

# LAVENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2



## PART C LANDSCAPE CHARACTER & SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT 2023

Incorporating justification for  
Local Area of Landscape Sensitivity and Defined Views policies



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# 1.1. Introduction

1. Lavenham first commissioned a parish landscape character and sensitivity assessment in 2015. These were published and presented, separately, as evidence documents supporting the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan (LNP), which was 'made' in September 2016, the first Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted in Suffolk. The Plan now forms part of the development plan framework for the District and is being used to manage change and determine planning applications in Lavenham.
2. The parish Working Group wished to put landscape at the heart of their plan because the landscape setting of Lavenham is so important to this unique and historic village. It forms an essential component of the village's function as a tourist destination and provides the backdrop to its iconic views. With the economy so hinged on tourism, protecting the assets on which the industry is based is important.
3. The landscape also has significant value in terms of its natural capital - its soils, its ecosystems, its processes. Natural capital refers to the elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services, such as recreation, wildlife habitat, flood risk reduction, and carbon capture. It is related to the concept of green infrastructure, which focuses on the idea that natural features should be planned and managed as networks that deliver value for people.
4. The landscape is highly valued by those who live and work in this rural part of Suffolk. Lavenham is a thriving working village, not a living museum, and faces continuous pressure to provide new housing, especially for its young, working families who struggle to afford to live there. It is imperative that any new developments are delivered without damaging the special historic character of the village or its landscape setting.
5. This document aims to provide an evidence-based resource to help protect sensitive areas of the parish and, where development is allowed to come forward, to promote context-sensitive design responses.

## Context for this updated report

6. The original Landscape Character Assessment was prepared for Lavenham Parish Council in 2015/2016 by this author. It was supported by two further separate documents. A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment report, and a Defined Views document, put together by the parish's Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. The latter two documents had parallel purposes in that they sought to define aspects of value in order that they could be identified and protected via Neighbourhood Plan policy, as part of the drive to place landscape, heritage and sense of place at the heart of development management.

7. Over the first 7 years, the three documents together proved useful in several ways. As well as helping shape the Neighbourhood Plan's original 2016 policies, they proved useful as a tool for the parish and district council in the negotiation of and responses to planning applications. They were also used by developers seeking to demonstrate responsive approaches to development (with mixed success).

## 2023 Neighbourhood Plan revision

8. The first Neighbourhood Plan was intended to cover a period from 2016 to 2031, although the parish are now preparing a revision to their Plan. There is no requirement to update a neighbourhood plan but since its adoption there have been a number of changes that the Working Group want to see reflected. An updating of the evidence base is, therefore, timely.
9. The changes include a major update of the Local Plan at District level, with associated loss of landscape related policy, as well as updated guidance relating to landscape sensitivity assessment. Furthermore, there have been notable physical changes to the



New houses along the skyline at Osier View

Settlement	Value	Susceptibility	Overall assessment	Notes
Lavenham	High	Medium/High	High	Lavenham is an exceptionally significant medieval market town, which is notable for both the extent and quality of the surviving built form. The historic core including the High Street, Water Street and the Market Square are of very high value. However the settlement has seen unsympathetic development to the northern, southern and western peripheries, which has altered the sense of arrival in the settlement, and divided the settlement from the surrounding landscape. There are also several areas of unsuitable backland development.

village itself, with a relatively large number of new houses added at various locations around the village edges over the past 7 years, and the village continues to face pressure for further development. The update also provides an opportunity to review the effect of the LNP policies on the quality of development that has come forward in recently delivered schemes and make adjustments as needed.

10. The policy and guidance-related change includes:

- The new Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 (JLP1) was made (adopted) in November 2023, and Part 2 will be completed at a later date.
- The JLP1 policy relating to landscape now has a landscape character based approach. One implication of this is that Special Landscape Areas (old Local Plan Policy CR04) has been phased out. The Brett Special Landscape Area covered the valleysides east of Lavenham, but this layer of policy protection no longer exists at District level.
- Joint Landscape Guidance was issued by Babergh and Mid Suffolk in 2015.
- New guidance was issued for Landscape Sensitivity Assessment in July 2019. (‘An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment. Christine Tudor Natural England’)

11. There is also an urgent and renewed imperative to deal with climate change and truly promote sustainable development. Sustainable development is generally defined as development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In planning terms it is seen to have three strands - social, environmental and economic. The planning system’s over-arching principle is that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. However, in practice, delivery of truly sustainable types of development remains elusive on the ground.

### Joint Local Plan

12. Also relevant to the LNP are findings from the new Joint Local Plan evidence base. Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils (BMSDC) commissioned a ‘Heritage and Sensitivity Assessment’, published in March 2018, which was intended to support the necessary site allocations within the Joint Local Plan. The study assessed 42 historic settlements in Babergh and Mid-Suffolk (BMS) which they identified as potentially

vulnerable to residential expansion. The assessment for Lavenham is shown in full at the end of the document at appendix 2.

13. Unsurprisingly, the study’s findings (see above) were that Lavenham has ‘exceptional’ heritage value. It considers the characteristics are very vulnerable to change; and development of settlement would have significant adverse impacts. In relation to recent development the study had the following comments; *“There is currently strong pervading character as a result of the complete and dominant character of the historic built form. This has been eroded by the areas of insensitive development and there is the potential that further insensitive development could exponentially harm the significance of the settlement.”*
14. The report also considers capacity for future expansion. The study concludes; *‘There are some isolated areas of modern development to the north and southwest where further development could be located with more limited potential for harm’.* However, it is not clear exactly to which land parcels this statement is referring.

### Public Consultation

15. A public consultation exercise was undertaken in Autumn 2021. This took the form of a paper-based Questionnaire Guide, linking the Survey questions to the 2016 LNP, which was posted through resident’s doors and directed people to an online survey. The questionnaire was summarised by the working group into a number of themes, a few of which, most relevant to character and landscape are outlined below. A fuller report on the consultation results is available.
16. The overwhelming sentiment reported was that residents felt there has been more than enough development in and around the village, and that it has not always been of sufficient design quality. The prevalence of developer-led housing was unpopular and it was felt such schemes usually relate poorly to the character of the village, having an ‘anywhere’ quality. Schemes led by architects were preferred and the Peek Close community led scheme was particularly well supported. However, there was a divergence of opinion in terms of appropriate design direction. Some championed modern design, whilst some advocated for the opposite; *“All new buildings should be built in traditional style”* was balanced by *“Let us build houses of quality but modern design. Don’t attempt olde-worldly imitation”*

17. Another theme was responsiveness to climate change. *“Climate change is real and we need to prepare for disruptive events (weather/flooding/food/migration etc)”* However, the comments often referred to retrofit technology such as solar panels. In reality, there is far more scope to have a more meaningful vision for the future of Lavenham and the LNP Revision Group feel the next iteration of the Plan needs to be far more radical in the approach to dealing with climate change. A ‘business as normal’ attitude to such matters will be insufficient.
18. The pandemic also brought forth comments relating to an increased sense of value towards the landscape and its opportunities for recreation. *“The pandemic has shown that we need to do everything we can to protect the paths and green spaces we have, especially for local use”*
19. As in previous surveys, tension continued in relation to visitor numbers and traffic. Friction exists between those who recognise the benefits that tourism brings, and those that focus more on issues that occur with traffic and parking. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group is considering how to address these themes and the Lavenham Design Code document will be a key tool in assisting with this.



The design and detailing of this new development relates poorly to the historic character of the village

## The purpose of Landscape Character Assessment

20. Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and analysing variation in the character of the rural landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features - characteristics - that make landscapes distinctive from one another. The differences, often subtle at parish level, help create an identifiable ‘sense of place’. Landscape is understood as the resultant interaction of the natural, physical components of the environment interacting with the human element - historical and cultural land use and interventions. Human experiences are also relevant to sense of place - sounds, smells, memories and cultural association.
21. Defining units of landscape through professionally undertaken Landscape Character Assessment can be helpful in informing, planning and managing change. When undertaken at a scale appropriate to local and neighbourhood plan-making, it provides a useful framework for decision-making.
22. This study continues to focus solely on the rural area and its interface with the edges of the settlement. Settlement Character Areas are the subject of a study (by others) to help inform preparation of the 2023 Lavenham Design Guide. The aim of this is to set out the expected standards for appropriate and sustainable design, to ensure that only development, household applications or environmental improvements that maintain and enhance the character and qualities of the village are consented.
23. The boundaries of the Character Areas were set in 2015 following analysis of differences in topography, soils, hydrology, woodland and tree cover, land use and farm type, and settlement pattern. Seven different character areas emerged, named after some local feature. Their boundaries generally follow some line in the landscape such as field boundaries or roads but it should be noted that, in reality, there is often a transition zone between one character and another, and it should not necessarily be expected that landscape character changes abruptly on the ground.
24. The information in this Character Assessment can be used in various situations. Its primary purpose is to continue to support preparation of the revised Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan 2 (LNP2) and support the parish and District planning team in their dealings with planning applications in assessing the potential impacts of development. It is essential that development management decisions are informed by understanding of the landscape context of any site. Any new development around this sensitive historic village must be highly sympathetic to the landscape setting or the potential impact of poorly designed development could have damaging consequences for its character, the appreciation of the village by its residents, and its tourism industry which is important to the local economy.



25. It will also be useful to those on the other side of the fence - applicants seeking success in planning applications or managing change in the countryside. It will hopefully foster appropriate land management, good site selection, responsive and sympathetic design and help protect the landscape and heritage assets on which the village's distinctive character is based.



### Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

26. Landscape sensitivity is the ability of a landscape, given its particular characteristics or qualities, to accommodate change. 'Change' usually refers to new development, but it can also be useful for considering other types of land use change. It provides an assessment of the value and sensitivity of various landscape factors and characteristics, and how they combine to determine how sensitive the area's landscapes are.
27. Rather than being provided in a separate report, as previously, a brief assessment of the pertinent landscape and visual sensitivity issues relating to each Rural Character Area is provided at the end of each description. Placing all the information relating to each character area in one place will be potentially more useful.
28. The assessment is in line with the 2019 guidance which emphasizes the importance of drawing out the individual issues in each area. This helps add nuance and overcomes the problems of allocating along the scales of 'high', 'moderate' or 'low'. Whilst an overall pattern of relative sensitivity is provided, the philosophy is that only with a very focused perspective on specific issues can the right outcomes be identified.
29. The approach in this assessment is less complex than that presented previously in 2016. The process of the assessment is methodical and repeated equally across each character area but the multi- scenario and multi-stage assessment undertaken previously is not repeated.
30. The results of this process can be used in a number of ways and assist with the following tasks and decisions:
- provide a tool for making sound decisions in relation to spatial planning and policy formation,
  - provide evidence to help the parish and District respond appropriately to future speculative planning applications;
  - help identify and justify land for allocation, if needed, and aid design briefs or site planning on any such land;
  - aid transparency; it is important that residents and land owners understand why decisions have been made, particularly in relation to site allocations and understand where development might be supported and where it might be discouraged;
  - identify opportunities for the enhancement, management and conservation of the landscape and views.
31. It is important to note that the results of the study are not intended to suggest specific development site areas or define future settlement boundaries. The study also takes no account of other factors that would influence allocation, such as availability of land. In reality many factors can constrain development including flood risk, infrastructure capacity, ecological impact etc. Detailed work on all types of impacts needs to be carried out in advance of planning applications to determine the acceptability of individual development sites.





## 1.2. Lavenham and its landscape

### Introduction

1. Lavenham is a rural parish in West Suffolk 11 miles from Bury St. Edmunds to the NW and 6 miles from Sudbury to the SW. It is an important example of a medieval village which retains its charming historic settlement form and many fine timbered buildings. As well as the quality and well preserved nature of its architecture, its unspoilt rural setting contributes greatly to its character. It is a key destination in Suffolk and tourism plays a very important role in the local economy of the area. But although it is known and loved by many people it is not a museum piece; it is a working Suffolk village, home to over 1,900 people and many more people who come to work in its diverse economy with many shops, hospitality venues, a surgery, school and numerous small businesses.

### Topography

2. The village occupies a position in the south-eastern corner of the parish, which comprises mostly arable land with pasture in the lower-lying valley bottoms. The village lies to the west of the Lavenham Brook which rises in farmland to the north of the village. Lavenham Brook runs from Cockfield down to Lavenham, along the eastern edge of the village (adjacent to Lower Road), through the Recreation Ground and then follows the direction of the Brent Eleigh Road (A1141) towards Monks Eleigh. Lavenham Brook is classified as a main river. This means the Environment Agency (EA) has responsibility for managing flood protection from it. The EA has permissive powers to carry out maintenance, improvement or construction work on main rivers to manage flood risk. Lavenham Brook is part of the River Brett main river system and is often referred to locally as the River Brett (including on ordnance survey maps). Two other shallow valleys provide localized relief within the village, a tributary to the south that flows between the

church and Lavenham Hall towards the Brook, the lower part is culverted underneath Water Street. To the north, the old railway line occupies a route adjacent to a small stream which drains into the Brook near Preston Road.

3. The parish comprises a mix of plateau edge, valley-side and valley bottom landscapes. The core of the medieval village is on the east side of the village and occupies the rolling valley side which is often steeply sloped in the upper reaches of the Lavenham Brook valley. The steepness of the streets leading from the Market Place add charm and drama, and create opportunities for long views to the surrounding countryside. The valley sides are a key component within these famous views. The valley landscapes are an intrinsic component of the character of the village and worthy of protection. As such, the land due east of the village is included within the boundaries of the Conservation Area which covers a significant proportion of the village. It is also part of the former Brett Valley Special Landscape Area.
4. The topography of the western side of the village is less dramatic. Here the village spreads out onto the plateau, which experienced only minor relief created by the

shallow tributary valleys. From its elevated position here, the tall and prominent church tower can be seen for miles around and is a key local landmark.

