enhancement.

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<sup>5</sup> Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan- Part 1 2023

## 8. Other Designations and Categories

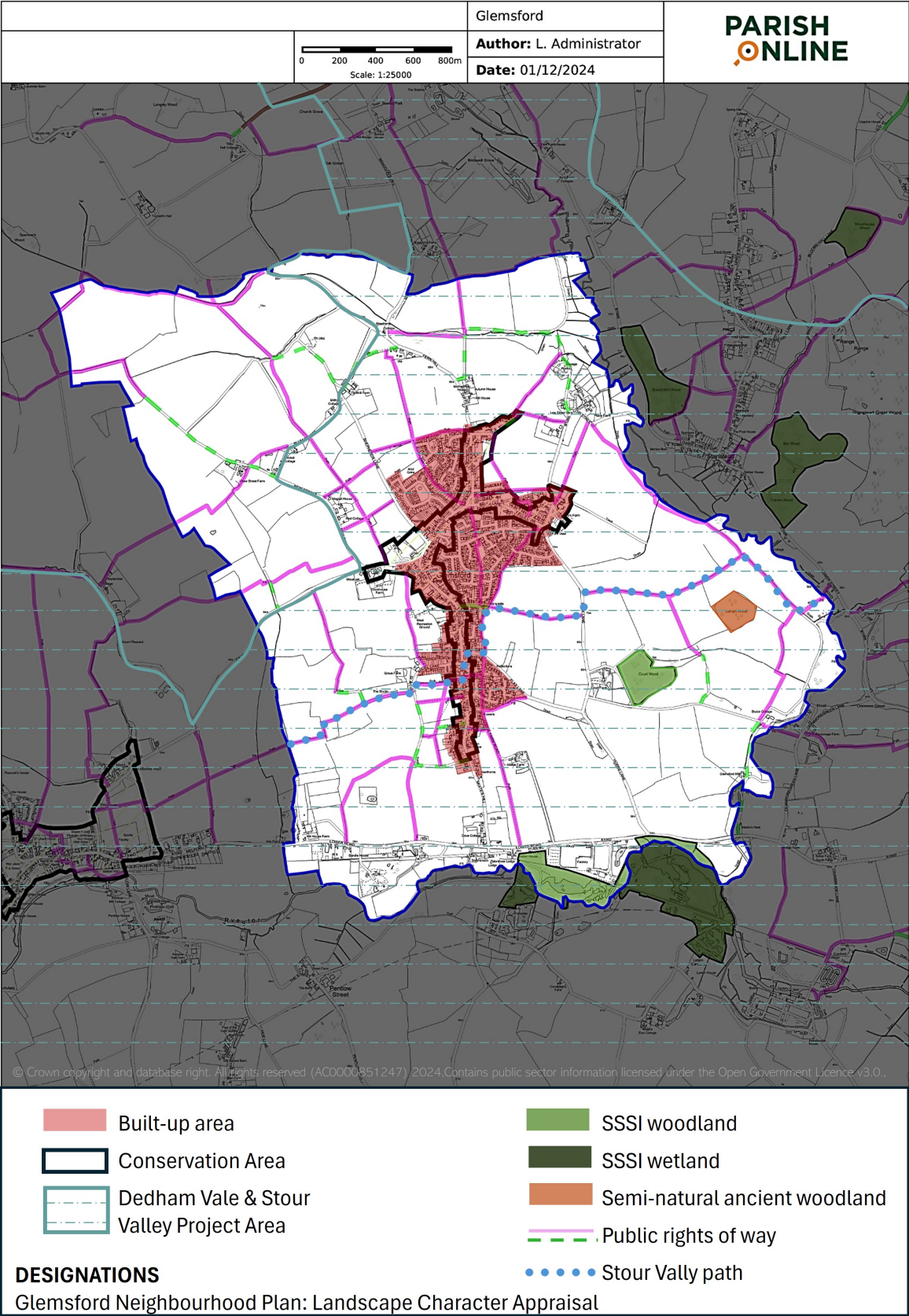
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest:** SSSI's are protected under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, both from development and from neglect and notifiable operations within them require consent from the relevant nature conservation body. Public funding for their management however has been halved in recent years. There are 2 SSSI's within the Neighbourhood Plan area both registered for biological interest:

**Glemsford Pits:** These are disused water-filled gravel workings and a length of the river Stour in the Stour valley with the major part of the site being in Essex. The site is listed because of its aquatic vegetation and fauna (dragonflies)

**Court Wood (Kentwell Woods SSSI):** Court Wood is one of a group of 15 woods associated with the former Kentwell Estate. The citation offers little information specific to Court Wood but does state that its condition is 'unfavourable/recovering'.
- Ancient & Semi Natural Woodland:** Stour Wood and the nearby Lumpit Wood are both designated by Natural England as 'Ancient Woodland' which means that they are assessed as being wooded continuously, as a site, since at least 1600 AD. By definition Ancient Woodland takes hundreds of years to establish and is considered to be 'irreplaceable habitat'. Designated Ancient Woodland is a material consideration in a planning application and protected under the NPPF.
- Stour Valley Project Area / Valued Landscape:** Most of the Neighbourhood Plan area falls within the Stour Valley Project Area (see Fig.2). This does not constitute designated land and it does not afford any particular protection in itself although it is linked to the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (a national designation affording a high degree of protection). The lower reaches of the Stour Valley were designated an AONB in 1979 (now known as a National Landscape) and there have been several initiatives to extend this since with 2 formal extensions having been made. Presently there is an outstanding submission to extend the AONB to Sudbury. In 1988 the Stour Valley Project Area was set up to support landscape improvements for a much larger area extending as far as Great Bradley and including most of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Project Area status allows the area to access 'AONB Services and Management' with access to funding for various projects and initiatives of the Project managers. The AONB is recognised for its tranquil, pastoral landscape. The wider Project Area *"resembles Dedham Vale with similar gently undulating river valley topography, medieval settlement pattern and rural characteristics."*<sup>6</sup> In issuing a planning decision (DC/18/01526) BDC has referred to affected land, at least in part, as 'Valued Landscape' although it is not defined in its extent. This is explored further in Section 30 below.

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<sup>6</sup> State of the AONB Report Headline Findings, Land Use Consultants: (2018)



## Evolution of Glemsford

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### 9. Influencing Factors

Understanding the characteristics that make a place distinctive starts with identifying the key influences that have shaped the landscape over time. For the parish of Glemsford the fundamental physical structure and the influential natural processes are, in geological terms, relatively recent. Overlaying these are the human influences which have been equally significant. Human influences reveal themselves as layers that can be glimpsed through the present day management of the landscape. This is called a 'palimpsest' (literally, a parchment that has been overwritten) and evidence of past influences are valued as part of an historical legacy.

### 10. Geology

The underlying bedrock is of chalk formations laid down in the warm seas of the Cretaceous Period about 70 to 90 million years ago but this is buried under thick 'superficial' deposits of much more recent origin. Of particular significance was the Anglian Glaciation which was a severe cold period that hit Britain around 450,000 years ago. It was one of a series of cold periods resulting in ice sheets covering parts of the country but on this occasion the ice reached its furthest southward extent spreading down to Essex. The glaciers easily eroded the underlying soft sedimentary chalk of west Suffolk and left in its wake thick deposits of chalky 'till' and 'head' (clay, silt, sand and gravel) known as the Lowestoft Formation. The gently undulating topography and shallow river valleys of southwest Suffolk are the result of the impact of this glaciation on soft chalk and the thick deposits left behind by meltwater. At Glemsford, 'almost unique in England'<sup>7</sup>, the deposits extend up to some 300' deep (as discovered in a water bore drilled in 1905).

### 11. Post Glaciation

In the millennia that followed the retreat of the glaciers there were climatic changes that witnessed periodic influxes of exotic flora and fauna and as recently as 125,000 years ago, when the last interglacial occurred and grasslands predominated, this included hippos, rhinos, cheetahs and elephants. Warmer periods also saw early human movements of Neanderthals crossing from the continent when the land link was available, as early as 200,000 years ago. Modern humans moved into Europe around 40,000 years ago making early incursions into southern Britain and are believed to have had a significant effect on mega fauna and, as a consequence, on the landscape.

### 12. Early Occupation: Clearance and Cultivation

Oliver Rackham<sup>8</sup> divides lowland England into 2 basic types:

Planned Countryside, where open fields, occasionally with older features, were parcelled up by Act of Parliament (The Enclosure Acts) in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

Ancient Countryside, hedged and walled, dating from any of the forty centuries between the Bronze Age and Queen Anne.

It is a crude division but the irregularity of enclosure in the Glemsford area, as well as the wandering lanes and roads, points to the second category of Ancient Countryside. Dating features from a 4,000-year period (if not longer according to more recent opinions) is fraught with difficulty. Theories are revised as new archaeological evidence comes to light and the following should be understood with this caveat in mind.

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<sup>7</sup> Glass, Rev. Kenneth. W.: A Short History of Glemsford (Foxearth and District Local History Society 1962)

<sup>8</sup> Rackham, Oliver: The Illustrated History of the Countryside (Wiedenfeld & Nicholson 1994)

Archaeological finds around Glemsford, including a Mesolithic flint axe and Neolithic axe head, indicate early settlement of the area. It was around this time, after about 3,500 BC, that agriculture was adopted. Agriculture required the clearance of the 'wild wood' that covered much of Britain after the last glacial retreat around 8,000BC. The presence of two ring-ditches and a tumulus near Glem Bridge are evidence of a permanent presence in the Bronze Age (c. 2,500-800 B.C.). Early agriculture may have been limited to the lower terraces of the Stour valley where soils are lighter with woodland above but there is also evidence of another ring-ditch in the vicinity of St Mary's Church. The relatively elevated location may have been attractive for reasons of defence, which would have been a consideration in turbulent times.

The Iron Age brought advances in cultivation such that the heavier clay soils of the higher ground eventually succumbed to the '*beast-drawn plough with an iron coulter*'<sup>9</sup> (introduced by the Belgae who arrived in Suffolk around 1 AD). The heavy soils also needed draining to be productive.

*"(they were) drained with huge moat-like ditches; and the ditches led into the streams that slowly carved into our gentle valleys. In this way the artificial creations of ditch and stream have come to look like the 'natural' lie of the land"*<sup>10</sup>

The ditches came with concomitant banks of excavated soil (often now dispersed and spread into the fields) providing shelter from east winds. Not infrequently the banks came to form parish boundaries.

*"Walking the parish boundaries of ... Boxted (sharing a boundary with Glemsford) one is immediately aware that the ancient bounds between parishes are following the ditch and hedge boundaries of fields that were already enclosed ..."*<sup>10</sup>

Ancient thoroughfares ran nearby following the river valleys. To the east Peddars Way ran north-south through Long Melford while within the southern boundary of the Parish is close to the A1092 which was also a Roman road with likely earlier origins, crossing the River Glem with a ford near the site of the present bridge and providing a name for the settlement.

Scarfe considers the name implies not only antiquity, but also continuity of settlement:

*"reasonably early [Romano-British] names [like] '-ford' would have disappeared totally if there had not been some degree of continuous use"*<sup>10</sup>

Bearing in mind also that England...