### Geology and soils

5. Chalky boulder clay of the Hanslope and Ragdale Series extends over the whole of the parish being composed of a matrix of grey clay containing pieces of Lias and Kimmeridge limestone, flint and chalk fragments. Small outcrops of gravel deposits and chalky silts are to be found in the valley bottoms and brickearth emerges near Lower Road. The MAFF (1998) Agriculture Land Classification indicates that there are areas of Grades 2 and 3 soils in the parish. Grade 2 (very good agricultural land) accounts for some 25% of the area with the remainder Grade 3 (good to moderate quality agricultural land). The higher quality land is situated north of the old railway line running towards Lavenham Park Farm and south of Bridge Farm.



### Historic and Cultural Influences

6. The village today is evocative of medieval life because of the remarkable number of surviving buildings from this period. The parish boasts over 300 listed buildings. Although many have been altered, they retain their original architectural form and materials. Their survival is in part due to the historical accident which led to Lavenham's boom being followed by an economic slump, which resulted in subsequent generations having little money to spend on expensive new architectural commissions.
7. The weaving and finishing of woollen cloth was a speciality of this area of Suffolk from the 12th to the 16th century. During this period, Lavenham emerged as a major industrial centre, producing and exporting vast quantities of woad-dyed broadcloth, known as 'Lavenham-Blues'. By 1524, it was recorded as the fourteenth wealthiest town in England and paid more in tax in that year than the much larger towns of York and Lincoln. Lavenham's prosperity at this time can be seen in the lavishly constructed church of St. Peter and St. Paul which boasts one of the highest church towers in England at 43m.
8. Many of the merchants, known as clothiers, who derived their wealth from the cloth industry made personal fortunes. Much of their enormous wealth was lavished on building projects and Lavenham was comprehensively re-built in a sophisticated and opulent style. The majority of Lavenham's finest and most ornate timber buildings date from the town's heyday c.1460-c.1530 .
9. This wealth also had an impact on the wider landscape. There are records of a deer park to

the north-west of the village, which apparently follows the parish boundary north of Bright's Farm towards the old airfield. Today the names Park Farm and Park Road give clues to its existence. There are records of a park here between 1200 and 1600, and the former hunting lodge of the De Vere's, Earls of Oxford and Lords of the Manor of Lavenham, still remains.<sup>1</sup>

10. But Lavenham's fortunes began to decline rapidly and by 1600 it was no longer an important trading town and lost out to competition from other cloth making towns which were producing cloth more cheaply, such as Colchester. Its decline was to last a long time.
11. By the 19th century Lavenham seems to have fallen into a state of complete disrepair and poverty. In 1829 a local newspaper reported:

"The state of the parish of Lavenham is still worse than that of the place above mentioned [Mildenhall], the decay of its wool trade having thrown a great number of persons out of employ from the burthen of maintaining whom the poor-laws afford no means of relief, whilst at the same time the scanty allowance which can be made is insufficient to restrain them from crimes of every description. In fact the situation in Lavenham is such as to be regarded with dismay by the farmers and other inhabitants to whom the heaviness of the rates is most distressing and the prospect apparently without a chance of improvement. A very serious affray was the consequence of this state of things one day last week."

Bury & Norwich Post, 23rd January 1829

<sup>1</sup> An Historical Atlas of Suffolk. Dymond & Martin. Suffolk County Council 1999



Lavenham Guildhall built towards the end of the economic boom c.1530.



Shilling Street sometime between 1926 and 1942



Post war  
development at  
Meadow Close

12. Some improvement came with the arrival of the railway in 1864. Victorian cottages, built for workers, began to appear and new industry from coconut matting manufacture, horsehair weaving and sugar beet processing arrived.
13. But the fortunes of the town remained fairly depressed until the end of WWII. In 1944 there was a proposal to build new housing in Lavenham, and to demolish and replace the ancient buildings which were deemed to have fallen into a state of disrepair. Many were lost, but luckily common sense prevailed and interest began to grow in the significance of the historic buildings, and the importance of Lavenham as a national example of medieval architecture grew. Many of its most important buildings were listed in 1958 and the Conservation Area was designated in 1973. Another wave of building listing took place in 1980. With the improving fortunes of its residents post WWII, the ancient buildings underwent sensitive renovations until Lavenham became the desirable 'honey-pot' village it is today.

#### Settlement pattern

14. The village is a good example of early town planning, with medieval streets radiating out from the Market Place. These streets form quite a 'hard' landscape with most houses directly abutting the pavement. But the effect is softened by colourful render, the aged nature of the bricks and timber, as well as greenery in occasional front gardens. Large side or rear gardens allow the canopies of mature trees to spill into the street which, together with glimpses of the countryside beyond, create an attractive village scene.
15. The fine timber-framed buildings, as well as attractive Victorian fronted buildings, tend to line the main routes in and out of the village. This strengthens the sense of historic character and it can be quite a surprise to encounter, the often large, social housing areas developed after WWII (e.g. Meadow Close and Spring Street). These are often integrated behind the historic street fronts which has allowed the character of Medieval Lavenham to dominate.

16. The outer parts of the village experienced growth in the later decades of the 20th century. Expansion to the north (Weavers Close and Trinity Gild) and south (Green Willows and Butfield) took place in the 1970s. The Glebe and Lower Road developments were added in the 1990s. The village has a strong nucleated feel, except for some ribbon development along Melford Road, an area of housing comprising pre and post war development, that is isolated from the main village.
17. More recent development has included sites on the village edge. 'The Halt' was built on the old Armorex site and is a development of 44 dwellings on the north edge of the village. The design principle was to reflect local vernacular in a contemporary way at relatively high densities. 'The Paddocks' development off Norman Way is an architect-designed scheme that commenced in October 2021.
18. Further less sympathetic development has recently been built by volume developers - on the east side of the village at Osier View, on Bears Lane, and a recently completed development of 25 dwellings southwest of Howletts garage.

#### Transport corridors

19. Lavenham is served by the main A1141 road which enters from the north to become the High Street with its distinctive ridged landform. The A1141 continues down Water Street towards Hadleigh and Ipswich. The High Street continues as Church Street and becomes the B1071 at its junction with Water Street to continue on its way toward Sudbury to the south-west. Traffic volumes have long been an issue for Lavenham with parked cars crowding the streets on busy days conflicting with the through traffic, including agricultural vehicles and HGVs, as well as visitor coaches.



20. The routes are an important part of the experience of the village, and each has quite a different character. From Brent Eleigh the approach is between steep valley sides, along the wooded and winding valley bottom which feels enclosed. The entry point to the village is at The Common at the bottom of Water Street and leads directly into the historic core. From Bury/Cockfield the road takes a dramatic route across the valley side through attractive rolling countryside offering long views of lightly wooded countryside. The village is revealed at the last minute as the road crosses over the old railway line into the High Street.
21. From the south, along the Melford and Sudbury Roads the experience of arrival is less dramatic and abrupt. Here 20th century ribbon and estate development has taken place which has a less distinctive character, and the condition of the landscape has been eroded. The combination of the flatter topography and good quality land means fields have been amalgamated over time causing loss of the historic landscape character. There are still valuable features here, between Sudbury and Melford Roads there is ancient woodland, Lavenham Wood, which is one of the few large woods in the parish.
- The railway**
22. The village's railway branch line connected Lavenham to Long Melford to the west and Bury St. Edmunds to the north. It was operational for almost 100 years after its opening in 1865 and a key local goods line as well as a passenger route.
23. The arrival of the railway had a big impact on Lavenham at a time when it was just starting to become industrialised. Poorly maintained roads limited the trade that could take place in bulky goods or livestock - most people chose to move their animals on the hoof. With the arrival of the railway, farmers were able to put their produce on trains and dispatch it anywhere in the country. Meat, poultry and game could be sent to the London markets, and Suffolk farmers were able to trade in an entirely new set of markets. Lavenham's short-lived sugar beet factory had its own railway siding.
24. Lavenham's coconut matting factory, which had opened just a few years earlier, and the horse hair and straw matting factories also benefitted from the new railway. Raw materials from all over the world could be brought with relative ease directly to the town, and the finished products could be dispatched. Crucially, the railway also started to bring tourists to Lavenham. The railway companies did much to promote Suffolk's villages to its potential visitors.
25. The railway also had a physical impact on the landscape, between Bury St Edmunds and Long Melford the countryside is undulating so extensive earthworks were needed to accommodate the line. But, by the 1920s the matting and horse-hair industries closed, and the population of the village plummeted from 2000 to 1400. The railway finally closed in 1961. The track between Lavenham and Long Melford was lifted in 1962 and between Lavenham and Bury in 1965. Although parts of the land have been reclaimed by agriculture much of the route is still apparent with significant remains of cuttings and embankments and a number of bridges.
26. Today the line is a nature reserve and footpath and flanked by a row of pillboxes on the valley side above which continue to stand guard between the railway line and the old air base to the north.



View from  
footpath east of  
Lower Road

### Cultural associations

27. The village has a number of cultural associations. In the late 18th century, the village was home to poet Jane Taylor, who wrote the poem *The Star*, from which the lyrics for the nursery rhyme 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'<sup>2</sup> are taken.
28. The village is often featured on the small and big screen. A number of films have used the village as a location including *Witchfinder General* (1968), *Playing Away* (1986), and John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1970 film *Apotheosis*. In more recent times scenes from *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 1* (2010) were filmed around the village. Other filmmakers who have used the village as a location include Stanley Kubrick and Pier Paolo Pasolini<sup>3</sup>.
29. Lavenham, along with other local villages, was also used in episodes of popular BBC TV drama *Lovejoy* in the 1990s which no doubt helped to boost tourism in this area of Suffolk.

### Forces for change in the landscape in the 21st century

30. Since the first version of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in 2016, there has been a notable amount of development in the village. Adding consented dwellings to the numbers of completed projects, the total number of new dwellings is likely to be at least 180. This would represent a nearly 10% increase in the village population over the last 7 years.
31. The new version of the plan must consider how sustainable this level of growth is in Lavenham and what cumulative effects are taking place as a result. A major concern for residents is that incremental development on the village fringes is having a damaging effect on the character of the village. Evidence for this can be found in the responses from the Lavenham residents questionnaire (autumn 2021) on the LNP website.
32. Lavenham parish had a realistic approach to development and recognised that to provide affordable housing for younger people, there would need to be broader housing delivery. Using the LNP, the supporting Character work and heritage protection measures, the parish has been successful in continuing to protect the historic core from harm, although partly because of the lack of opportunity within the dense historic core. However, the new version of the plan should shift equal attention to the character of the village fringes which have seen some notable changes since the adoption of the first plan.
33. Completed developments, both on the fringes and within the settlement, include:

- Meadow Court on Bears Lane - 12 affordable dwellings.
- Highview Close, Bury Road - 3 dwellings.
- Peek Close - 18 affordable dwellings.
- Osier View - 24 dwellings, 8 affordable dwellings.
- Indigo Fields, Melford Road - 25 dwellings, 8 affordable dwellings.
- Windwards, Bury Road - 2 dwellings.

Underway, include:

- The Paddocks, Norman Way, 25 dwellings including 8 affordable.
- Howletts Garage - 5 dwellings.

Refer to Figure 1.1 for a map showing these sites.

34. Peek Close has been a notable success. Formerly a County Council gritting depot, it was acquired from Suffolk County Council by the Lavenham Community Land Trust, for the development of local needs housing. Planning permission was granted in January 2017, to build 18 dwelling with two starter homes and the rest made available for rent and shared ownership.

### Ongoing Pressures

35. Currently, the domestic tourism market is burgeoning and this could bring further pressure on the road network which already struggles on busy days. There is frequent congestion in both the High Street and the surrounding lanes and fierce competition for parking space on the Market Place. There is an aspiration to provide additional parking areas for cars and coaches on the village edge. Again, siting of such areas must be carefully approached.
36. The rural landscape of England faces some uncertainty which will have an impact on its historic settlements; both positive and negative change is possible. Post-Brexit the redirection of the agri-environment support schemes is anticipated to bring opportunities to enhance biodiversity within farmland. New schemes could create opportunities for farmers to instate landscape improvements and the restoration of landscape character. However, our changing climate may present challenges, such as allowing new tree diseases to take hold. For example, over past decades, the decline of elms, and now ash, has changed the landscape, and other diseases are likely to arrive to threaten other tree species. Climate change will see change to the range of crops we can grow, result in water shortages, and result in the adaptation of farming practises for example.