*"in later pre-historic and Roman periods had far more people within it than at the time of the Norman conquest."*<sup>10</sup> [estimated by Taylor at 2 million in AD 43 and perhaps 4 million by 3<sup>rd</sup> C. AD]

the suggestion that this early period made its mark on the landscape around Glemsford gains credence. It seems likely that by the time the Romans arrived if there was ancient woodland on the plateau around Glemsford it was not going to last much longer.

### 13. The English Settlement & The Normans

When the Romans withdrew from Britain in 410 the German mercenaries that they employed were joined by their tribesmen - the Saxons and the Angles. They favoured small, dispersed settlements with varying allegiance to independent 'kingdoms' (with that of East Anglia being centred around Ipswich although Essex had independent status during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries). Power was in flux with Mercia, Wessex and later the Danelaw holding sway in turn. According to Taylor:

<sup>9</sup> Scarfe, Norman: *The Suffolk Landscape* (Hodder & Stoughton 1972)

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, Christopher (1988): Commentary on 'The Making of the English Landscape' (W G Hoskins)

*“The coming of the Saxons (and Angles) had little effect on the landscape except perhaps in the negative sense with a reduction of population...They came to a crowded, totally exploited country covered in fields, towns, roads, villages and farmsteads, all organised into a complex system of landholding and with boundaries not only fixed but of great antiquity”<sup>11</sup>*

The parish boundary of Glemsford would have been established when Christianity came to Suffolk (first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> C.) and, according to Scarfe:

*“by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> C. villages and churches, and so presumably parishes, were established and marked out right across the Suffolk landscape.”<sup>10</sup>*

In the later Saxon period through to the Norman conquest and beyond there was something of a revolution in the settlement pattern. Connected with a rise in population the nucleated English village appeared, often a result of conscious planning (perhaps at the behest of the lord).

*“Although there has been continuous occupation (of many villages) from Roman, early to mid Saxon, or even late pre-historic times, the beginnings of the actual arrangement of the settlements as they have come down to us (continuous building lines, neat greens and regular gardens) belong mainly to the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.”<sup>11</sup>*

This was a formative period in the landscape too, and with more formal villages came a reconfiguring, if not introduction, of the open field system associated with the Saxons, often with little consideration for topography. Whether or not there was ever such an open system in the case of Glemsford, i.e. whether the small enclosed fields (more recently merged into larger fields) are ‘pre-parliamentary’ or survived from an earlier period, is not known.

#### **14. Medieval Period & The Wool Trade**

The landmark churches were in place, as were the villages and the surrounding field systems and according to Scarfe: *“The modern landscape of Suffolk is still essentially a medieval one”<sup>10</sup>*. But inevitably there were changes to come. Some of what we know applies to the Suffolk claylands or neighbouring areas generally but there are also records that refer to Glemsford specifically.

From 1450 onwards the price of wool was rising and significant amounts of arable land was converted to pasture with increasing enclosure by hedge planting. Less labour was required for farming but the wealth flowing from the wool trade meant that the countryside *“was filled with builders, carpenters and masons”<sup>12</sup>* re-building not only churches but dwellings also. The Conservation Area Appraisal<sup>11</sup> refers to the 16<sup>th</sup> C. as Glemsford’s period of *“former glory, when it was a major centre for Suffolk’s woollen cloth industry.”*

Changes associated with the wool trade however were not to everyone’s benefit and Glass records evidence of very hard times in Glemsford, initially for former agricultural workers and, in time, for those engaged in the wool trade when the industry’s focus turned to the north and west of England. After the 17<sup>th</sup> C. development in this part of Suffolk effectively came to a halt.

#### **15. Woodland**

By 1086 Suffolk was the most densely populated county in England. The Domesday survey records the extent of woodland and *“makes it clear that England was not very wooded”<sup>9</sup>*. For Glemsford it records that it had ‘wood for 5 swine’ (a very small area of wood by most standards). The survey also indicates the extent of arable land as it records that Glemsford

<sup>11</sup> Conservation Area Appraisal, Patrick Taylor, Babergh District Council 2007

had '3 ploughs in lordship' and '7 men's ploughs' and that St Etheldreda's (the Manor) held 8 curates of land (1 carucate being about 120 acres, which could be kept in cultivation through the year by one plough and a team of 8 oxen)<sup>8</sup>.

Differing accounts indicate that areas of tree cover waxed and waned over the centuries. Of the limited amount of woodland present at the time of the Domesday survey "*at least half of that grubbed out before 1350*"<sup>12</sup> Then "*After 1500 hedgerow trees appear in vast numbers in almost all landscape pictures and on early maps .. and are enumerated on surveys...for example on a 170 acre farm in Long Melford (1546)*"<sup>12</sup>

Some lamented the impact of the wool trade on woodland:

*"the multiplicity of curious timber buildings and costly ships hath almost utterly consumed our timber"* (Robert Ryece 'Breviary of Suffolk, 1618) .

Later, Hodgkins map of 1748 would seem to support the idea of lost woodland. Court Wood is clearly identifiable but no other wood seems present. On the other side of the account however we have Thomas Gainsborough's work. He found inspiration in the landscape around Sudbury although his 'bosky' paintings must be viewed with the cautionary note that his work would have been subject to stylistic influences, including Romantic painters such as Lorraine and Poussin, and of course he left Sudbury to study art on London at the age of 13. Scarfe states

*"As recently as the 1740's, when Gainsborough knew it and painted his first picture of the edge of it, that clay-capped middle of Suffolk was still called 'the Woodlands'"*<sup>10</sup>

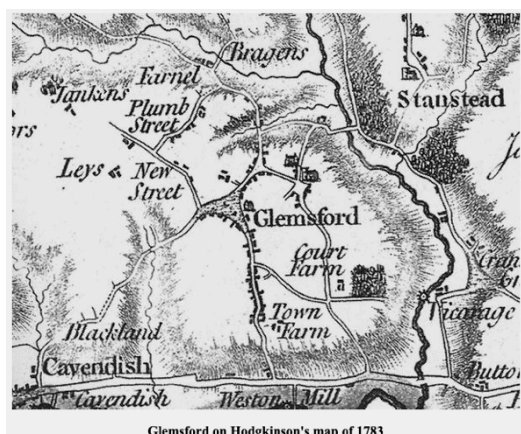


Figure 18.1: Glemsford on Hodgkins Map of 1783



Figure 18.2: Thomas Gainsborough: Landscape in Suffolk c 1748

## 16. Agricultural Improvements & Suffolk Historic Landscape Characterisation maps

Agriculture was still important and at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> C. witnessed a 'golden age' with many innovations. Mechanisation also began to appear becoming more important over time and this facilitated an increase in the size of landholdings and amalgamation of smaller fields. This has had an impact on Glemsford as elsewhere, particularly in the late 20<sup>th</sup> C. Hedgerows were removed and there was some loss of semi-natural vegetation including lowland grassland. The Suffolk Historical Landscape Character study notes:

*Physical changes to the landscape in the last few hundred years have been limited. Agricultural mechanisation has led to the amalgamation of numerous smaller fields with inevitable loss of hedgerows (often still clearly discernible as crop marks in aerial photographs) but the medieval period still leaves its legacy in the overall pattern.*

<sup>12</sup> Brooks, Howard: Stour Valley Heritage Compendia ,2013

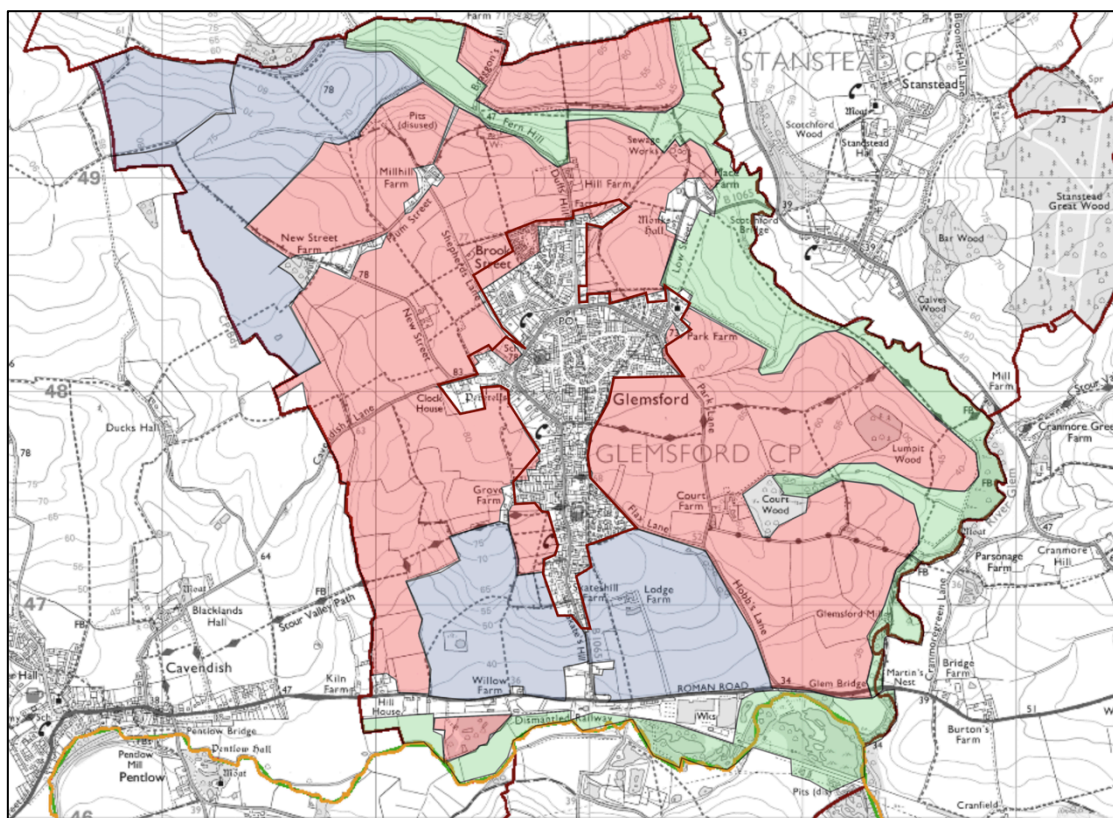





Figure 20.1: Historic Landscape Characterisation (Suffolk County Council)

-  Pre-18<sup>th</sup> C enclosure – random fields: Landscapes made up of fields that have an irregular pattern (i.e. without a dominant axis). Many were in existence by the medieval period, but could be earlier. Boundaries usually take the form of species-rich hedges (normally coppiced, not laid) with associated ditches and banks. Areas with this field pattern are probably some of our earliest farming landscapes.
  -  Post 1950 agricultural landscape – boundary loss from random fields: Landscapes made up of fields that have an irregular pattern (i.e. without any dominant axis). Many were in existence by the medieval period, but could be earlier. Boundaries usually take the form of species-rich hedges (normally coppiced not laid) with associated ditches and banks. Areas with this field pattern are probably some of our earliest farming landscapes.
  -  Meadow or managed wetland-meadow: Seasonally wet grassland that is mown for hay and/or grazed by animals. Normally found alongside rivers and streams and characteristically takes the form of long and narrow land parcels that run parallel to the watercourses. Often hedged on the dry land side, but with ditched internal sub-divisions that often had a drainage function.