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twinkle,\\_Twinkle,\\_Little\\_Star](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twinkle,_Twinkle,_Little_Star)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavenham#cite\\_note-22](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavenham#cite_note-22)



37. Post pandemic, the domestic tourism market has strengthened and visitor numbers may be increasing in Lavenham. Visitors cause impacts that must be addressed sympathetically for the community, not least in terms of traffic management. Further forces for change include further amalgamation of fields and farms; further boundary loss through lack of management; loss of pasture to arable land; increased pressure on marginal land such as for equestrianism or small holdings; land used for renewable energy (such as solar) or growth of biomass, and other diversification schemes which could have an impact on character.
38. Other key Forces for Change are noted in the Suffolk Landscape Guidance that accompanies the Suffolk character assessment.<sup>4</sup>
- Expansion of garden curtilage
  - Change of land use to horse paddocks and other recreational uses
  - Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover
  - Settlement expansion eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles
  - Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
  - Large-scale agricultural buildings in open countryside
  - Development of former airfield sites
  - Development of large-scale wind turbines

Peek Close



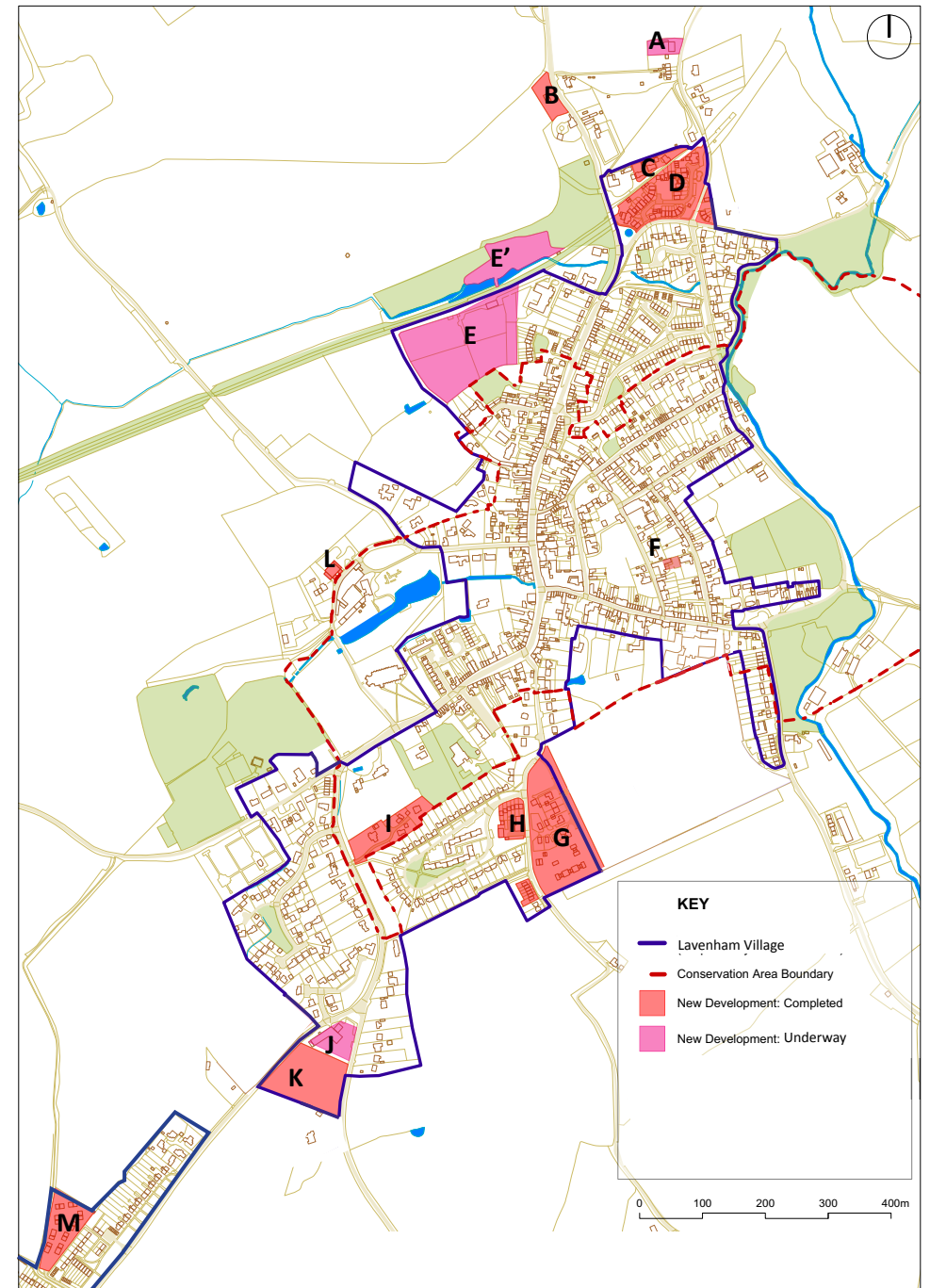
Indigo Fields



<sup>4</sup> Guidance Note Ancient Rolling Farmlands, Suffolk Landscape Guidance, SCC

**Figure 1.1: Plan of Lavenham showing selected new developments, 2011-2022**

- A. Drury House 3 new dwellings
- B. Windwards 2 new dwellings
- C. Highfield Close, 3 new dwellings
- D. Old Station Close - 44 dwellings (approved pre-Neighbourhood Plan)
- E. The Paddocks, Norman Way, 25 dwellings including 8 affordable
- E.' Proposed allotments
- F. Constable Court in Barn Street
- G. Osier View - 24 dwellings, 8 affordable
- H. Meadow Court, Bears Lane - 12 affordable dwellings
- I. White Gates (approved pre-Neighbourhood Plan)
- J. Howletts Garage - 5 dwellings
- K. Indigo Fields, Melford Road - 25 dwellings, 8 affordable.
- L. Black Barn on Hall Road - commercial to mixed residential and commercial
- M. Peek Close - 18 affordable dwellings





## 1.3 Landscape Character Context

### Policy

1. The need for Local Authorities and applicants to understanding and respond to local character is now emphasised at all levels of the planning system. Following the lead of the District Council, Neighbourhood Plan Groups must also integrate a requirement for the protection of landscape character and settlement identity into their plan making process. This makes for better design outcomes and ensures compliance with the planning framework that they sit within.
2. Paragraph 135 (NPPF, December 2023) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
  - a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
  - 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);
3. Paragraph 139 also guides new design. It states that 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.**
4. This policy replaces previous local Plan policies in relation to landscape, notably policy CR04 'Special Landscape Areas'. Babergh had mapped a number of SLAs that generally covered its river valley systems including that of the Lavenham Brook to the east of Lavenham. Adoption of JLP1 means the SLA designation and related policy no longer exists. Instead, BMSDC will use policy LP17. It takes the approach that all landscapes have value, and that all development proposals must demonstrate sympathy with local character and distinctiveness. The only exceptions are Suffolk's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which are subject to additional protection, through policy LP18 of the JLP.
5. Whilst this approach to landscape protection is broadly welcomed, retention of the Special Landscape Area is felt to be important, given the key role it plays in the special identity of the village. It was retained in the 2016 iteration of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Working Group wishes to continue its inclusion in the revised Plan. The character assessment work that follows supports this approach. Please refer to part 2 of this report which provides justification for its retention and for a map of the boundaries of the Lavenham Special Landscape Area.
6. Planning in relation to landscape is also now supported at District level by the '*Joint Landscape Guidance*' noted above which was published in 2015. Guidance is provided for each landscape character type found in Babergh. The implications for this are set out in the next section.
  - 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*
7. *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.*

### Local Plan

4. The new Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Part 1 (JLP1) was made (adopted) in November 2023, and Part 2 will be completed at a later date.
5. *Policy LP17 of JLP1 specifically focuses on landscape and character. It states:*
  1. *To conserve and enhance landscape character development must:*



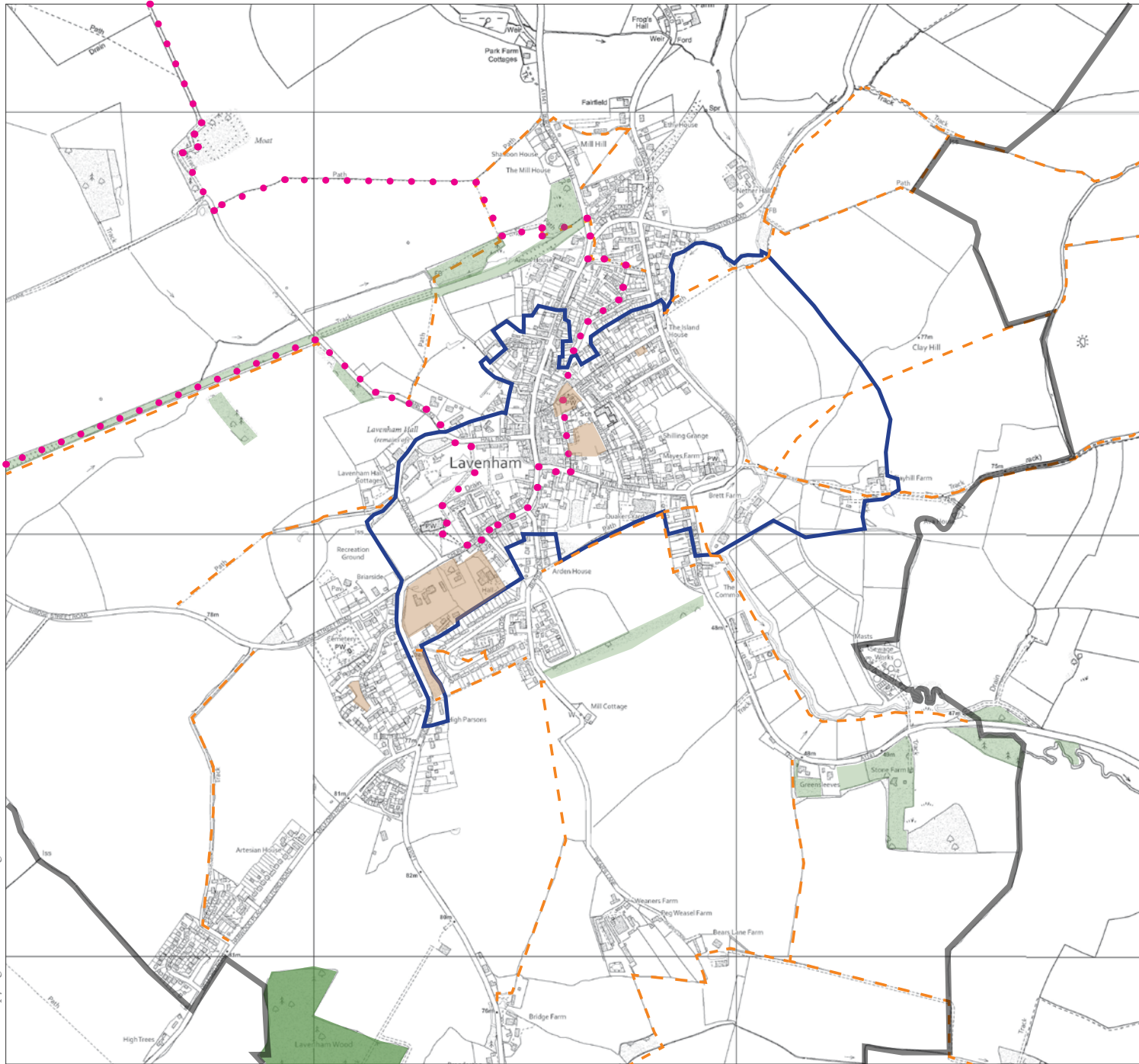
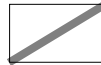








Figure 1.2: Policies, land use, designated areas and rights of way

**KEY:**

-  Parish boundary
-  Woodland that includes areas of Ancient Woodland
-  Woodland
-  Conservation Area
-  Rights of way
-  St. Edmunds Way long distance path
-  Area of recreational/visual amenity as was defined in Babergh Local Plan (2006)





## Landscape Character Assessments

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

### Landscape typologies explained:

Landscape character **types** are landscapes with broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, vegetation, land use, field and settlement patterns. They might repeat across Suffolk so that landscapes of a particular type, such as 'Valley meadowlands' or 'Plateau estate farmlands', can be found in several different places across the county. They are labelled according to the position in the landscape along with a label relating to soil profile and/or farm type.

Landscape character **areas** are unique units that occur in only one place and are therefore geographically specific. They have their own individual character and identity and are labelled according to some local place or feature.

## National level Assessment

14. At the largest scale there are 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). The descriptions for these are available on the Natural England website. This part of Suffolk is within NCA 86 'South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland'. This covers an area across four counties south of the A14 between Ipswich and Bury, as far as Chelmsford in the south and Stevenage in the west.
15. It describes an ancient landscape of wooded, arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams, and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century. The widespread moderately fertile, chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character.
16. In terms of settlement it is an area of notable medieval towns and villages, such as Lavenham, Cavendish and Thaxted, which support many vernacular buildings dating from the 13th to 17th centuries when the wool and cloth trades brought considerable wealth. Traditional settlements are characterised by organic street patterns, large churches – sometimes overlooking village greens – and groups of colour-washed medieval houses. A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside.