## 17. Evolution of the Village

The fortunes of the settlement were closely linked to agriculture throughout its early development so, although well-established at the time of the Domesday survey, the settlement pattern would have been dispersed in form, as was typical for Saxon Suffolk and may have centred on the historic Greens.

*"The Greens are an ancient and characteristic element in the communal life of East Anglian 'Vills'"<sup>10</sup>*

The present church dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> C. and would likely have replaced a former structure in the same location. Its detachment from the village is not an indication that the settlement has relocated as this is a common arrangement in Suffolk. It seems reasonable to suppose that Christopher Taylor's comments (S. 16 above) would have applied to Glemsford so that a

consolidated and formalised settlement would have appeared in the 9<sup>th</sup> C. to 12<sup>th</sup> C. although even by the late 19<sup>th</sup> C three distinct historic cores had not yet merged.

The later middle ages brought prosperity to the village in the form of the wool trade (which was concentrated along the river Stour and its northern tributaries - convenient for export through the port of Ipswich). It was a cottage industry but the transport of wool from house to house for spinning, fulling, dyeing and weaving would have encouraged proximity of dwellings and an increasingly compact structure to the village. There are some important historic dwellings that date from this period. The settlement and its roads as depicted in Hodgkins map of 1783 is clearly recognisable. This period of prosperity saw the erection of some substantial and impressive houses, including Angel House, Chequers and Monks Hall, which are still key features of the modern settlement.

As the manufacture of broadcloth was lost to the north of England the industry in Suffolk went into decline in the 17<sup>th</sup> C. and this decline accelerated steeply in the late 18<sup>th</sup> C with the introduction of steam engines. The population of Glemsford may have halved from 2,400 to 1,200 in a 30 year period (1770 to 1800). However the demise of the wool industry was also an opportunity for other employers and the 19<sup>th</sup> C. brought new industries to Glemsford. The silk mill was founded in 1824 (by 1874 it was employing 200 hands). In 1865 the railway came to the Stour valley providing a boost to new industries allowing access to markets but also reducing the cost of materials brought in, including for construction. Coir mat making was another introduction and at one time there were 10 factories in Glemsford making mats leading to the making of machinery that made the mats at 'The Foundry'. Flax Lane became home to a flax processing factory. In 1884 the horsehair factory was established and by that year industries included brick works, soap and candles works, and a malthouse adjoining the Black Lion Inn. Thus, in Victorian times, Glemsford had become a busy industrial village. A number of landmark industrial buildings have since been removed, including the water tower, but this period leaves its mark to the present day and the Conservation Area Appraisal refers to the "[historic] *industrial nature of the village being one of its important qualities*". Some industrial buildings, such as the horse hair factory, have been converted to residential use.

## Landscape Character

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### 18. Introduction: What is Landscape Character?

The European Landscape Convention (see Section 6) provides a definition of 'landscape' as an area *'as perceived by people'*. Thus the concept of 'landscape', as opposed to 'land', is not divorced from our perceptions of it.

Perception rests with the individual. *'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'*, and with the culture to which that individual belongs. The previous sections make clear that the attributes of a landscape change over time but equally perceptions themselves are not fixed. They also change over time (possibly within a generation or about 40 years<sup>13</sup>) and they change between cultures and individuals. A hunter-gatherer, a Bronze Age settler and a Roman soldier would probably each perceive the landscape around Glemsford in different ways and value it according to their needs. To this extent 'landscape' might be considered more of an idea rather than a thing.

The character of a landscape is the *"distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse"*.<sup>1</sup> Landscape characterisation starts from the premise that all landscapes have value and it does not seek to rank them in order of value. However it is not entirely removed from the influence of perception. In identifying character certain attributes, e.g slope, may be quantifiable but others rely, to varying degrees, on our aesthetic responses to the landscape which can provide, for example, a sense of scale or proportion, composition, enclosure, texture and colour. Perceptions are formed with all the senses. The 'character' of a landscape is primarily concerned with visual attributes but some aspects, such as 'tranquility', are informed by more than one sense.

Landscape character can also be described and understood at different scales. It can be mapped at a national scale but also regionally, at the county level and more locally, resulting in a finer grain of understanding.

### 19. National Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character for the whole of the UK has been mapped at the national scale<sup>14</sup> and the published maps provide a wider context to the landscape character of Suffolk and of the Parish. There are 159 distinct character areas across England and Glemsford comes within 'Character Area 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland' stretching from Bury St Edmunds in the north down to Braintree and Chelmsford and from Stevenage in the west across to Ipswich. Glemsford sits comfortably within this character area away from any transitional borders and the descriptions of this landscape type fit well with the scenery of the parish (see Fig.6).

#### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF NCA86:

*It is an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernable over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The widespread moderately chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character. Gravel and*

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<sup>13</sup> Human Landscape Perception, Eugenie van Heijagen, Wageningen University, for High Weald AONB (2013)

<sup>14</sup> National Character Area profiles, Natural England (September 2014)

*sand deposits under the clay are important geological features, often exposed during mineral extraction.”*

*The area’s rich archaeology provides evidence of a long history of settlement and significant past wealth and importance, including Palaeolithic finds, Roman sites, isolated moated farmsteads and a large number of large country houses. It is an area of notable medieval towns and villages which support many vernacular buildings dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the wool and cloth trade brought considerable wealth to the area. Traditional settlements are characterised by organic street patterns, large churches and groups of colour-washed medieval houses with pegtile roofs interspersed with ones refronted with brick facades in Georgian or Victorian times. An intricate maze of narrow, winding lanes links settlements.*

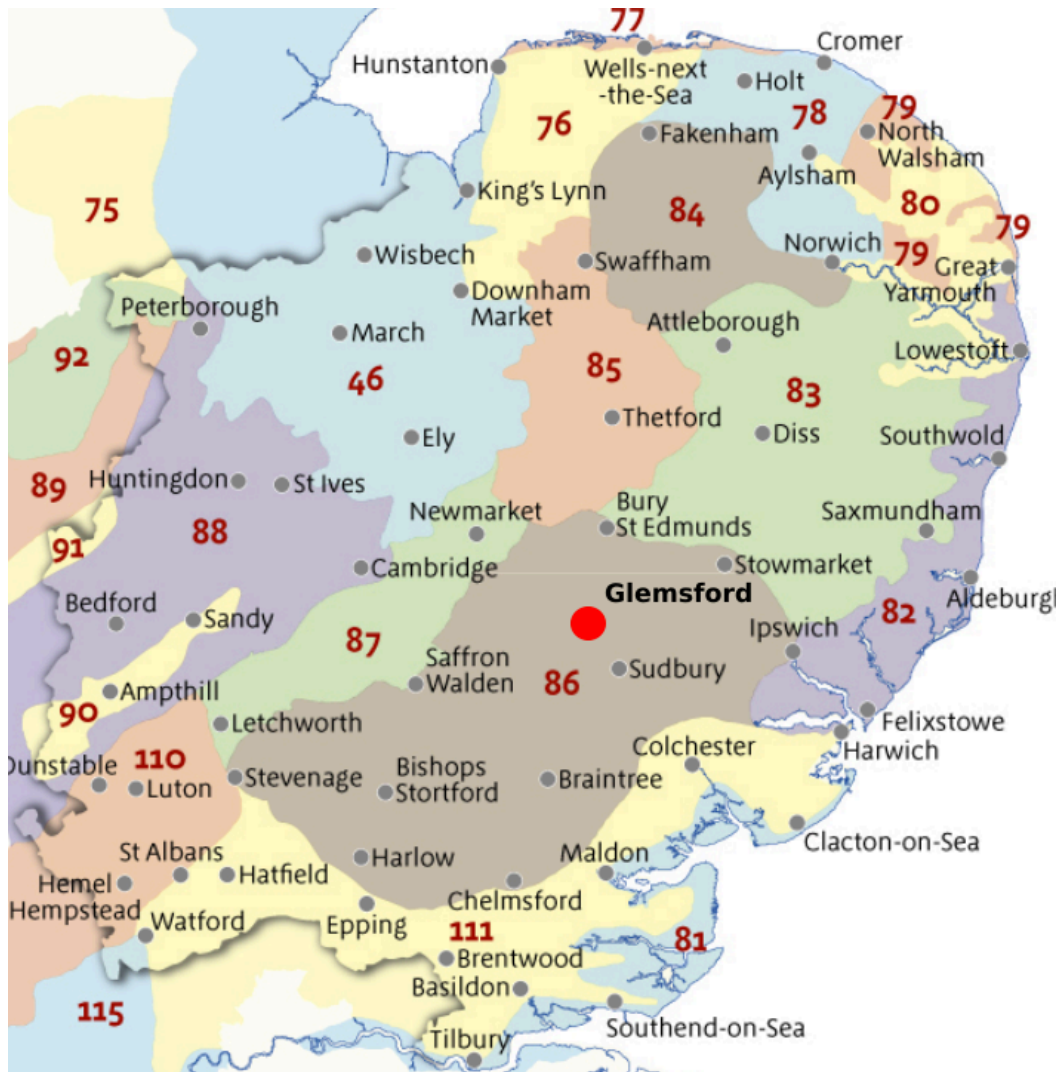


Figure 23.1: National Character Areas

*Semi-natural habitats of particular importance include sparsely scattered lowland meadows and ancient woodlands. Mosaics of valley floor habitats such as marsh, fen and wet woodland support European protected species including great crested newt, otter and pipistrelle bats, as well as the rare black poplar.*

*open yet wooded character is sufficiently endowed with copses and small woods to have wooded horizons, which give a large, distantly wooded character to the landscape – an impression that is sometimes missing at close quarters due to the loss of hedges and hedgerow trees.*