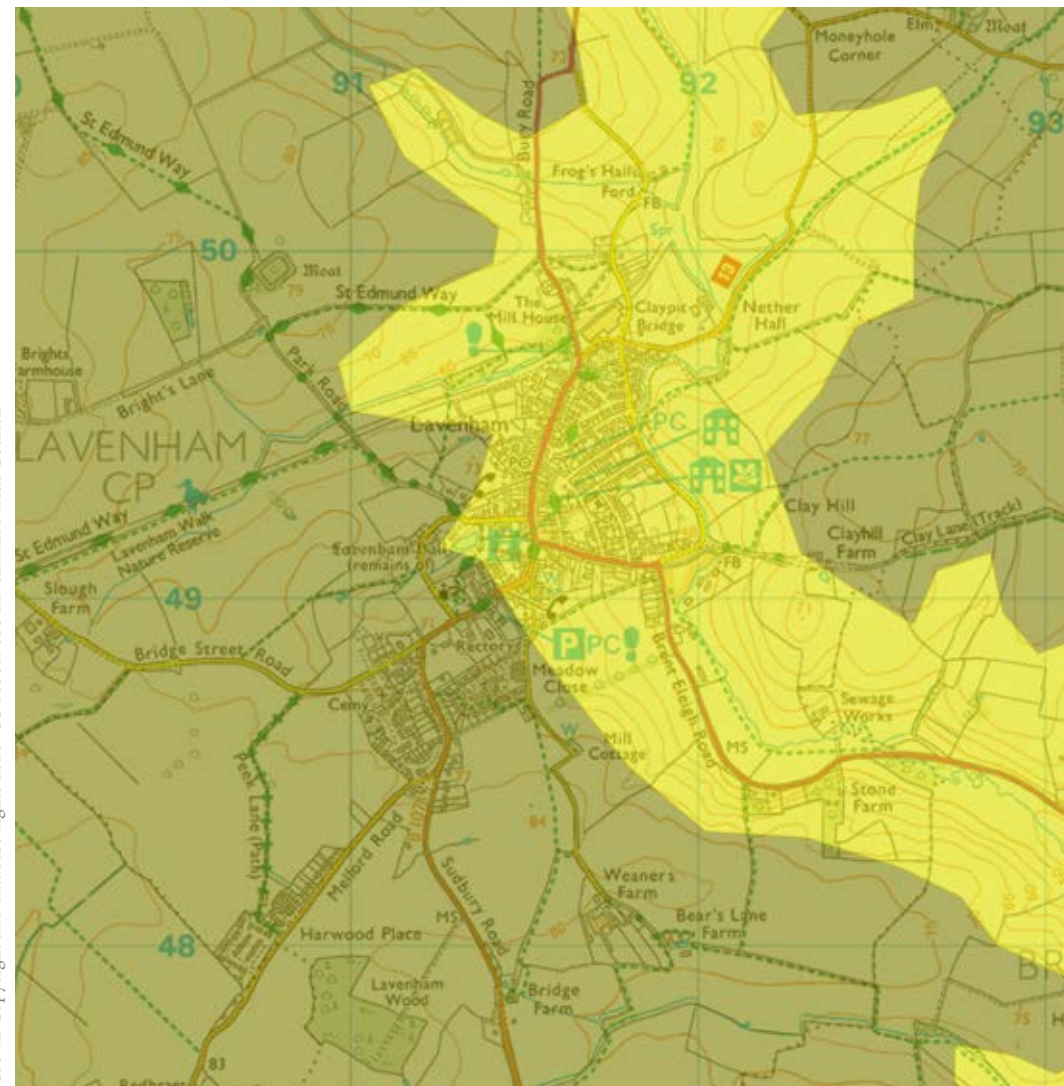
Figure 1.3 Suffolk Landscape Character map



County Level Assessment

- 17. Offering a finer grain of detail is the Suffolk County Council Landscape Character Assessment<sup>1</sup> which was first published in 2008 (updated 2011). It is a good and comprehensive assessment and describes 31 character types within Suffolk as a whole. The assessment describes two Landscape Character Types in the parish of Lavenham; ‘Type 4: Ancient Rolling Farmlands’ and ‘Type 18: Rolling Valley Farmlands’ as presented on figure 2.
- 18. The boundaries of this assessment formed the basis of the parish characterisation process. Summary text is shown on the following pages.
- 19. The guidance that accompanies each Suffolk character type, from the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk Landscape Guidance is also provided here, it helps set direction for change management that should be carried through to parish character areas, as appropriate.

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Source: www.suffolklandscape.org.uk

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

## Suffolk LCA Type 18. Rolling Valley Farmlands - summary

### Key Characteristics

The valley sides to the east and north of Lavenham comprise the gently sloping valley sides of the River Brett (*here the Lavenham Brook*), as it rises to the north of the village.

Valley sides are generally gentle as they cut through the glacial till / boulder clay of the adjoining plateau, but sometimes with surprisingly complex and steep slopes.

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

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

There is a scattering of landscape parks in this type.

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

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

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

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

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

### Sensitivities:

These south Suffolk valleys are locally distinctive and even the areas outside 'Constable Country' such as the villages of the Brett valley, have some of the highest national profiles of any Suffolk landscape.

***The spatial relationship of this landscape to the adjacent valley floor means that change and development here can have a profound visual impact.***

### Guidance from the BMS Joint Landscape Guidelines (2015):

#### Aims

To retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character. In particular strengthening the rolling valley landscape with appropriate planting and safeguarding the dispersed settlement pattern

#### Objectives

To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and settlement pattern.

To safeguard the parkland areas, Village Greens and Tyes

To safeguard and appropriately increase the woodland cover.

#### BMS Key Design Principles

I. Due to the rolling landscape development in this area is considered to have a wide zone of visual impact. All development must take into consideration the cultural and historic importance of this area and the potential visual impact on AONB and Conservation Areas

II. Reinforce the parkland and village green features in new developments.

III. Woodlands are to be protected and maintained within this landscape character.

## Suffolk LCA Type 4. Ancient Rolling Farmlands - summary

### Key Characteristics

Rolling arable landscape of chalky clays and loams. Dissected widely, and sometimes deeply, by river valleys. Dissection action by the area's rivers has produced a variety of soil types including patches of sands and gravels resulting in small heaths.

Organic pattern of species-rich hedgerows and associated ditches demonstrating ancient random enclosure. The hedges are frequently high and wide and have a strong visual impact - hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees.

Substantial open areas between the river valleys were used for military airfields. Some areas of openness also created on plateaux as a result of 20th century farming practice amalgamating small fields systems into larger units.

Scattered with ancient woodland parcels containing a mix of oak, lime, cherry, hazel, hornbeam, ash and holly

Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads of mediaeval origin.

Farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, the houses colour-washed and the barns blackened with tar. Roofs are frequently tiled, though thatched houses can be locally significant.

Villages often associated with village greens or the remains of greens.

This area has a network of winding lanes and paths often associated with hedges that, together with the rolling countryside, can give a feeling of intimacy. However, the areas of field amalgamation have also created longer views of a rolling lightly wooded countryside.

### Sensitivities:

Historic patterns within parishes are easily lost to infill and ribbon development.

The recurring airfields are often the focus of industrial and transport orientated development that can have a considerable local visual impact.

Ancient woodland can be at risk from inappropriate management and neglect including a lack of deer control.

Important array of moated sites and farmsteads which are often the focus for redevelopment and modification. Includes potential loss of individual buildings/features, development of garden curtilages. Cumulative effects can result as pattern repeats.

Intake of greens commons and tyes into domestic curtilages has a detrimental effect.

Potential for considerable visual intrusion from modern day agricultural sheds if the siting, finish, and planting is not appropriate.

### Guidance from the BMS Joint Landscape Guidelines (2015):

#### Aims

- To retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character. In particular safeguarding the influences of the area.

#### Objectives

- To maintain and enhance the landscape and the settlement pattern, ensuring the sense of separation between settlements is maintained.
- To reinforce hedgerows of locally native species and retain the existing field boundaries.
- To safeguard the ancient hedgerow and woodland areas.
- To safeguard the orchard areas.

### BMS Key Design Principles

- I. There are significant sized areas of open landscape providing wide panoramic views, with the potential of any form of development to be visibility intrusive if it has been designed without sufficient screening, appropriate landscape design plan or appropriate siting.
- II. Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern, ensuring the sense of separation between settlements is maintained.
- III. Retain rural character of the small settlements, by avoiding the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials and features; conservation areas and areas that fall within the AONB are particularly sensitive in this respect
- IV. Minimise the cumulative visual impact of equine development and ancillary equipment within this landscape character.
- V. Restore, maintain and enhance Greens and Tyes, orchards and woodland areas.
- VI. Hedging for boundaries will be designed to reflect the local character of exiting planting to minimise the landscape and visual impacts on the distinctive character of the area.
- VII. To maintain the character and condition of the landscape any major developments will enter into a Section 106 Legal Agreement for on and off site landscaping including enhancing field boundaries with local hedging and tree species.

## 1.4. Methods of Assessment

The methods for landscape character assessment and landscape sensitivity assessment are summarised here.

### Parish Character Assessment

1. The study focuses on the character of the rural settlement fringes of Lavenham. It does not consider different character areas within the settlement itself. (Areas of diversity within the settlement character are likely be the subject of another piece of work which is being considered in tandem with the development of a village design guide).
2. Methods follow nationally accepted best practice and available guidance on undertaking Landscape Character Assessment <sup>1</sup> which involve a combination of objective data collection and subjective professional judgement. The methods are not repeated here, in the interests of brevity, but can be read at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>
3. The parish character area boundaries were initially drafted for the 2015 study. The primary basis for the characterisation was the existing Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment which was last updated in 2011. This parish study uses the boundaries of the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands' and the 'Ancient Rolling Farmlands' as defined in the Suffolk Assessment, as the starting point for subdivision of parish character areas. This updated report has not sought to update the boundaries.
4. The character areas were initially mapped via digital methods from desktop study. Through overlaying digital maps of character, topography, soils, field patterns, land use, aerial mapping etc, areas of common or divergent character emerged. The following specific sources of information were used to help develop parish character area boundaries:
  - Topography data from OS maps
  - Soils and geology data from Landis
  - Designations for heritage and ecology information from government GIS website Magic Map <sup>2</sup>
  - Historic mapping from National Library of Scotland website
5. Seven rural character areas are defined. Mapped lines and features on the ground were used to define the boundaries. This initial desktop stage resulted in a set of draft character area boundaries, which were then tested and adjusted following visual survey in the field to see how far the draft areas made sense on the ground and to add a visual dimension such as noting key views, identifying landmarks, distinctive features, or hedgerow species. Perceptual information, such as tranquillity and aesthetic aspects, were recorded as well as judgments about condition and the robustness of the prevailing character. Any particular sensitivities or potential pressures were noted.
6. The inner boundary of the character areas is the Settlement Boundary, as defined by the revised Neighbourhood Plan. The outer areas are intentionally less well defined, as the focus is on the village fringes, but they are intended to continue on their given trajectory to the parish boundary.
7. Each was attributed a name and number 'Lavenham Rural Character Area', shortened to 'LR' 1 to 7. This is to differentiate from any 'settlement' character areas that develop as part of other studies. The areas are described under an objective, systematic and consistent set of headings. The descriptions are supported by a set of representative illustrative photographs.
8. There is one less character area than in the previous version of this assessment as the valleysides and plateau on the east side of Lavenham at Clay Hill have been merged into a single character area. Their characteristics were in any case broadly similar and the treatment as a single entity for the sensitivity study made more sense than two areas where one was entirely removed, at some distance, from the fringes of the village.
9. The headings used for each character area are set out and explained on the following table (overleaf).
10. The final part of each character description is an analysis of landscape value and visual sensitivity.

<sup>1</sup> 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', Natural England, 2014

<sup>2</sup> [magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap](https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap)



Table 1.4 Landscape Character assessment headings and explanation:

Physical landscape	Location and underlying character type	Reference to the relevant underlying landscape type in the Suffolk Character Assessment. The location of the area within the village.
	Topography / hydrology / position in the landscape	Describes where the area sits within the landscape. Describes the landform, its elevation in metres above ordnance datum (AOD); whether there are water courses or ponds in the area; the direction that drainage basins fall toward.
	Landcover/Land use	Describes how the land is being used, the types of farming or cropping, and whether it is being managed for other activities, such as shooting. It describes the pattern of enclosures. What patterns the landscape demonstrates in terms of the size and form of its fields, e.g. whether organic or geometric in shape, and the presence or absence of boundary hedges.
	Trees and woodland Cover cover	The amount and type of woodland present. Whether it's ancient or of more recent origin.
Cultural perceptual, and aesthetic:	Scale and enclosure	Whether a feeling of openness or containment prevails, given the arrangement of vegetation and topography. The degree to which an area's pattern of subdivisions is small and frequent (fine grain), or large and infrequent (coarse grain).
	Historic landscape/time depth	Lists historic aspects of value such as Listed buildings/structures and their settings. How today's patterns relate to the historic pattern.
	Settlement interfaces and road network	Describes the pattern of settlement found, the shape or form and 'grain' of the settlement. Describes the transition between settlement and the countryside. Includes the forms of roads.
	Perceptual experience/ tranquillity	Whether the area feels noisy or tranquil, busy or remote and isolated. Whether the landscape feels well cared for and in good condition, or where there are aspects that are degraded or cause visual intrusion. Judgement about the level of tranquillity. Identify any sources of noise, movement and disruption.
	Visual experience and views	Description of the visual experience - whether views are generally open or intimate, whether long or short; how scenic they are. Whether the area feels noisy or tranquil, busy or remote and isolated. Whether the landscape feels well cared for and in good condition, or where there are aspects that are degraded or cause visual intrusion. Are there any Key views in the area?
	Indicators of value and Rights of Way	Areas designated and protected for geological or biological conservation, such as SSSI's and County Wildlife Sites; ancient woodland and veteran trees. Designated greenspace or public open space, or other features which contribute positively to the character of an area. The presence of any footpaths or rights of way or recreation sites.
Management Issues:	Condition and strength of character	In what condition are the landscape and its features? How strongly does the historic character endure to this day?
	Issues / Change pressures	Is any aspect under threat? What should be the objectives for conservation or enhancement? Are there possibilities for future creation of ecological habitat, or expanded recreation, etc?

## 1.4. Method of Assessment continued:-

### Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

1. Lavenham has two defined settlement clusters. In addition to the main nucleated village there is another defined settlement cluster to the south-west of the main village, along Melford Road. It is separated from the main village by a belt of open farmland west of The Glebe. The remainder of the outlying settlement, including scattered cottages and farmsteads are in 'countryside' in planning terms.
2. The final part of the character assessment deals with the sensitivity of the countryside fringes in each character area. The fringes are the focus of the assessment because pressure for new residential development is likely to be felt here, and especially between the two settlement clusters. Opportunities within the village are limited owing to the tightly drawn settlement boundaries. Development in countryside is generally not supported in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and district planning policy, except under specific circumstances, but pressure will continue to be felt on land abutting the existing built-up area. Village fringes are particularly sensitive at gateway/arrival points to a settlement.
3. This assessment aims to ensure the most sensitive areas are entirely protected from development, and aims to ensure any development that does come forward on less sensitive fringes is designed appropriately to respond to its context. Housing must only be delivered in appropriate locations that do not harm the special character of the village, its valued views or features.
4. The previous 2015 assessment method was overly complex. The assessment method has been simplified for this update. This is supported by the publishing of guidance relating to sensitivity assessment, not available 5 years ago. Methods for assessing landscape sensitivity were published in 2019 in *"An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management"* (Christine Tudor, Natural England). The guidance urges studies to be simple, transparent, robust and defensible. An idealised process schematic is shown at the end of this document in Appendix 1.
5. The guidance provides the following definition of sensitivity (p5):
 

*'..Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value... a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value – to a defined change, or changes..'*
6. The assessment relies on the premise that development or change should be more readily acceptable in the least sensitive areas, and where appropriate forms of mitigation would be possible. Development would be least acceptable in areas of higher landscape value and where visual sensitivity is high, and/or where conditions are such that the landscape would be sensitive to available mitigation measures.
7. The interplay of two factors 'Landscape Value' and 'Visual sensitivity' are used to determine sensitivity. Professional judgement is used to balance and weigh the factors against one another. A set of tables was devised as the means for applying a transparent and repeatable series of analyses for each of the 7 parish character areas.
8. Landscape value and Visual Sensitivity were attributed along the following scale: LOW / MODEST / MODERATE / HIGH / VERY HIGH. The following scenarios indicate the upper and lower parameters on a relative scale of sensitivity.
9. Example conditions indicating **HIGH landscape value**:
  - Where impacts might result to recognised indicators of value - designated landscapes or their setting or the setting of heritage assets (such as listed buildings or scheduled monuments).
  - Where ecological value is high and designated accordingly.
  - Where historic patterns are strong, clearly expressed, rare and/or particularly distinctive.
  - Where impacts might result to natural or topographic features that contribute notably to local character and sense of place.
  - Where perceptions are strongly rural or highly tranquil.
  - Where public access and recreation are a key part of the experience of landscape.
  - Where there is an important cultural relationship with the landscape. An example of this might be the importance of the Dedham Vale and its artists to British art history.

10. Example conditions indicating **HIGH visual sensitivity**:

- Where impacts might result because land is very visually prominent, and openness is an essential contributor to character.
- Where commonly valued or highly scenic views, that are important to the experience of a settlement or to visitors, are vulnerable.
- Where a large number of people might be affected, and/or viewers would be considered sensitive (i.e. views experience directly from homes or busy recreational areas).
- Where settlement has stark edges and assimilation of new development would be a challenge - ie the scope for mitigation is low.

11. Example conditions indicating **LOW landscape value**:

- Where there is a lack of any designations for landscape or heritage or any cultural associations.
- Where ecological value is low.
- Where there is little contribution by natural or topographic features.
- Where historic patterns are absent.
- Where development would fit easily with the adjacent settlement pattern
- Where a sense of tranquillity is absent.

12. Example conditions indicating **LOW visual sensitivity**:

- Where there is little visual amenity or aesthetical value in the views affected.
- Where the landscape does not fall into any key views of the village and/or has little scenic value.
- Where land is contained or well vegetated and where development could be assimilated without wider impact.
- Where development might offer opportunity for the enhancement or reinforcement of character that would otherwise be unavailable.
- Where there are few receptors - few opportunities for people to view changes.

13. Further examples are provided in the tables that follow. The scales of value and sensitivity are useful for comparative purposes, but more useful is the detail in the supporting text that pick out the issues in each area.

14. After each area's characteristics and sensitivities are identified, objectives for managing change in each area are put forward in a set of bullet points under the heading 'Development Management Guidelines'. The Revision Group were also asked to contribute to these sections, to ensure that the wishes of the community in regards to land management, were included.

## INDICATORS OF VALUE &amp; SENSITIVITY: Landscape

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

INDICATORS OF VALUE & SENSITIVITY: Visual and Perceptual

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



Section 1.5.

# Character and Sensitivity Assessment

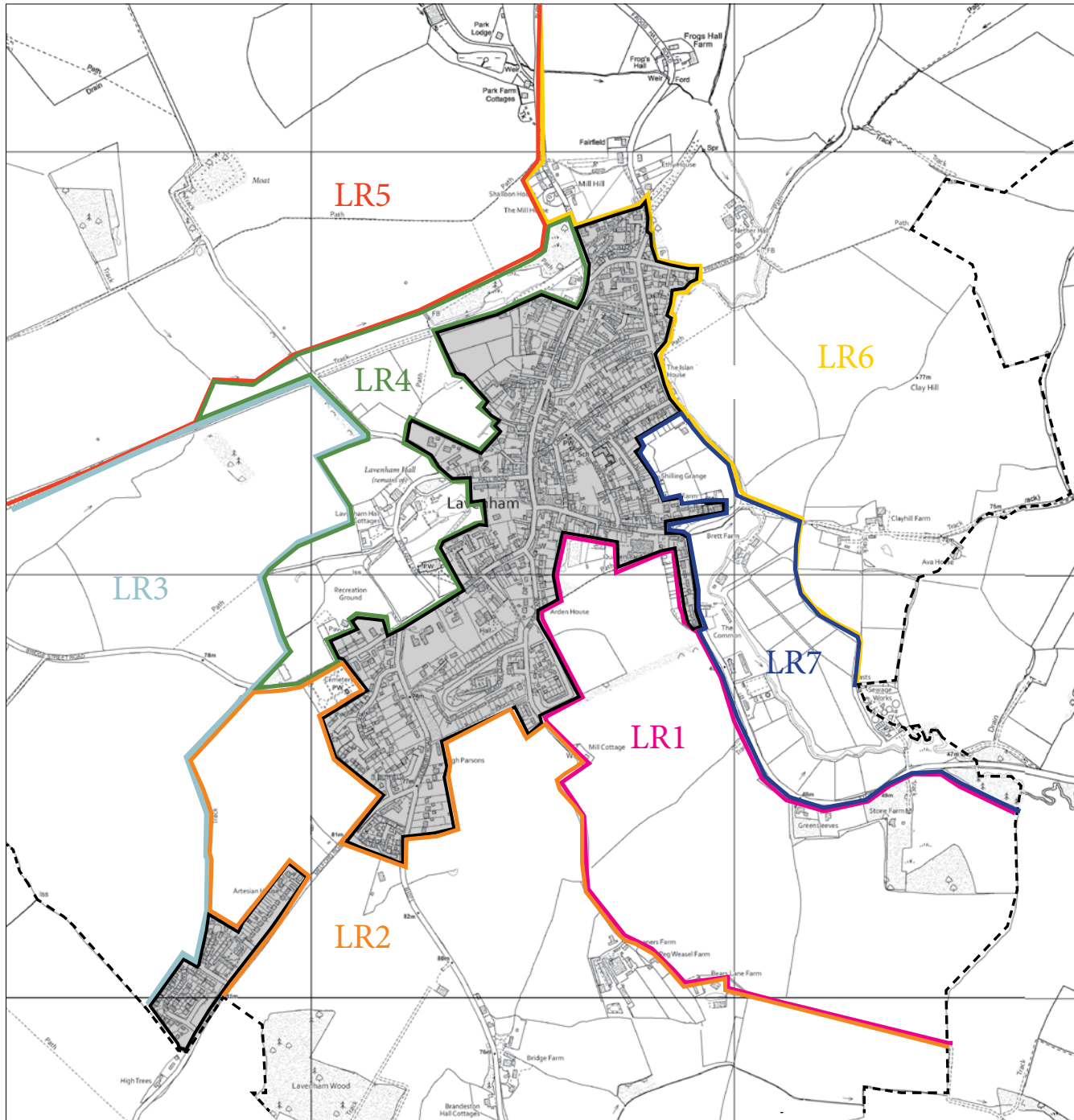

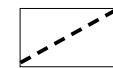

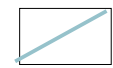

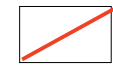




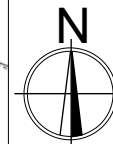
Figure 1.5: Plan showing the 7 landscape character areas

**KEY:**

-  Lavenham village
-  Parish boundary

**Character areas:**

-  Rural Character Area LR1: Pit Meadow
-  Rural Character Area LR2: Lavenham Wood
-  Rural Character Area LR3: Bridge Street Road
-  Rural Character Area LR4: Western Meadows
-  Rural Character Area LR5: Brights Drift
-  Rural Character Area LR6: Clay Hill
-  Rural Character Area LR7: The Common



# Rural Character Area LR1: Pit Meadow

## Key characteristics

- Relatively steeply sloping valleyside between the plateau edge and valley bottom.
- Medium-large field size, fields bounded by hedges and hedgerow trees. Land use is arable.
- Longitudinal field boundaries dominate, in the direction of the slope, following C.20th amalgamation of ancient enclosure patterns.
- Long-established interface with historic village edge to the north, recently interrupted by modern development
- Area otherwise unsettled except a small number of farmsteads
- Narrow winding Bears Lane separates LR1 from LR2
- Long scenic views over valley experienced from the top of the slope.

## Location and underlying landscape type

This character area comprises the sloping land to the south of the village. It lies between the plateau-top area LR2 and the valley bottom area LR7, defined respectively by Bears Lane to the west, and Monks Eleigh Road to the east. The underlying landscape type is 'Rolling Valley Farmlands'.

## Topography / hydrology / position in the landscape

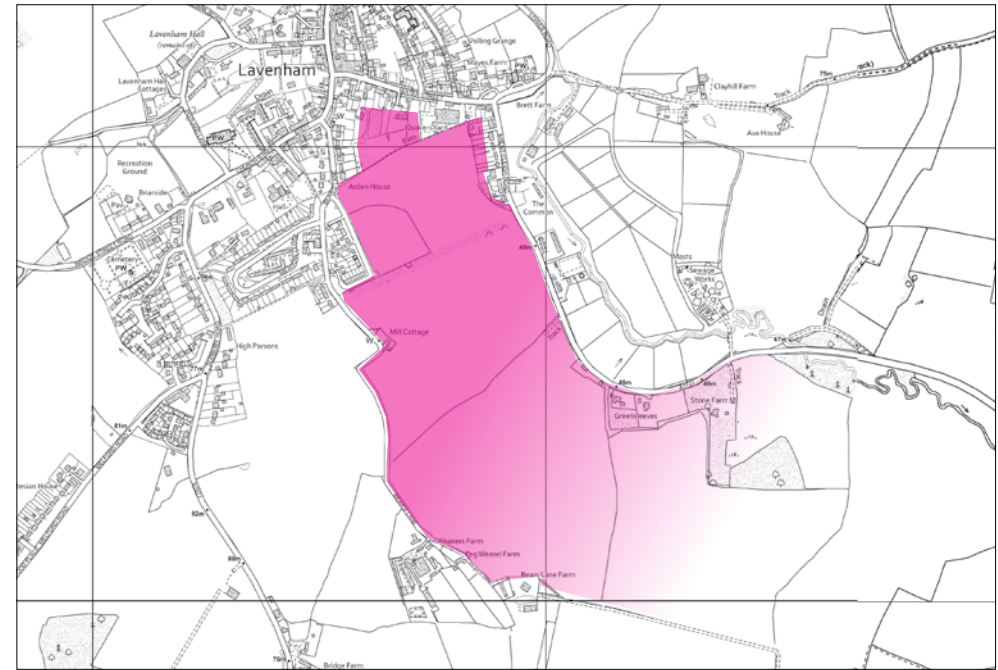
Sloping valleyside topography, falling from approximately 80m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 50m AOD. Slopes face east and northeast. There are no obvious natural water courses or ponds in the area.

## Landcover/landuse

Land use is arable farmland and field sizes are relatively large. Boundaries take the form of hedges or tree belts, and have a dominant axis running down the valley side towards the river. They often take a slightly meandering line and form strong linear features. Land immediately east of the new Osiers development, along the village edge, is amenity space under grass and features an attenuation pond.

## Trees and woodland Cover

Hedgerows are mix of hawthorn, field maple and suckering elm with hedgerow oaks. Bears Lane is hedged to either side, also with oak trees at intervals. Efforts to retain its vegetated character have been made during the integration of recent modern development at Osier View, Meadow Court and Long Meadow.



Location of LR1

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There is little woodland in this character area. The dense plantation strip planted along the boundary south of Osier View is a more recent addition and is a prominent vegetative feature.

## Scale and enclosure

This landscape is of small to medium-scale. Some evidence of the underlying pre-18th century irregular enclosure pattern remains, but during the C.20th successive boundary removal has amalgamated the land into larger, more open fields. The openness allows long views across the valley but in less elevated places, the feeling can be one of containment by rising land and by vegetation.

## Historic landscape/Time depth

This area is part of the ancient farmed landscape found across this part of Suffolk, with organic underlying patterns shaping the field enclosures and lanes. Hedges, ditches and roadside banks are still found.

### **Historic landscape/Time depth continued:-**

Early OS maps show a mix of loosely geometric fields here - larger in size on the upper slopes, smaller towards the valley bottom. The old maps refer to an 'Osier Ground' here - likely a source for the village's basket making industry. There was also a gravel pit just east of Bears Lane which led to the name of Pit Meadow. Roman finds are also associated with this area which indicate the presence of a substantial building.

### **Settlement interfaces and road network**

Away from the village edge, rural settlement is sparse - the farmsteads avoid the valleysides and are, instead, located on flat land in the valley bottom or on the plateau.