| National Character Area                   |   |   | Suffolk Character Areas          |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 86: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands | Key Characteristics   | Environmental Opportunities   |                                  | Key Characteristics   | Management Guidelines  |   |
|   | <p>An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts.</p> <p>nts of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.</p> <p>ast flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards.</p> <p>d wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.</p> <p>gricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.</p> <p>sites and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates dot the landscape, forming historical resources.</p> <p>s a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around ‘tyes’ (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. The NCA features a concentration of isolated moated farmsteads and numerous well-preserved medieval large villages.</p> <p>onal timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes they have been refronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks (‘Suffolk whites’). Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings.</p> <p>Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows</p> | <p>Maintain and enhance the character of this gently undulating, rural landscape by maintaining agricultural productivity and encouraging sustainable land management practices that protect and enhance the landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity assets and networks to benefit geodiversity, biodiversity, carbon storage and water quality, as well as the over-riding sense of place.</p> <p>Protect and enhance the area’s ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows, through the management of existing woods and the planting of new woods, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including timber provision, the regulation of soil erosion and the strengthening of the sense of place and history.</p> <p>Protect and enhance the area’s ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows, through the management of existing woods and the planting of new woods, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including timber provision, the regulation of soil erosion and the strengthening of the sense of place and history.</p> <p>Enhance the slow-flowing, winding rivers and their pastoral valley flood plains that provide linkages through the landscape, including redundant sand and gravel extraction sites, for their ecological, historical and recreational importance. This will support the operation of natural processes and their contribution to biodiversity, geodiversity, soil quality, water availability and regulating water flow and their function in contributing to the character of the area.</p> <p>Improve opportunities for people to enjoy and understand the distinctive assemblage of historic landscapes outside the AONB. Ensure that access and recreational resources are managed to be compatible with the tranquillity of the area and the special qualities of protected landscapes, while providing a valuable health, education and access resource</p> | 23: Undulating Ancient Farmlands | <p><b>A landscape of open undulating farmland with blocks of ancient woodland</b></p> <p>Undulating arable landscape</p> <p>Field pattern generally a random ancient pattern with occasional areas of regular fields associated with former mediaeval deer parks</p> <p>Oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees</p> <p>Studded with blocks of ancient woodland</p> <p>Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads</p> <p>Villages often associated with greens or former greens</p> <p>Rich stock of medieval and Tudor timber-framed and brick buildings and moated sites.</p> <p>A large scale landscape with long undulating open views, trees either in hedges or in woods always a prominent feature</p> <p>In the undulating landscape crop production, especially oilseeds, can be visually prominent</p> | <p>Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries</p> <p>Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting hedgerows</p> <p>Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees</p>   | <p>Maintain the extent and improve the condition of woodland cover with effective management</p> <p>Maintain and restore greens and commons</p>                                     |
|   |   |   | 18: Rolling Valley Farmlands     | <p>Gentle valley sides with some complex and steep slopes</p> <p>Deep well drained loamy soils</p> <p>Organic pattern of fields smaller than on the plateaux</p> <p>Distinct areas of regular field patterns</p> <p>A scattering of landscape parks</p> <p>Small ancient woodlands on the valley fringes</p> <p>Sunken lanes</p> <p>Large, often moated houses</p>  | <p>Maintain and restore the stock of moats and ponds in this landscape</p>   | <p>Increase the area of woodland cover; siting should be based on information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation and in consultation with the Archaeological Service.</p> |
|   |   |   | 26: Valley Meadowlands           | <p><b>Flat valley floor grasslands on silty and peat soils</b></p> <p>Flat landscapes of alluvium or peat on valley floors</p> <p>Grassland divided by a network of wet ditches</p> <p>Occasional carr woodland and plantations of poplar</p> <p>Occasional small reedbeds</p> <p>Unsettled</p> <p>Cattle grazed fields</p> <p>Fields converted to arable production</p>  | <p>Support continuation of traditional economic activities</p> <p>Restore and maintain grazing with cattle and sheep. The continuation of traditional agricultural practices is integral to the character and condition of these landscapes and grazing is often critical to the successful management of important wildlife sites.</p> <p>Restore and retain the pattern of drainage The pattern of meadows divided by ditches and dykes are a characteristic feature to maintained with sympathetic management. This will also deliver ecological benefits</p> <p>Maintain levels of grassland arable reversion though agri-environment schemes, or with the expansion of livestock enterprises, can help maintain the character of this landscape and also deliver ecological benefits</p> <p>Encourage and support appropriate planting and management of woodlands. These landscapes contain a proportion of wet and plantation woodland. While wet woodland is an important part of the habitat mix in this landscape excessive creation of plantation woodland should be avoided.</p> |   |

Table 1: National & County Level Character Areas

## 20. Suffolk County Landscape Character Areas

At this scale, mapped at 1:50,000, the 6 different character areas that include Suffolk at the National level are broken down into 31 different types 3 of which are to be found in the parish of Glemsford. They are:

- 23 Undulating Ancient Farmlands – most of the parish lies within this type which is on the higher ground above types 18 and 26
- 18 Rolling Valley Farmlands – bordering the river valleys above the floodplain
- 26 Valley Meadowlands – closely following the course of the rivers Stour and Glem

### 23 Undulating Ancient Farmlands:

*This typology occurs in only one character area bordering the Stour and Glem rivers but extending from Clare in the West to Lawshall in the east and as far north as Chedburgh. It is predominantly an area of ancient enclosure with an irregular pattern of fields bounded by large, long-established hedges. The historic pattern of field boundaries has been degraded through 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural rationalisation that has resulted in a large number of hedges being removed. However despite these changes the landscape maintains much of its historic character. In general there are long open views across this undulating landscape in which trees either in hedges or in woods are always a prominent feature.*

### 18 Rolling Valley Farmlands:

*These landscapes occur on the sides of the valleys that cut through the thick layer of chalky till deposited by the retreating icesheet of the Anglian Glaciation. Topography is mainly formed by the sloping sides, usually relatively gentle, but sometimes with surprisingly complex and steep slopes. The soils are mainly well-drained deep loams of the Ludford Series overlying glaciofluvial drift but in patches heavier Melford loams and deep clay soils of the Hanslope series on upper slopes. All have good arable potential. The landscape has small and medium sized fields on the valley sides with an organic form created by piecemeal enclosure. Field size tends to increase on the upper sides and plateau edges. The overall impression is of sinuous and organic boundaries around ancient enclosed fields. There is a preponderance of former manorial halls. Ancient woodland is mainly confined to the upper slopes and is mostly in relatively small parcels. The landscape type embraces some of the most famous views and sites of Suffolk (including) the Stour Valley which is internationally renowned as 'Constable Country'. Much of the landscape retains its historic patterns, of both agricultural and built environment.*

### 26 Valley Meadowlands:

*These are flat valley floors made up of seasonally wet clays overlying alluvial deposits and peat with some lakes created by the exploitation of underlying gravels. These landscapes are generally unsettled although there are occasional farmsteads on higher spots and some significant moated site. Historically the value of the meadows precluded their use for woodland except in the wettest areas where alder carrs were a more viable option but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century plantations, particularly of poplars or cricket-bat willows, were introduced. Some 'amenity' planting of trees in the valleys has also occurred which is out of character with the pattern, species and extent of tree cover of this landscape character type. These landscapes often form wonderful examples of pristine and picturesque meadows in a wider arable landscape and, if accessible, they can provide an oasis of enclosure and confined views, enhanced by the presence of cattle grazing. On drier sites agriculture is the dominant feature.*

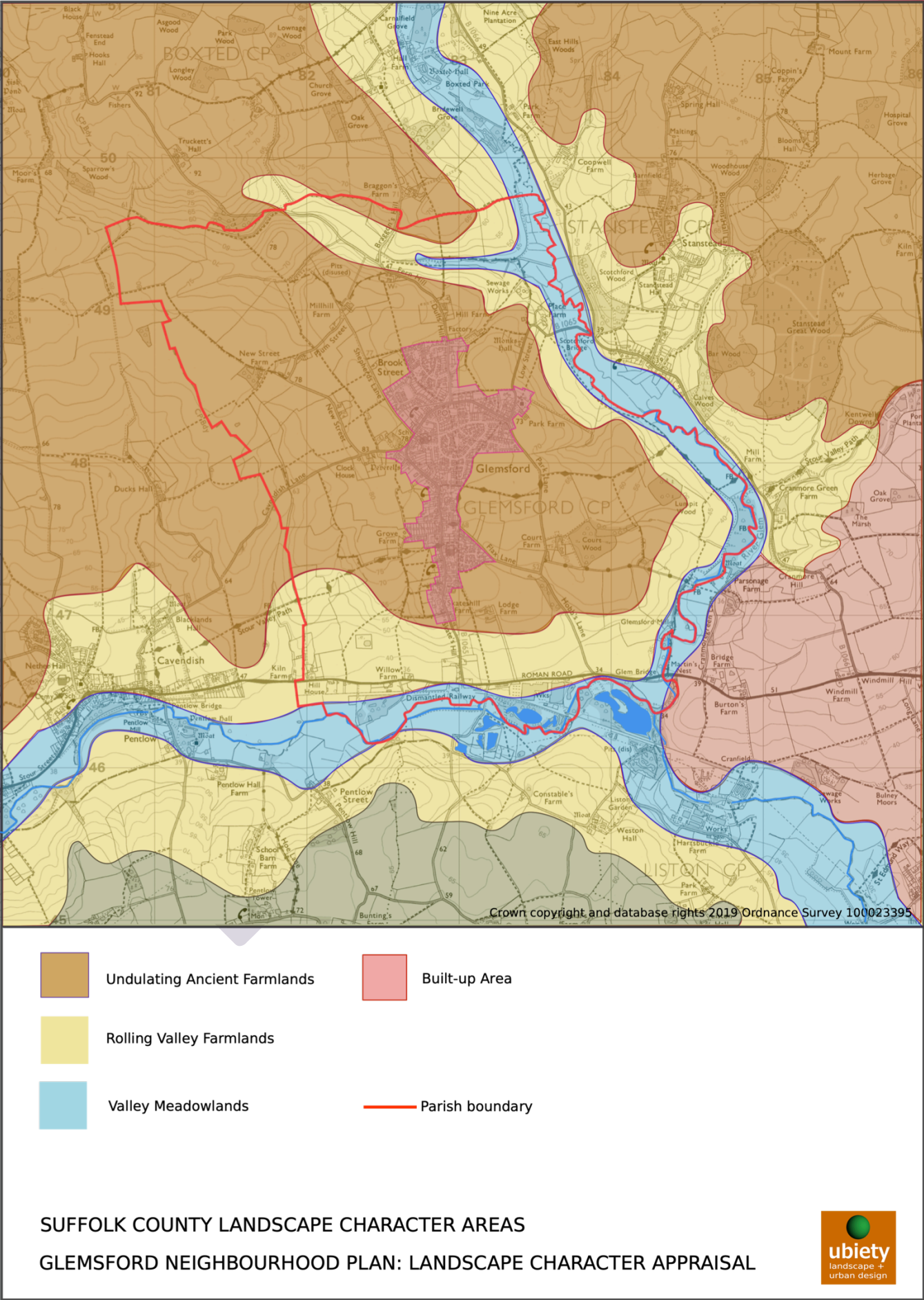


Figure 24.1

## 21. Neighbourhood Plan Character Areas

The County level study portrays a relatively simple pattern. The valleys of the rivers Stour and Glem, carved by glacial meltwaters, are characterised by narrow, flat, sedimentary flood-plains. The village sits on the boulder clay plateau above and these two, relatively flat character areas, are defined in part by the slopes that separate them. However the finer-grained survey carried out for this Appraisal found that this simple pattern did not always fit well with observations in the field. The river valley floors or 'Valley Meadowlands (26) are clearly observable and very well-defined, particularly in respect of topography / drainage but also land cover and other factors. The boundary between types 18 and 23 however were difficult to locate on the ground and the differences in descriptions for each were not so easy to match with observations. This study has therefore adopted more local character typologies that fit better with features discernible within the Neighbourhood Plan area. They are:

1. Glem Plateau: in location terms this equates approximately mostly to the Undulating Ancient Farmlands. It tends to occupy the higher ground although not exclusively and in the south it extends down below the 50m contour. The Farmlands of the County study may appear more undulating because of the scale at which they are considered but at the Neighbourhood Plan level substantial parts of this Type are flat. Nor does it have an 'ancient' appearance. Time-worn, irregular field boundaries are largely

absent. Open, expansive views and a sense of exposure are key attributes. Where the infrequent field boundaries have been retained they have hedges and are often associated with deep drainage ditches. Also to be found in both this and the Ancient Fields Type (below) are isolated ponds, as at Newlands Farm and Court Farm which are understood to have been created when the farms supported more livestock. It is unexpected to find ponds on the tops of hills but the heavy clay becomes impervious when puddled despite the chalky tilth below. The ponds are generally associated with trees and are very important for wildlife.



Figure 25.13: Glem Plateau

2. Glem Ancient Fields: This character type most closely equates to the Rolling Valley Farmlands of the County level study but differs in that it does not follow a simple contour line. Although it is mostly found at lower levels predominantly to the south and east of the village, it is also borders the settlement on the top of the plateau. The primary distinguishing feature between this and Glem Plateau is a sense of enclosure and intimacy. This derives mostly from vegetation – from the hedgerows that



Figure 25.2: Glem Ancient Fields

bound the smaller, irregular fields, but also sometimes from topography or a combination of the two. It generally occupies more sloping ground, often with complex slopes rather than with a simple, even gradient. The increased amounts of woody vegetation together with the complex slopes and irregular fields together create a more richly textured landscape than the Plateau. Oak, ash and field maple predominate.

**NOTE:** Glem Plateau and Glem Ancient Fields in particular share a number of attributes that combine to create a greater or lesser sense of enclosure. The distinction between greater or lesser enclosure is based on perceptual responses. In some areas there is distinct boundary, perhaps marked by a hedge on either side of which there is a clear difference. In other areas the boundary is more of a transition. Usually, depending on the direction of travel, the transition resolves itself to become one or other Type but in some instances a specific location may simply not lend itself to easy categorisation and defining a boundary can then be a matter of personal judgement. The Landscape Character Area map identifies transitional areas with a 'blurred' boundary created by overlaying adjacent shades of colour

3. Shepherds Valley: Unlike the first two Types this one is associated with a single location only. Shepherds Valley (the name attributed by this study) is much more narrow than the Glem Valley or Stour Valley. As a consequence views are contained principally by topography and slopes can be steeper. Vantage points offer views along the axis of the valley that are often framed by the valley sides. This reinforces a scenic quality to this landscape type and there is a rhythm to the arrangement of vegetated boundaries to fields. Duff lane becomes single track and, cut into the slope, it does not impinge on the scene. The hedges, sometimes studded with trees, can lend emphasis to the rolling slopes with the eye drawn along the line intermittently flowing and deeply incised brook that feeds into the river Glem, marked out from the arable fields by natural vegetation for which it provides a refuge.



4 Glem River Plain: This is also a single, defined character area, but instead of comprising an assemblage of units like Shepherds Valley it comprises a single topographical unit – the valley floor. The edge of this area is marked by an abrupt change from a flat plain to sloping valley sides. Some drier areas are cropped but poor drainage and flooding has favoured 'water meadows' where wetland perennials predominate with some wetland shrubs and trees also. Generally unsettled apart occasional dwellings.



5. Stour River Plain: At the County level this Type would include the Glem River Plain and they do both share many key features. In the Neighbourhood Plan Area however there are distinct differences between the two arising largely from the greater density of tree cover (and therefore more enclosed nature) and the mostly settled character of the Stour Plain which includes the Avent factory site as well as dwellings with large gardens. It also includes an SSSI based on old water-filled gravel workings but otherwise the vegetation in garden areas can be less natural.



| CHARACTER TYPE             | TOPOGRAPHY   | LAND COVER / VEGETATION  | ENCLOSURE/ SCENIC QUALITY  | PATTERN / TEXTURE   | NOTES   | SETTLEMENT   |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Glem Plateau</b>        | Predominantly on higher ground but not exclusively. Flat or gently sloping with an even grade  | Relatively large-scale arable fields. Infrequent hedgerows and few trees. Isolated farms and dwellings, sometimes in clusters, are associated with tree planting. Includes at least one substantial pond with its own vegetation and some more exotic tree species.  | Open views, generally long distance, and a strong sense of exposure. Ground level often forming the horizon from some aspects. Views of the valley floors are often hidden from the higher vantage points so that an appreciation of the changes in elevation, as well as roads and settlements, may not be present leaving a sense of tranquillity and isolation. | Large scale, generally rectilinear boundaries producing a smooth texture to the landscape   | Park Farm: the name implies that there had been medieval deer park here which would have been open in character with associated woodland. | Main settlement occupies adjacent plateau  |
| <b>Glem Ancient Fields</b> | Occupying the more complex, rolling slopes above the valley floor but also on the highest ground and areas without slope. Frequent deep ditches that have spared this Type from field amalgamation and provided a refuge for hedgerows and associated trees. | Mosltly arable, some paddocks. Smaller scale fields more frequently enclosed with hedges, sometimes containing trees and woodland in occasional blocks (including ancient woodland) and spinneys. Includes at least one substantial pond with its own vegetation and some more exotic tree species. Field maple, hazel, oak and ash, as well as cyclical regenerating elm in hedgerows from trees now lost to disease. | A sense of enclosure, mostly from vegetation (hedges and woods) but also by combination or substitution with landform. More varied than the Plateau Type and therefore with a greater scenic quality.  | Fields irregular in shape and size, generally bounded by ancient ditches and hedges with more vegetation making for a more richly textured landscape. Narrow roads and sunken lanes also tend to have vegetated banks when cut into the slopes. |   | Generally not settled. Isolated farm buildings and some clusters   |
| <b>Shepherds Valley</b>    | Embracing the whole of a narrow valley from the watershed down to the brook. Valley sides are steep in places and the narrow, flat floor of the valley is sometimes absent.  | Arable fields, not rectilinear but fairly regular in size and shape with hedgerows in the lower valley. The brook is mostly incised a few metres but occasionally much more (up to over 20m) offering protection for natural vegetation.   | Marked scenic quality. Views channelled along valley axis over convex slopes, relatively steep in parts, rolling down from plateau and mirrored across valley. Vegetated field/road boundaries adding interest and absence of visual detractors.   | Some regularity of pattern providing a sense of rhythm and restful intimacy   | All of this Type sits within the Stour Valley Project Area  | Generally not settled other than isolated buildings  |
| <b>Glem River Plain</b>    | Flat, low-lying, relatively narrow and slightly sinuous  | Wildflower meadows in floodplain. Trees more abundant than on slopes above and including wetlands species such as poplar and willow. Some crops on drier areas   | Enclosed. Low elevation and vegetation contains views  | No discernible pattern. Rich texture with meandering stream, associated vegetation, habitation  |   | Generally not settled other than isolated dwellings and small groups   |
| <b>Stour River Plain</b>   | Flat, low-lying, relatively narrow and slightly sinuous  | Private garden land with many trees/ spinneys. SSSI wetland/water  | Very enclosed. Low elevation, relatively dense elevation and buildings all contain views.  | No discernible pattern. Rich texture with meandering stream, flooded ex gravel workings, associated vegetation, habitation and employment uses  | South of the A1092. The disused railway line is still visible in parts<br>SSSI: ex gravel workings flooded; 22 species of dragonfly       | Settled, Dwellings and Avent Factory Site. Above the immediate flood plain this area may have had the longest history of settlement. |
| <b>Transitional</b>        | This is not a Landscape Character Type but it is recognized that in some areas there is a gradual transition from one Type to another, or simply a blend of attributes, that makes categorization inappropriate.   |  |  |   |   |  |

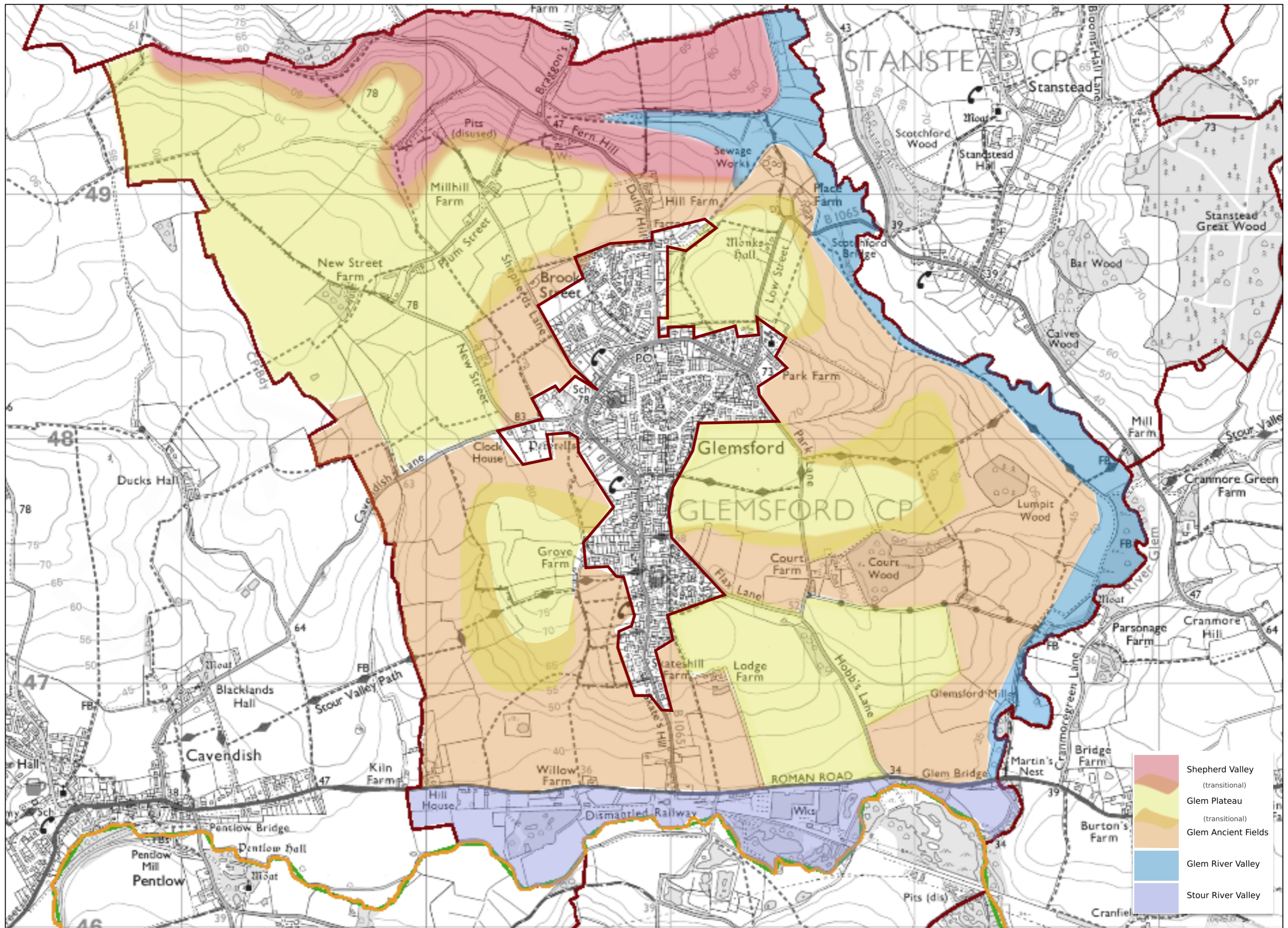


Figure 25.6: Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Character Areas

## Built Environment

### 22. Village Layout

The village occupies the high ground and is arranged along a primary route (B1065) linking Skates Hill and Low Street providing a main artery off which secondary roads and cul-de-sacs branch. The settlement grew from small separate hamlets, centred around the Greens or 'Tyes' and the primary route connected these and created a path for the growth of the village. The designated Conservation Area follows this route and its branch to the north along Brook Street. More recent development has been largely in the form of 'estates' or phases of 'volume house building' occupying sites either side of the primary route.