The area plays a role as visible rural backdrop to the village 'gateway' on Brent Eleigh Road. It adjoins the rear curtilage of properties on Water Street - where deep gardens with mature trees form a strong, long-established boundary. The edge of the village is successfully integrated along this tree studded interface.

Much less successful is the interface with Osier View, recently completed. The visually dominant frontage has only a single line of trees along its edge. The straight line that forms the front, on the top of the valley, contrasts with the soft vegetated edges and organic patterns that otherwise characterise the village.

### **Perceptual experience /tranquillity**

Tranquillity has declined in this area, given the adjacent enlarged residential area which has opened up views of moving cars and human activity. With distance south from the village edge tranquillity increases.

### **Visual experience and views**

From within the character area views out are important. The open, sloping valley sides afford long views over the Lavenham Brook valley to the east - a picturesque, wooded, rolling farmland scene without noticeable detracting features. Views across the valleyside are most readily experienced from the footpath along the north of the area. Views within the area have changed recently with completion of Osier View development (See 'The Lolls' Defined View).

'Upward' views are also experienced, intermittently, from points along the Brent Eleigh Road in the valley bottom on the approach to Lavenham. The valleyside provides an undeveloped backdrop at the village gateway, and helps understanding of Lavenham's rolling valley

location.

Longer views into the area are also possible, at some distance, from footpaths on the opposite valleyside where the area forms an attractive setting to the historic village (see 'Clay Hill' Defined View).

This character area cannot be seen from within the main village.

### **Indicators of value and rights of way**

Previously formed the western edge of Babergh's Brett Valley Special Landscape Area which covered land south and east of Lavenham.

There is a well used footpath along the village edge which is also the boundary of the Conservation Area.

### **Condition and strength of character**

The irregular forms of the ancient farming landscape have been overwritten by amalgamation and rationalisation of 20th century arable farming to some extent, but the strong combination of linear field boundaries and valleyside topography is distinctive. Field hedges are gappy and grown out in places but the area is generally in reasonable condition.

### **Issues / Change pressures**

Osier View development completed in 2019 has had an adverse effect on the rural character of this area. Two-storey houses placed along the top of the slope, to take advantage of the outlook, are now visually dominant. Mitigation with more substantial tree planting, could have been successful in reinstating a softer edge, but the single row of trees provided is unlikely to be sufficient to assimilate the houses and restore the 'treed' skyline. The edge of the development also features street lighting and impacts on the rural dark skies have resulted.

An attenuation basin to the front of the development has been poorly integrated and boundaries of private/public land are not legible.

The valleyside remains subject to future pressure for expansion.



## LR1: Pit Meadow - Photographs



View into LR1 from the other side of the valley.....



.....the same view in 2015



The edge of Osier View at close range



View eastwards over the valleyside



## LR1: Pit Meadow - Sensitivity and value

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Former Brett Valley SLA. Adjoins the Conservation Area boundary along the rear of Water Street including curtilages of key listed buildings. Otherwise no designations within the landscape.	Visual prominence	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity The land parcel is not prominent in views from the historic core. Glimpsed from entrance to village on Brent Eleigh Rd. Highly visible in views from opposite valley side footpaths.
Other aspects of landscape value	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Plantation belt west of Osier View. Vegetated edges along curtilages of Water street.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Sensitive users - footpath users and new residents of Osier View that overlook the valleyside.
Landform	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Valley topography is a key aspect of character. Valleyside backs the gateway on Brent Eleigh Road and provides understanding of the relationship of village and its landscape setting.	Tranquility / activity	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Reasonable level of activity from roads to either side of the character area, movement from people on footpaths.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Ancient boundaries amalgamated in the 20th century but underlying organic pattern perceptible. Condition fair.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Strongly scenic views outwards over rolling valley landscape. Recent development is stark and detracts from rural character of previous views.
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH / MOD / LOW value Slope important in providing the rural backdrop to the single row of houses at the village entrance on Brent Eleigh Rd. Osier View is not visible from this point.	Vulnerability of key views	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity More than one key view affected.

### Change management in LR1 must:

- Protect from further development to maintain rural backdrop to village gateway, and retain rural interface to historic village edge. The valleyside is visually sensitive and provides a rural setting to the historic southern edge of the village. It is prominent in views from the opposite side of the valley on several rights of way.
- Conserve rural character of views in and out of the Conservation Area. Harm to views out from Lavenham Priory and other listed buildings are not acceptable.
- Conserve and enhance all existing natural boundary features including ditches, hedges and hedge banks, and trees. Conserve the narrow, rural character of Bears Lane.
- Seek opportunities to integrate modern stark settlement edges restoring a softer, vegetated interface.
- Mitigate impact of any further development on the valleyside with regular skyline tree planting.
- Choose materials carefully. As well as vernacular materials (render, brick, clay tiles, etc) visual prominence can be reduced with materials such as natural weathering timber. Large windows likely to spill light into adjacent dark landscapes should be avoided.
- Seek opportunities to better integrate water attenuation measures associated with new development, and take opportunity to improve biodiversity.
- Improve legibility of the limits of public/private land east of Osier View which is currently unclear.
- Ensure open space is not just 'left over' but integrated positively into new development. It should contribute strongly to visual amenity and promote a rural settlement feel.
- Maximise opportunities to make new connections to existing rights of way.
- Give very careful consideration to any proposed change at the gateway point to the village on Brent Eleigh Road to ensure enhancement to local character results.
- Hedging for boundaries will be designed to reflect the local native field boundary character. To ensure long term retention and management, ownership to be planned to avoid conveyance to households where possible.

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

## Key characteristics

- Flat or gently undulating plateau
- Arable farmland with moderate sized fields, bisected by network of lanes and the main Sudbury road, with large block of woodland (partly ancient) south of the village.
- Irregular shaped features/boundaries hint at underlying pre-18th enclosure patterns but much amalgamation has created an open feel.
- Somewhat scenic especially where longer views of the adjacent rolling river valley are possible. Horizons are wooded.
- Settlement comprises scattered dwellings and a farm. Village edge is modern with a mix of residential estates from the 20th century which have left straight boundary edges.
- Ribbon development along Melford Road and Sudbury Roads is isolated from main village and forms a separate settlement cluster.
- Busy roads limit sense of tranquillity.

## Location and underlying landscape type

Land around the southern fringes of the village, bounded by Bears Lane on the east side, to either side of the Sudbury Road, and as far west as Peek Lane (a byway). It features in three village gateway points - Bridge Street Road, Melford Road and Sudbury Road.

## Topography / hydrology /position in the landscape

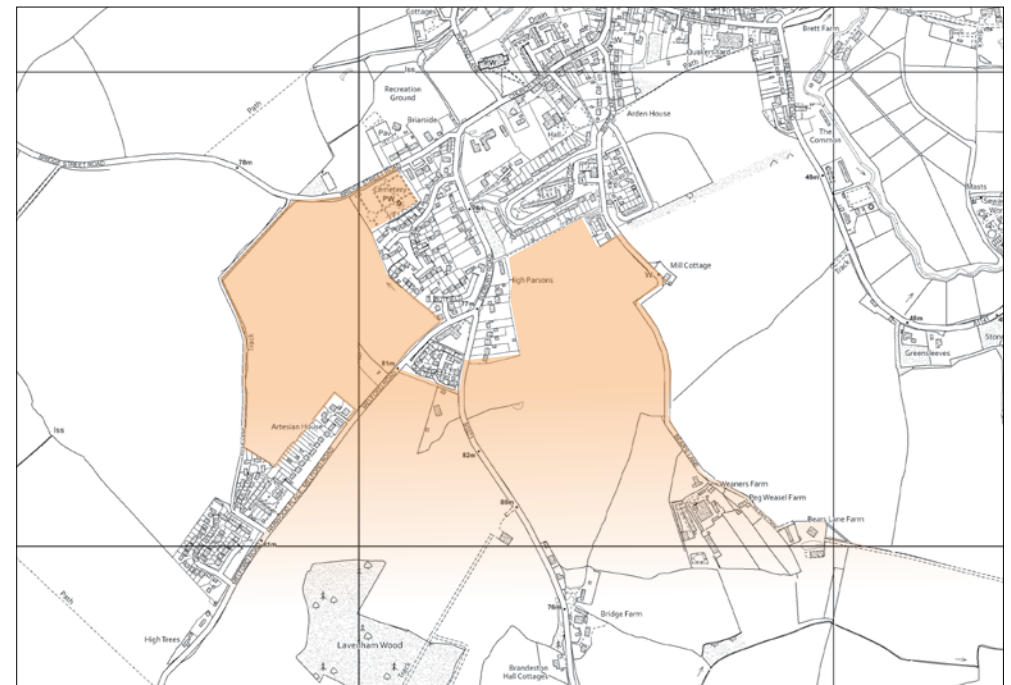
Very gently undulating land between 70 and 80m AOD. It occupies the edge of the plateau above the Lavenham Brook valley, which lies to the east, on an interfluvium that stretches westwards towards the Stour and its tributaries.

## Landcover/land use

Land use is arable farmland with one large block of woodland. There is a cemetery on the village edge on Bridge Street Road.

## Trees and woodland Cover

Lavenham Wood is a large block of ancient and replanted woodland, surrounded by open



Location of LR2

farmland. It has strong visual impact and this, along with field boundary hedges and oaks at intervals along the narrow lanes, give this area of farmland a wooded feel. It should be noted there is no public access to Lavenham Wood. Peek Lane is tree lined and defines the western boundary of the character area.

## Scale and enclosure

The lack of relief and fairly large field size creates a moderate scale landscape with a sense of openness, with large skies overhead in some parts of the parcel. Closer to the woodland block and along the lanes there is more enclosure - Bears Lane and Peek Lane are more intimate, providing contrast. There is a good network of farmland hedges.

## Historic landscape/Time depth

Remnant irregular field boundaries and the winding Bear and Peek Lanes hint at the ancient nature of the farming landscape here, but much 20th century amalgamation has taken place resulting in large and more regular pattern of fields.

### **Settlement interfaces and road network**

The area interfaces with modern settlement edges dating from the 20th century and more recent developments. To the east land backs the local authority built housing estate at the Meadow Close (1950/60s), to the west the mid century ribbon development forming the Melford Road cluster. The Glebe was added in the 1990s and Peek Close was completed in the last 4 years. Development has recently been completed at Indigo Fields, behind Howletts Garage. The boundaries of these areas of modern expansion are often abrupt and straight, lacking softening from mature vegetation. Indigo Fields integrates more successfully behind mature oak trees along its north boundary, although on the Sudbury road side the houses are pressed up against the boundary in an uncomfortable manner.

Away from the village edge settlement is also found as farmsteads with associated workers cottages or isolated cottages.

### **Perceptual experience/tranquillity**

Character area bisected by fairly busy Sudbury/Lavenham Road which brings traffic noise. Away from the main roads to the east, the area is more tranquil.

### **Visual experience and views**

Apart from the more intimate lanes, the visual experience is generally of open farmland with horizons curtailed by trees. To the east where the rolling valley side forms a distant backdrop views are longer.

Parts of the area are visually prominent - views in are readily experienced from the road network.

Views to the character area are not possible from the historic core of Lavenham.

Newly completed housing behind Howletts garage is quite visually prominent at the gateway to village on the Sudbury Road approach. The larger scale and higher density houses contrast with older housing stock which is much better assimilated within well vegetated plots. (Changes to the garage site itself along with 5 new houses has also been consented).

### **Indicators of value and rights of way**

The easternmost part of the area, at the top of the valley side, used to fall within the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area, which covered land south and east of Lavenham.

Lavenham Wood is partly designated Ancient Woodland and a SSSI.

Three footpaths pass through the area, linking the village edge with its old lanes and farms in the surrounding countryside.

### **Condition and strength of character**

The area is in mixed condition with adverse effects felt from the influence of the modern settlement edges, and where field boundary hedges have been removed. Glimpses of C.20th buildings associated with the farms are also sometimes slightly detracting features. Hedges appear to be in good condition where they remain, particularly along the roads.

Ancient Woodland forms a skyline block with strong presence.

### **Issues / Change pressures**

New development can exert adverse strong visual impacts where screening is insufficient.

Further development pressure could result on this plateau from further conversion of commercial/agricultural sites, or from speculative greenfield proposals.

Opportunities to create access to Lavenham Wood would be welcomed.



## LR2: Lavenham Wood - Photographs



View northward from Washmere Green/Sudbury Rd junction



Line of oaks help assimilate new settlement along Quilter Road



View southwards from church tower over The Glebe

## LR2: Lavenham Wood - Sensitivity and value

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: No landscape designations. (Easternmost field was within the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area). Ancient woodland – Lavenham Wood to the south (SSSI).	Visual prominence	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity The land parcel is not seen in views from the historic village core. It can be prominent in views from principal routes through Lavenham, owing to screening from existing estate or ribbon development.
Other aspects of landscape value	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Open farmland generally devoid of features Eastern and western boundaries are defined by historic winding hedged lanes. Peek Lane (Byway Open to all Traffic) is a green lane which connects Bridge Street to Peek Close/Harwood Place.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity The parcel is most prominent to passing traffic - it covers land at three entrance points to village. Melford Road residents have open views across the parcel to Lavenham Wood.
Landform	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Plateau-type landscape which does not provide particularly distinctive aspect of character.	Tranquillity / activity	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Tranquillity limited - roads cross the area.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Large field sizes have overwritten ancient enclosure patterns but underlying patterns and ancient winding lanes remain.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Varies. Scenic qualities higher to the east. Some poor relationships between settlement edge and rural landscape on west side.
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Modern straight edges, some poorly integrated. Modern development imposes on countryside.	Vulnerability of key views	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Land parcel not generally within Lavenham's significant views.