There is no obvious, single focus or centre to the village and key community assets occur at different points along the circuitous primary route. In this way the primary route, although car-focussed, knits together the diverse elements of the village. The sense of spaces created by enclosing building lines is fractured. In places the road can be narrow with buildings abutting the pavement. In other places there are gaps or buildings are set back at varying distances so that a sense of enclosure is absent. Such changes in layout can be abrupt. The residential 'estates' tend to have a greater sense of coherence in that layouts are more ordered and styles more similar but this does not equate to more robust character. In addition to the estates there are smaller 'enclaves' of dwellings accessed via narrow lanes that are often 'shared' (vehicles and pedestrians) and generally pre-dating more extensive residential development. As can be seen in the figure opposite there are parts of the settlement (to the north-east and the west) where the Conservation Area remains in close proximity to the surrounding countryside rather than separated by new development. This is an important relationship as the landscape gives meaning to the historic core, and vice versa.

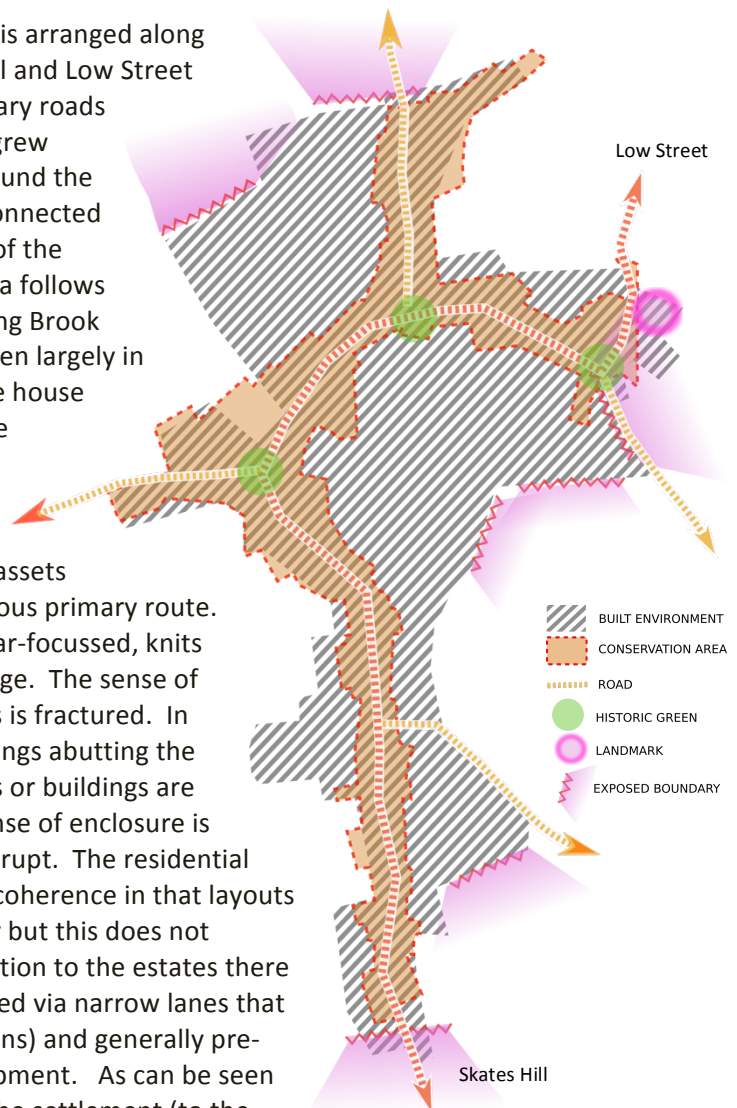


Fig.26.1: Settlement Form

### 23 Conservation Area

The Conservation Area was designated by West Suffolk County Council in 1973 and its boundary revised by Babergh District Council in 2001. A Conservation Area Appraisal was published by BDC in 2007. The Appraisal describes the village as:

*".. a large village, most of which is strung out along about 2km of road... essentially linear in its historic form, punctuated at its northern end by the three Greens at Tye Green, Fair Green and Churchgate... Within Egremont Street many buildings are fairly tightly packed onto the street giving a good sense of enclosure and achieving an almost urban feel as the street winds gently back and forth... to the north the greens provide three foci of a more rural and relaxed settlement pattern Any one of these would be an asset to a typical Suffolk village, and their rural quality should be maintained."*

*The listed buildings in Glemsford fall roughly into four separate clusters that represent the areas of historic settlement.*

*Relationship to Open Countryside:*

*Most of Glemsford's recent growth has been the housing estates that fill in the area between Tye Green and Bell's Lane, the geographical centre of the village. Some of these areas of housing abut rather uneasily with the adjoining countryside, such as on the approach to the village up Park Lane, where assorted rear gardens back onto fields. The outer edges therefore remain much as they were especially to the west and north with countryside immediately behind one plot deep development.*

*There are also some "smaller light industrial buildings, mostly early 20<sup>th</sup> C., at various locations around the village, which maintain Glemsford's slightly industrial feel."*

**Loss, Intrusion & Damage**

*The industrial nature of the village is one of Glemsford's important qualities but the industrial buildings of more recent times let it down. Housing has also produced some intrusions of a non-traditional nature; some of the modern infill, especially that in the form of bungalows, is less appropriate as part of a traditional Suffolk village. In addition the visibility splays giving access to estates have not always been handled sensitively, leaving large gaps in the street scene.*

## **24. Built Environment - Character**

Character in the built environment generally focuses on qualities of 'distinctiveness' as opposed to what is more common or ubiquitous. A built environment with a unique sense of place is usually valued above one that is difficult to distinguish from other places where building styles and layouts have been replicated without much regard to local conditions. There is a strong tendency for new development to erode character by replication for reasons that include:

- the economies of scale impels developers to produce standard house designs, and preferably on large sites, using standard materials and products
- apart from economic considerations developers are averse to risk/change and prefer the 'tried and trusted' and this also facilitates financing
- the highways authority often require developers to use standard road layouts (in accordance with Design Bulletin 32) as this is seen as 'safe' for road users

Thus instilling character into new development is often resisted and can be difficult to achieve. The Conservation Area Appraisal points to the fact that the character of Glemsford, which has accommodated substantial development in recent decades, has suffered. The late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing 'estates' generally exhibit many standardising features that dilute character. There have been advances in recent decades and Crownfield Road is more successful at using buildings to define spaces. On the other hand the constraints of a particular site, such as the narrow Foundry Lane site, have sometimes not been addressed with imagination.



Fig. 24.1 new development with character in Glemsford

Glemsford also has some very significant heritage assets, particularly in its Listed Buildings. These act to impose a 'sense of place' but, not infrequently, they are interspersed with buildings that pull in the opposite direction. Along Egremont Street in particular it is not easy to ascribe a coherent character owing to the juxtaposition of diverse architectural

styles and variations in layout. A wide range of front boundary treatments has also been explored with some loss of coherence as a result. The Conservation Area Appraisal also draws attention to Glemsford's industrial heritage. Some former factories have been retained and converted to residential use and these schemes have been particularly successful at retaining and building on character. The short narrow lanes with restricted access have not facilitated road construction to DB32 Standards and these locations also have been relatively successful at retaining a strong sense of place although in some instances the fabric of the public realm has not been well-maintained.



Fig. 24.2: Example of a Heritage Asset in Glemsford

There may be opportunities in the future to build or repair character in the built environment, including:

Designate Glemsford as a 20mph zone. It is not a natural route for through-traffic and the village itself is walkable so there is limited need to retain the hg. This would not only help calm traffic but also allow for more varied and pedestrian friendly solutions for the highway in the future

Promote the network of footpaths/rights of way and integrate them in future development as green corridors and seek to enhance pedestrian routes to community facilities

Explore grant aid (e.g Historic England's Partnership Scheme for Conservation Areas) for defined projects, such as - a unifying front boundary treatment to lengths of Victorian terrace

Explore alternatives to large-scale, single-developer estates, such as self-build and co-housing

Use the smaller older lanes and closes as design templates for new development

Seek to enhance the historic greens e.g. by reducing highway and parking where possible

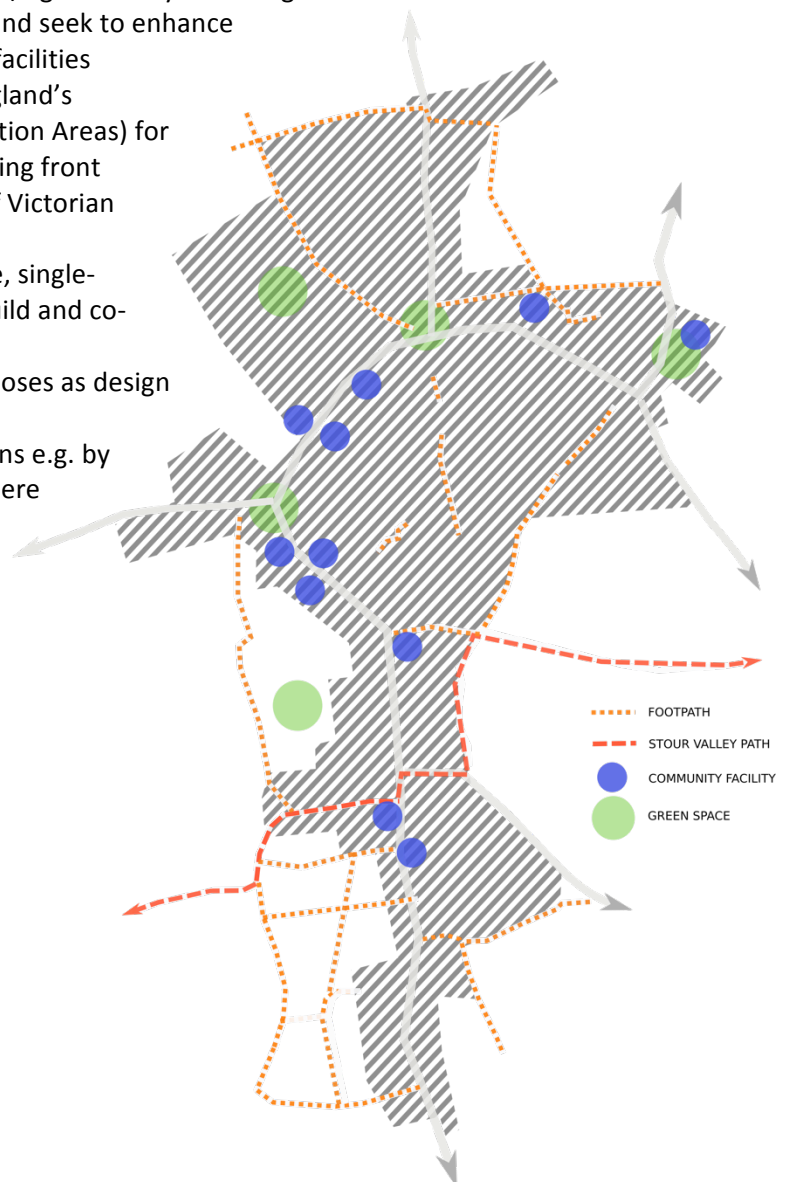
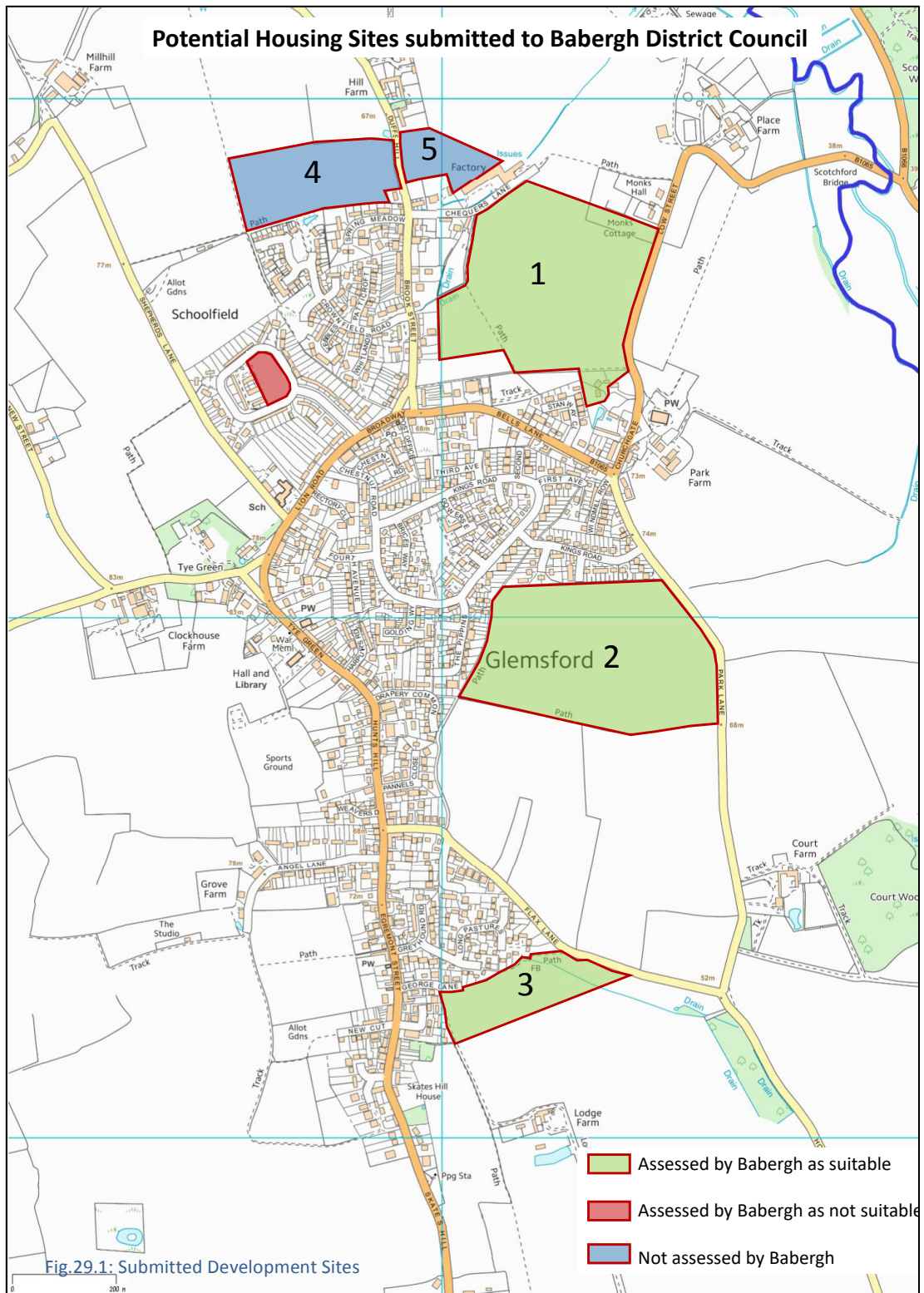


Fig.28.3: Footpath Network

## LANDSCAPE CAPACITY

### 25 Sites to be Assessed

A number sites have been submitted to Babergh for assessment in terms of potential residential development as shown below.



Site 1, to the west of Low Street, has been the subject of a recent outline application for 136 dwellings (DC/18/01526). Permission was refused for a number of reasons including impact on the landscape (as discussed further below). Landscape issues have been examined in

depth, in the applicant's submission (which included an LVIA), the consultation process and the Planning Authorities decision. This study is not positioned to add further to matters already examined in detail therefore Site 1 is not included in this assessment. The other 4 sites that have not been deemed unsuitable (numbered 2-5 above) are assessed here in terms of landscape capacity for development. This assessment does not take account of other planning issues that may affect the acceptability or otherwise of development such as access or other impacts. Moreover this is a generic assessment and it can only consider landscape capacity in the broadest terms. It is not intended as a substitute for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that can take account of the full circumstances of specific proposals.

## 26 Methodology

Landscape Capacity is defined as

*"the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type"*<sup>15</sup>

It is a function of the sensitivity of that landscape, the nature and scale of change, and the way in which that landscape might be valued. Assessments of sensitivity should take account of both the sensitivity of the landscape as a resource and its visual sensitivity. The more sensitive and valued the landscape, the lower its capacity to accommodate change of a certain nature or scale.

For the purposes of this study it is assumed that development, if proposed, would take the form of residential uses only and of a similar nature to recent developments, i.e. predominantly 2-storey dwellings in a density range of 30 to 40 dwellings/ha.

## 27 Landscape Value

Value can be attached to different landscapes by different stakeholders and for a variety of reasons and, as stated in S.22 above, landscape characterisation starts from the premise that all landscapes have value. However value is a relative quality and some landscapes may be valued more than others. GLVIA3 states that landscape designations are usually the starting point in understanding landscape value, but the value can also be attached to undesignated landscapes. At a certain level they may be described as 'Valued Landscapes'. This term was introduced by the NPPF in 2012 and is retained in the 2024 version (paragraph 187, see Section 6 above). It constitutes a material consideration in planning policy and decision making. In issuing a refusal in respect a planning application (DC/18/01526) the Local Planning Authority stated its opinion that, for an undefined area to the north of the village:

*"We consider that the presence of the historic Church, the gently rolling landform, the adjacent SLA designation, the lack of visible development on the skyline and the long views out over the Glem Valley (collectively) elevates the landscape value to the north of Glemsford above ordinary to that of a Valued Landscape."* (At the time of the decision a Special Landscape Area was designated in the Local Plan that covered land to the east of the built-up area of the village. Joint Local Plan Part 1 removed this designation and Policy LP17 provides a framework for the consideration of impact on the basis that all landscapes have value and where development proposals must demonstrate sympathy with local character and distinctiveness.)

A Planning Appeal<sup>16</sup> has found that to be a 'Valued Landscape' land has to show some demonstrable physical attribute rather than simply be popular. GLVIA3<sup>17</sup> states *"a stated strategy of landscape conservation is usually a good indicator..[of particularly valued landscape]*. Approximately 80% of the Parish of Glemsford, including all of the sites identified above, is within the Stour Valley Project Area which means that a strategy of landscape conservation is in place.

<sup>15</sup> Topic Paper 6 Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity, The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 2004

<sup>16</sup> Appeal Reference APP/1625/A/13/2207324

<sup>17</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.; Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) 5.27

GLVIA3 also notes the following factors as ‘generally agreed’ to influence value:

- Landscape quality or condition (how in tact the landscape is)
- Scenic quality (appealing to the senses)
- Rarity (a rare type or including rare elements or features)
- Representativeness (an important example of something)
- Conservation interests (wildlife, historical or cultural)
- Recreation value (recreational activity)
- Perceptual aspects (e.g. wildness or tranquillity)
- Associations (e.g. with an artist or event in history)

| LANDSCAPE VALUE | TYPICAL CRITERIA  |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>HIGH</b>     | Designated at international / national level<br>Provides setting for nationally valued buildings or cultural features<br>Strong cultural associations<br>Strong conservation interests<br>Very attractive and rare scenic quality<br>Strong sense of remoteness and tranquility |
| <b>MODERATE</b> | Designated at local / regional level<br>Provides setting for nationally valued buildings or cultural features<br>Some cultural associations<br>Some conservation interests<br>Commonplace landscape with some scenic quality<br>Moderate sense of remoteness and tranquility    |
| <b>LOW</b>      | No landscape designations<br>No / few cultural associations<br>No / little conservation interest<br>Limited areas of scenic quality<br>No sense of remoteness / tranquility<br>Few or no aesthetic factors contributing towards character and would benefit from restoration    |

## 28 Landscape Character Sensitivity

The sensitivity of landscape to development is defined in the Guidance on Landscape Character Assessment<sup>2</sup> as:

*“the extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character”*

This should take account of:

- individual elements that contribute to character, their significance and vulnerability to change
- overall quality and condition of the landscape
- aesthetic aspect of landscape character

Criteria for identifying landscape sensitivity are:

| LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY | TYPICAL CRITERIA  |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>HIGH</b>           | Strong pattern and/or extent of semi-natural habitat<br>Strong enclosure pattern and/or evidence of historic field boundaries<br>Consistently good quality or condition<br>Highly representative of surrounding character<br>A number of aesthetic factors contributing towards character |
| <b>MODERATE</b>       | Moderate pattern and/or extent of semi-natural habitat<br>Some enclosure pattern<br>Consistently moderate quality or condition<br>Coherent landscape<br>Landscape makes some contribution to surrounding character<br>Some aesthetic factors contributing towards character               |
| <b>LOW</b>            | Minimal or no semi-natural habitat<br>Poor enclosure pattern<br>Consistently poor quality or condition<br>Landscape makes little or no contribution to surrounding character<br>Few or no aesthetic factors contributing towards character  |

## 29 Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is a function of the visual 'receptors' (the viewers – the number of people that might view the area in question, how much that view occupies their outlook

Assessments of visual sensitivity should take account of:

- the probability of change being highly visible, based particularly on the nature of the landscape and the extent of tree cover
- the numbers of people likely to perceive any changes and their reasons for being in the landscape
- potential for mitigation with adverse consequences