### Change management in LR2 must:

- Protect against development that harms the rural character of this area, particularly where associated with sensitive village arrival points/gateways.
- Consider visual impacts carefully. The plateau is potentially less visually sensitive than the adjoining valley sides but the openness means that land can be visually prominent, particularly on the west side of LR2. Visual impacts of development could have a potentially wide impact.
- Enhance existing modern edges and mitigate visual effects of new development through substantial native hedges and skyline scale tree planting. Substantial native boundary planting should be included with any development under consideration to achieve effective screening and assimilation, as well as links with existing biodiversity corridors.
- Seek opportunities to restore historic field patterns lost during the 20th century through native hedge and tree planting.
- Protect the character of the green lanes. Manage to conserve vegetation and avoid further loss.

### Overall sensitivity indicator:

Landscape Value	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low



## Key characteristics

- A fairly flat landscape of large arable fields divided by ditches.
- Generally open in character against backdrop of well-vegetated village edge to the east.
- Broadly featureless, but scattering of boundary oaks along old field boundaries.
- Well-vegetated old railway line (Lavenham Walk) forms a strong linear feature to the north.
- Little direct interface with village edge.
- This part of the village fringe is fairly inaccessible and visual impacts from modern development are limited owing to the well vegetated edges of the village to the east. It therefore has a strong rural feel.
- The Church tower forms a distinctive skyline landmark to the east.
- Slough Farm is the only settlement in this area, a somewhat gentrified farmstead on Bridge Street Road.

## Location and underlying landscape type

A block of land west of the village - bounded to the north by the old railway line and by Peek Lane by-way to the south. It is bisected by Bridge Street Road. Its eastern boundary is indented along the edges of the low lying pastureland (character area LR4) which buffers the character area from the settlement edge.

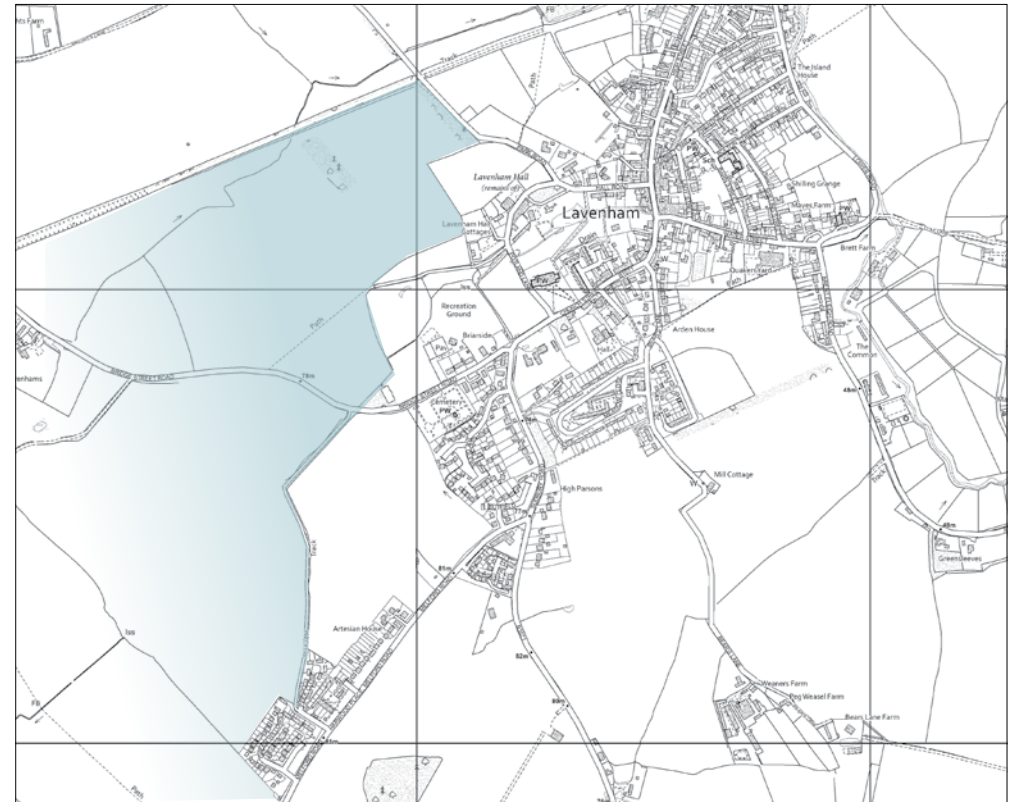
The landscape type is Ancient Rolling Farmland.

## Topography / hydrology /position in the landscape

Very gently undulating land on the plateau edge which slopes gently towards the village from (approx) 80m AOD to 70m AOD.

## Landcover/land use

This area is under arable land use.



Location of LR3

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## Trees and woodland Cover

Field oaks are seen at intervals on field boundaries but no woodland is present. Woodland appears to contain the edges of the character area however - the well wooded railway line to the north is a strong linear feature and trees along the village edge also provide a 'treed' skyline to the east.

## Scale and enclosure

This is an open landscape with little vegetation to interrupt views. Containment comes at the edges via the wooded horizons described. Although further 20th century amalgamation took

place, today's pattern of fairly large fields had already been created by the end of the 19th century, as shown on early OS maps.

The field boundary system was disrupted by the arrival of the railway line in the 1860s.

#### **Historic landscape/Time depth**

Sense of time-depth is limited as the ancient enclosed farming landscape has been lost to modern farming through boundary removal and amalgamation leaving only hints within the irregular lines of enclosure that endure.

The size of the church tower hints at the historic significance of the nearby settlement.

#### **Settlement interfaces and road network**

The only settlement beyond the village boundaries is Slough Farm. This exhibits a common local trend whereby old dwellings become extended and the associated barns converted and gentrified. Whilst this ensures the conservation of such buildings it does have a subtle effect on character and demonstrates the social change taking place in agricultural landscapes.

The village edge to the east is well assimilated - glimpses of houses in amongst tree cover.

#### **Perceptual experience/Tranquillity**

Prevailing feel is of a quiet rural area but Bridge Street Road, linking Lavenham and Melford, does bring frequent traffic.

#### **Visual experience and views**

This area is most easily experienced from Bridge Street Road which is slightly elevated over the eastern part of the area, and the footpaths through the area. The village edge is generally well absorbed within vegetation so is not easily perceived. The church tower is a prominent landmark emerging from trees to the east. The well vegetated old railway line forms a strong linear feature along the northern boundary of the area, curtailing any longer views to the north.

#### **Indicators of value and rights of way**

There are two footpaths through this area, one along the railway line and a second linking Bridge Street Road with Potland Lane/Hall Lane. Owing to their proximity to the village, these are well used footpaths so this area likely to be highly valued by local people for informal recreation.

#### **Condition and strength of character**

There is little hedgerow network in this area - some roadside sections endure but much has been lost in this area. Although boundary oaks and the belt of woodland along the railway line remain the area is otherwise fairly featureless.

#### **Issues / Change pressures**

This character area is under less pressure for development as it does not directly adjoin the village edge, except at Peek Close.

The loss of vegetation at the southern end of Peek Lane means the development at Peek Close has greater visual impact and an abrupt, unvegetated boundary with the countryside.

## LR3: Bridge Street: Illustrative photographs



View from Bridge Street Road eastwards



View of Bridge Street Road at Slough Farm



View to Peek Close - a well designed community led affordable housing scheme

## LR3: Bridge Street - Landscape value and visual sensitivity

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: There are no landscape designations indicating value.	Visual prominence	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity The land parcel is not seen in views from the historic village core. Prominent in views from routes from Bridge St/Melford. Direct views from footpaths.
Other aspects of landscape value	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Open farmland generally devoid of features. Some remnant boundary oaks. Bounds Peek Lane (BOAT) - a historic green lane which connects Bridge Street to Peek Close/Harwood Place.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity The fringes of the parcel experience high recreational use by walkers. Footpath users are sensitive to change.
Landform	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Plateau-type landscape which does not provide particularly distinctive aspect of character.	Tranquillity / activity	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Moderate tranquillity.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Large field sizes have overwritten ancient enclosure patterns but underlying patterns and ancient winding lanes remain.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Varies. Scenic qualities higher to the east where the smaller scale landscape along the historic village edge provides greater texture and richness.
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Little interface with settlement. Provides setting to the rural approach to the village from Melford - church tower views marks arrival. Modern elements limited.	Vulnerability of key views	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Defined views - No. 4 Bridge Street - is located on the east side of LR3 and looks over meadows towards the Church tower.

### Change management in LR3 must:

- Protect the rural character of the village's landscape setting west of Lavenham. Avoid development because it would be generally separated from the village edge and have a poor relationship.
- Protect the rural character of the well vegetated, low key approach and arrival point on Bridge Street Road.
- Protect visual amenity. Loss of hedges and resultant openness means that any change or development would be seen from wide area including a number of well used footpaths.
- Protect and conserve the important views of the church tower on the approach along Bridge Street Road and from the footpaths.
- Protect farmland hedges and remnant oak trees. Seek opportunities to increase woodland cover and to plant a new generation of specimen oak trees along road and field boundaries. Restore condition by reinstating hedges.
- Support any opportunities to enhance biodiversity via agri-environment schemes.
- Protect the wider setting of the Conservation Area and the listed buildings along the western edge of Lavenham.
- Ensure any new build proposals in this, or adjoining character areas, are accompanied by effective screening planting. Mitigation can be effective in flat and gently rolling landscapes. Parish Council to push for substantial native boundary planting for any development under consideration to achieve effective screening and assimilation.
- Protect the historic character of Peek Lane and manage to avoid gradual loss of enclosing vegetation

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



# Rural Character Area LR4: Western Meadows

## Key characteristics

- Gently sloping sides and bottom of a tributary valley
- Seasonally wet grassland used solely for grazing
- Dense hedgerow network with trees define system of small, irregular fields
- Relatively small scale and intimate landscape but with longer views from higher ground
- Area important for recreational access
- Area generally not easily viewed from village or wider landscape
- Attractive, well vegetated traditional landscape with strong sense of time-depth.
- Important community woodlad resource at Dyehouse Field Wood

## Location and underlying landscape type

The area comprises a series of meadows bounding the village all along its west side, comprising a narrow strip just north of the old railway line to as far south as the playing fields on Bridge Street road. It includes the churchyard. Much of this area is relatively inaccessible. This is Ancient Rolling Farmland landscape.

## Topography / hydrology /position in the landscape

Gently sloping valley sides and valley bottom of a tributary valley system that drains into the Brett to the east.

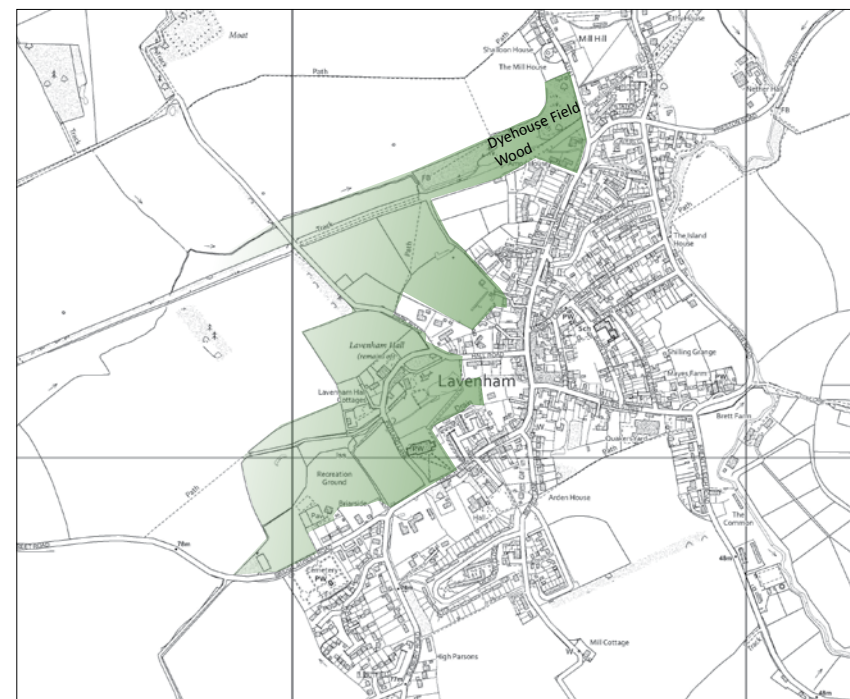
## Landcover/land use

The area comprises grassland meadows, arranged in irregular ancient field patterns. They are seasonally wet so unsuited for arable production which has allowed their historic use and character to endure. Field sizes are relatively small. Hedges form boundary features, predominantly field maple. The grassland is grazed, both traditionally with sheep and also horses.

## Trees and woodland Cover

The woodland belt alongside the old railway line forms a strong linear feature in the valley bottom. This widens out at the eastern end and forms Dyehouse Field Wood, a 4.37 acre community woodland, funded by the villagers, and planted with nut trees. It forms an extension to the Lavenham Railway Walk and has public access.

The meadows are enclosed by substantial species-rich hedgerows and associated ditches with mature hedgerow trees - ash, willow, oak. A single mature black poplar punctuates the skyline to the west of the village.



Location of LR4



### **Scale and enclosure**

Relatively small scale and intimate and contrasting strongly with the openness of the character areas adjacent to the north and west (LR3 & 5).

### **Historic landscape/Time depth**

The randomly shaped fields and old hedgelines indicate the ancient field pattern has endured. Together with the continuation of traditional grassland management there is a strong sense of time-depth. There are few modern elements. The Church and Hall here probably mark the beginnings of the settlement which then developed to the east.