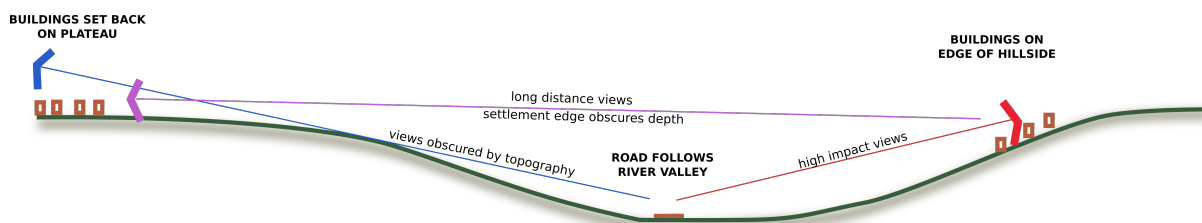
Criteria for identifying visual sensitivity are:

| VISUAL SENSITIVITY | TYPICAL CRITERIA   |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>HIGH</b>        | Open landscape with limited intervening landform, built development and/or vegetation cover<br>Extensive views within and to/from the landscape<br>Large number of visual receptors<br>Highly sensitive receptors such as residential properties, users of public rights of way or nationally designated landscapes<br>No/limited scope for mitigation |
| <b>MODERATE</b>    | Partially enclosed with some intervening landform/ buildings/ vegetation cover<br>Some views within and to/from the landscape<br>Moderate number of visual receptors<br>Moderately sensitive receptors people working outdoors or using sports/recreational facilities where focus is not primarily engaged with view<br>Some scope for mitigation     |
| <b>LOW</b>         | Enclosed landscape with intervening landform, built development and/or vegetation cover<br>Contained views – few visual receptors<br>Low sensitivity receptors such as vehicular traffic, people at work<br>Good scope for mitigation  |

It has been noted in several documents that much of the built environment of Glemsford is not highly visible from surrounding areas and this is borne out by the representative views in Appendix A. It has been suggested (Babergh Landscape Guidelines) that this reduced visibility is owing to tree cover lining the access roads and the roads in the bordering valleys. Joint Babergh & Mid Suffolk Landscape Guidance (2015):

*“all lanes leading into Glemsford consist of mature hedges and trees which soften the edges of the village. Although Glemsford is in an elevated location surrounded by agricultural fields the surrounding woodlands and nearby mature planting provides screening from the roads.”*

This is the case in part but topography has a key role. Much of the plateau is not visible from the valley floor because of topography while higher level viewpoints are much further way and the full depth of development is often hidden by buildings in the foreground.



Thus buildings occupying the slopes, particularly the upper slopes, are more visible and generally from viewpoints that are closer. However this is a broad principle and for any particular location visibility from different viewpoints would need to be tested.


### 30 Site Assessments


Using the typical criteria outlined in S.32 judgements are made on Landscape Value so that this factor can be ranked from Low to High for each site. The same is done for Visual Sensitivity and Landscape Sensitivity and these two factors are combined to arrive at a judgement for Sensitivity overall.

SITE 2

West of Park Lane

|                       |   |               |                   |
|-----------------------|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Landscape Value       | Inside SVPA and abuts SLA to east<br>Buffered from Conservation Area<br>Long-distance Stour Valley Footpath along south boundary<br>Not rare; not tranquil; little conservation interest<br>Scenic value derives from distant views out   |               | Medium / Med-High |
| Landscape Sensitivity | Within Glem Plateau, level and open<br>Not tranquil – proximity to existing housing<br>Rural aspect is open and not enclosed<br>No semi-natural habitat   | Medium / Low  | Medium            |
| Visual Sensitivity    | Foreground views from existing housing<br>Open and exposed with long distance views into site from east side of Glem valley but within influence of existing settlement boundary – potential for mitigation<br>Eastern part close to brow of hill and exposure to valley below and B1066<br>Long-distance path on south boundary<br>Some scope for mitigation with new planting | Medium / High |                   |

| SITE 3   | South-west of Flax Lane  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
|  |  |                     |
| <b>Landscape Value</b>   | Inside SVPA and close to SLA to east<br>Close to but not adjacent Conservation Area<br>Not rare; not tranquil; minor conservation interest (ditch in east)<br>Scenic value derives largely from distant views out, also topography (gently rolling)  | <b>Medium</b>       |
| <b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>   | Within Glem Plateau, characteristic of the area, level and open<br>No cultural associations<br>Negligible semi-natural habitat   | <b>Medium / Low</b> |
| <b>Visual Sensitivity</b>  | Foreground views from existing housing<br>Open and exposed with long distance views into site from south side of Stour valley but within influence of existing settlement boundary – potential for mitigation<br>Some inter-visibility with Conservation Area<br>Footpaths on edge of countryside to north and west<br>Some scope for mitigation with new planting | <b>Medium</b>       |
|  |  | <b>Medium</b>       |

| SITE 4   | North of Crownfield Road   |                      |
|--|--|----------------------|
|  |  |                      |
| <b>Landscape Value</b>   | Inside SVPA and mostly visually separated from SLA<br>Not rare; not tranquil; very little conservation interest<br>Site is north of village 'envelope', rural character with open countryside on 3 sides<br>Rights of way border 2 sides (south and west)  | <b>Medium</b>        |
| <b>Landscape Sensitivity</b>   | Within Glem Ancient Fields/Transitional character type<br>Land rises slightly to north and whilst providing some moderate enclosure this also means it forms a part of a setting from within the village<br>Landscape is coherent and in good condition, no visual detractors  | <b>Medium</b>        |
| <b>Visual Sensitivity</b>  | Within visual influence of existing settlement boundary to south<br>Land slopes to south and east and site appears visually contained and sheltered near ground level but first floor / roofscape on higher ground likely to be visible over wide area (including Conservation Area – cemetery), also increases visibility from residential areas within village | <b>Medium / high</b> |
| <b>Medium</b>  |  |                      |

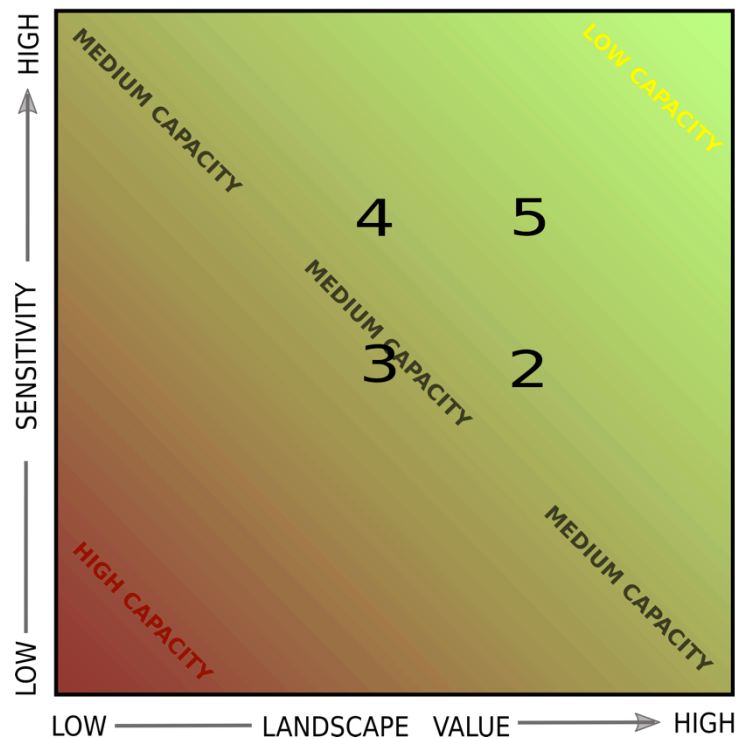
SITE 5

North of Chequers Lane

|                       |  |               |                   |
|-----------------------|--|---------------|-------------------|
| Landscape Value       | Inside SVPA and abuts to SLA to north<br>Abuts Conservation Area and Grade II* Listed property to south<br>Not rare; not tranquil; minor conservation interest (hedge to west boundary)<br>Some scenic quality from rolling topography and sense of enclosure  |               | Medium / Med-High |
| Landscape Sensitivity | Within Glem Ancient Fields<br>Moderate pattern and/or extent of semi-natural habitat<br>Some enclosure pattern<br>Consistently moderate quality or condition<br>Coherent landscape<br>Landscape makes some contribution to surrounding character<br>Some aesthetic factors contributing towards character, rolling topography with wooded margins                    | Medium / High | Medium / High     |
| Visual Sensitivity    | Abuts Conservation Area, Grade II* Listed property and SLA<br>Partially enclosed with some intervening landform/ buildings/ vegetation cover<br>Some views within and to/from the landscape<br>Moderate number of visual receptors<br>Moderately sensitive receptors - people on rights of way, Foreground views from residential areas<br>Some scope for mitigation | Medium / High |                   |

### 31 Capacity

Judgements on Sensitivity and Landscape Value are plotted on the X and Y axis of a graph to arrive at an indicative Capacity for development as envisaged. . When there are multiple sites to assess it can be helpful to show them all on a single graph to facilitate comparison.



**Low Capacity:** new development would have a significant and adverse impact on landscape character. Some very small-scale development may have an acceptable impact but it should have regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.

**Low/medium Capacity:** a minimal amount of development can be accommodated in limited situations, providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas

**Medium Capacity:** The area could be able to accommodate new development in some parts providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. There are landscape constraints and therefore the key landscape characteristics should be retained and enhanced.

**Medium/High Capacity:** The area is able to accommodate larger amounts of development providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. Certain landscape and visual features may require protection.

**High Capacity:** much of the area is able to accommodate significant areas of development, providing it has regard to the setting and form of the existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Glemsford has a distinctive setting on elevated land bordered by well-defined valleys on 3 sides. The topography disguises the size of the settlement from surrounding viewpoints while affording expansive views out across a rural and often tranquil scene. The village has a long history as a settlement and deep connections with the surrounding countryside as well as a landscape that retains historical characteristics. But recent decades have also seen significant erosion of character both in the built environment, where substantial amounts of new housing has been in the form of relatively large estates, and in the landscape where hedgerows have been removed, fields amalgamated and some storage buildings erected.

There is evidence that much of the surrounding landscape is valued and that it is sensitive to a greater or lesser extent depending on location. There is some capacity for further development but this should be undertaken with greater regard for local character than has been the case in the past. Smaller scale residential areas accessed through narrow lanes is a feature of the village and may offer a template for future development. Less common forms of developments, such as self-build and co-housing, might also reduce loss of character. The sites currently proposed for development are relatively large, inviting larger-scale development, however some parts of some sites are more sensitive than others and this could be a limiting factor.

Whether or not further development takes place there is scope for enhancement of the character of the landscape and the village. This could include:

- (i) Initiatives to enhance the landscape
  - Tree planting, including new woodland
  - Reinstall hedgerows
  - Conserve wetland biodiversity in the river valleys
- (ii) Initiatives to reinstate features of the Conservation Area, e.g.
  - Reduction of highways around the historic Greens or Tyes
  - Restoring integrity to Victorian terraces with new front boundaries
  - Prepare Design Statements for different parts or elements of the Conservation Area to encourage and direct repair of the fabric in a coherent manner, possibly in concert with grant applications
- (iii) Initiatives to enhance integration of the wider village, e.g.:
  - Plan for integrated footpaths within green corridors
  - Introduce a 20mph zone for the village as a whole

Further development can also bring new opportunities. The New Homes Bonus Scheme could help towards delivery the above objectives. New development is also strongly linked with issues of landscape and the wider environment and it should:

- Ensure opportunities for mitigation of adverse landscape effects are fully utilised
- Incorporate Sustainable Drainage (SUDS) that is well-integrated and enhances landscape and biodiversity
- Offsetting carbon footprint with sequestration (e.g. tree planting and biofuel production which could in turn help to power new homes).

This study finds that new development is most likely to have a moderately negative impact on the landscape but that potential for other benefits affecting landscape, if delivered in full, could be weighed in the balance.