### **Settlement, road network, and relationship to village**

The area bounds the settlement along Hall Road and Potland Lane. Potland Lane passes through an old farmyard - the weather-boarded barn now converted. Park Road provides access to farmland to the north - this is not a public highway as such, leading only to Brights Farm, but it is well used as a walking route linking Hall Lane to the Railway walk.

### **Perceptual experience/Tranquillity**

The isolation of these meadows and absence of road network means they are peaceful although not entirely tranquil owing to the main roads of the village being not too far away to the east.

### **Visual experience and views**

Pattern of meadows enclosed by hedgerows is simple and attractive.

Much of the area, to the north, is not easily seen from points within the village or the surrounding countryside. The combination of the slope of the valley towards the railway line, the dense hedges and the screening provided by village properties means views into the parcel are difficult to achieve.

### **Indicators of value and Rights of Way**

There are several public rights of way through the area - one passing directly through the meadows to the north, connecting the old railway line with Park Road, itself a busy route for local walkers and part of the St Edmunds Way long distance footpath.

The Conservation Area covers much of the western village edge including land within this

character area.

### **Condition and strength of character**

The area has a robust character and is in generally good condition. The meadows are generally grazed although parts are currently unmanaged (to the rear of Norman Way). There is some erosion of character through additions like paddock fencing or stable blocks.

### **Issues / Change pressures**

Development is consented at 'The Paddocks' on Norman Way which will impact the northern end of this character area. This began construction in October 2021 and was completed in 2023. It will have a significant effect on the visual amenity of the eastern end of the railway line walk, where the views will become urbanised to the south. A new area of allotments is also proposed on the north side of the railway walk.

## LR 4: Western Meadows: Illustrative photographs



View into meadow north of railway line from Park Road



Park Road is well used by walkers



View from footpath west of Potland Lane looking west



Board at Dye House Wood community woodland

## LR4: Western Meadows - Landscape value and visual sensitivity

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: No landscape designations. Part of this area falls within the Conservation Area.	Visual prominence	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity  The meadows are often visually well contained and not easily experienced from the village or wider landscape. Meadows near the church provide part of its setting.
Other aspects of landscape value	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: The area comprises a system of historic meadows bounding the village on its west side. Community woodland highly valued.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity No views from highways. Lanes and footpaths important to walkers (high sensitivity).
Landform	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Gently sloping tributary valley meadowlands. Landform not a strong component of character.	Tranquility / activity	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity  Tranquillity is highest in this part of the village edge.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: System of long established, small scale pastoral meadows. Managed through both traditional sheep grazing and hay cutting. Enclosed by hedges.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Quiet, scenic, historic feel with few detracting elements.
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Long established patterns, indented and porous settlement edge with few modern elements.	Vulnerability of key views	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Land parcel not generally within Lavenham's significant views.

### Change management in LR4 must:

- Protect the historic character of the village edge to the west of Lavenham. The area has high landscape value and sensitivity as it represents a relatively intact historic landscape system. Detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of any proposal.
- Development must be avoided where it would harm the setting of key heritage features, particularly Lavenham church. Protect and conserve the important views of the church tower from the lanes and footpaths.
- Protect the historic relationships between the church and Lavenham Hall and the undeveloped character of the landscape that lies between them
- Maintain the contained feel. The meadows are often visually well contained and not easily experienced. The old railway line and the continuous developed frontage of the High Street to the north and east generally prevent views into this area; although some visibility from the Brights Drift character area is possible at distance. Much of the parcel has no visual relationship with the Historic Core – the meadows in the north of the parcel particularly.
- Protect the sensitive views from points in the western/southern part of the parcel, where the lanes are important routes for local walkers.
- Ensure retention of all existing natural features including ditches, hedges and hedgebanks, and trees.

### Overall sensitivity indicator:

Landscape Value	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low





### **Settlement interfaces and road network**

Settlement comprises farmsteads with no other settlement. There is a complex of large agricultural buildings at Brights Farm on the skyline. The dispersed farmsteads in this area likely date from the Medieval period.

There are no roads through the area except Park Road.

This area has little direct visual relationship with the edge of the village except for a number of dwellings north of the old railway line on Bury Road.

### **Perceptual experience/Tranquillity**

Simple landscape with linear boundaries. The isolation of the area means it is particularly quiet and peaceful. Activity comes from walkers on footpaths or glimpses of distant tractors working on distant valley sides.

### **Visual experience and views**

Very open, long expansive views south and east over the valley to wooded horizons. There is a wooded character to the distant landscape – an impression that is sometimes missing at close range owing to the loss of hedges and hedgerow trees. No detracting features of note. The prominent church tower is a strong landmark on elevated land to the south.

### **Indicators of value and rights of way**

There are several public rights of way through the area connecting onto Park Road, itself a busy route for local walkers and part of the St Edmunds Way long distance footpath.

Dyehouse Field Wood is a maturing community woodland funded by villagers and planted with mixed native species. It forms an extension to the Lavenham Railway Walk.

### **Condition and strength of character**

The historic character has been eroded but otherwise the landscape is in good condition. Remaining features such as hedges are well managed. Strong sense of productive quiet rural landscape.

### **Issues / Change pressures**

- This character area is under less pressure for development as it does not directly adjoin the village edge, except along Bury Road.
- The landscape could face pressure for green energy provision in the future.



## LR5: Brights Drift: Illustrative photographs



View west from the top of Park Road



View east from Bridge Street Road /Brights Farm Driveway beside railway line

## LR5: Brights Drift - Landscape Value and visual sensitivity

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations	HIGH / MOD / <del>LOW</del> value: No landscape or ecological designations. Brights Farmhouse is a grade II listed building.	Visual prominence	HIGH / MOD / <del>LOW</del> sensitivity The land parcel is not seen in views from the historic village core owing to continuous frontage and railway line trees. Not prominent in views from principal roads.
Other aspects of landscape value	HIGH / <del>MOD</del> / LOW value: Moated Site (undesigned). Footpaths network. Community woodland on west side of Bury Road.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH / <del>MOD</del> / LOW sensitivity There are a number of footpaths offering views including the St Edmunds Way long distance footpath.
Landform	HIGH / <del>MOD</del> / LOW value: Landform plays a modest role in character, the gently undulating plateau edge allowing long views and sense of openness.	Tranquillity / activity	HIGH / <del>MOD</del> / LOW sensitivity Tranquillity relatively high here where roads are not present.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH / <del>MOD</del> / LOW value: Large field sizes have overwritten ancient enclosure patterns but underlying patterns and ancient winding lanes remain. Hedges in mixed condition.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH / <del>MOD</del> / LOW sensitivity This scenic qualities come from the combination of gently rolling lightly farmland with wooded edges - long strongly rural views are possible and there are no detracting significant detracting elements.
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH / <del>MOD</del> / LOW value: Little direct interface with settlement - only cottages and mill ,with new infill, back onto the area along Bury Road.	Vulnerability of key views	HIGH / MOD / <del>LOW</del> sensitivity Land parcel not generally within Lavenham's significant views.

### Change management in LR5 must:

- Conserve the quiet rural character of the landscape. Its fairly open, gently rolling character allows long views across unspoilt countryside, framed with wooded edges. It provides a contrast with the character of the low lying, enclosed meadows to the south.
- Protect the settlement pattern. The land here has little relationship with existing settlement edge and is separated from the village both physically and visually by the wooded corridor of the railway line walk. Glimpses in are briefly possible on the Bury Road just north of the bridge. Development here would generally not fit the pattern and constitute an obtrusive break into open countryside.
- Protect visual amenity which is of primary interest to residents - the footpaths here are well used.
- Protect the rural setting of the community woodland at Dyehouse Field Wood.
- Enhance rural character by seek opportunities to restore lost hedged field boundaries and increase the amount of woodland cover.

### Overall sensitivity indicator:

Landscape Value	Very high	High	<del>Moderate</del>	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	<del>Moderate</del>	Modest	Low

## Key characteristics

- Rolling valleyside, sometimes steep, ascending to a more gently rolling plateau edge with an elevated feel.
- Arable land use in moderately large fields which retain their underlying ancient irregular patterns.
- Field boundaries often substantial hawthorn and elm hedges studded with trees - often oak.
- No woodlands but network of trees and hedges link up to give a lightly wooded feel.
- Distinctive long views from the upper valleysides across the valley. Attractive scenic landscape composition where rolling valleysides interact with views from historic village.
- Network of well used footpaths ascend the valley.

## Location and underlying landscape type

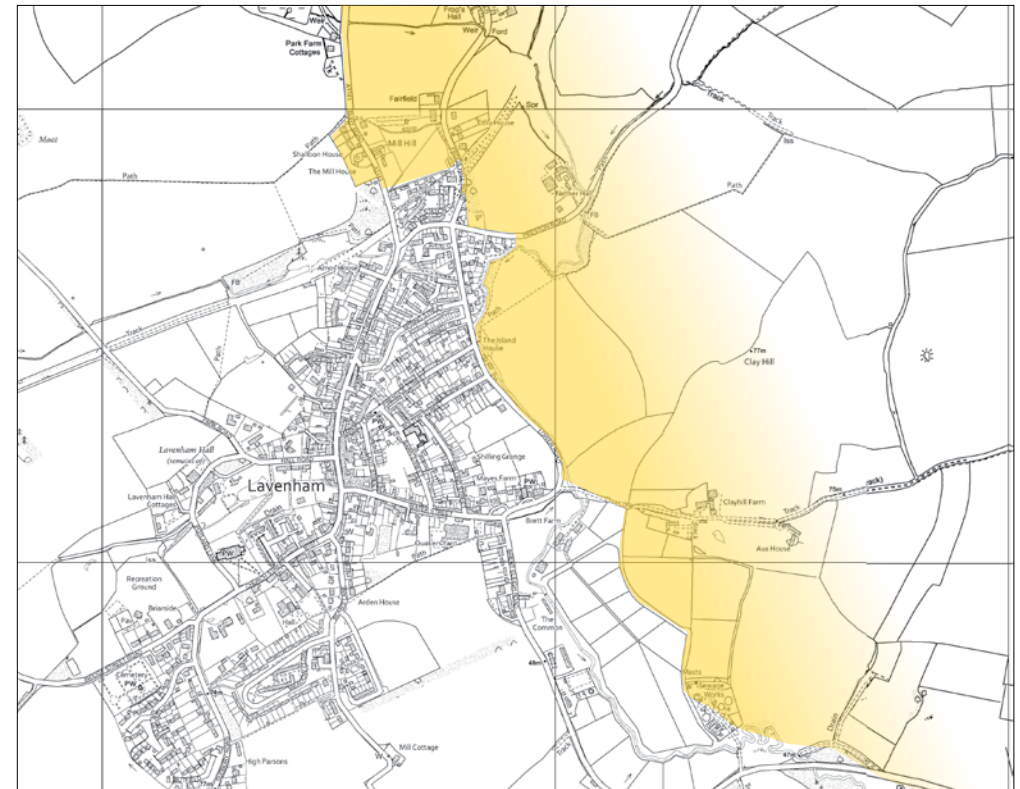
A belt of rolling valleyside land and plateau edge landscape between Lavenham and Preston. It lies mostly east of Bury Road, Lower Road and Brent Eleigh Road where it adjoins the corridor of the Lavenham Brook. It is the Rolling Valley Farmlands type merging into the plateau top Ancient Rolling Farmlands.

## Topography / hydrology / position in the landscape

From the river banks along the east side of the Brett land rises, quickly sometimes, into relatively complex, rolling valleysides. Perceptions of the river corridor and the distinctive dissected topography is a key element of the character of the east side of Lavenham and a key contributor to the setting of the village. It provides scenic backdrop within defined views from the historic core.

## Landcover/land use

Land use is arable farming, in medium-sized fields - smaller in the lower slopes and increasing in size on the plateau edge.



Location of LR6

## Historic landscape/Time depth

The ancient pattern has been eroded as fields have become amalgamated into larger parcels but the steep slopes have limited the scope for the really extensive field amalgamation found elsewhere. Boundary forms are a mixture of straight-sided fields intersecting with ancient organic shapes which are relics of early, piecemeal enclosure. This gives rise to irregular 'stepped' boundary shapes.

### **Scale and enclosure**

This is a medium scale, moderately open landscape. Some sense of enclosure provided where landform rolls and provides containment and the lanes form pockets of localised enclosure.

The overall impression is of curves and organic forms.

### **Trees and woodland Cover**

There is a substantial network of hedges and ditches on field boundaries and along Clay Lane (a green lane). Field boundary trees, usually oaks, are often prominent and add to the lightly wooded feel of the landscape and wooded skylines.

### **Settlement interfaces and road network**

The landscape meets the edge of the historic core, which remains fairly intact. Modern development is present along the north edge of the village. There are no major roads through the area, Preston Road carries traffic to villages to the east of Lavenham. Settlement in the countryside is sparse - isolated farmsteads approached along ancient lanes.

### **Perceptual experience/Tranquillity**

The character area is fairly quiet and peaceful but intermittent activity comes from the network of lanes. Distant traffic heard on main road. There are no detracting features (e.g. pylons) to lessen the appeal of the rural scene. The simple texture of the rolling open fields, embellished by the tree studded hedges, is very scenic.

### **Visual experience and views**

Long views are afforded from the elevated land with very scenic views towards the village from the east side - the historic side of the village. The church tower looms above it all as a prominent landmark. Views out from the historic core from Bolton and Prentice Streets overlook this character area which make it particularly sensitive.

The descent into the valley from Preston is distinctive and allows long views across to the historic side of Lavenham. This is recognised by Defined view 1 - Money Hole Corner.

### **Indicators of value and rights of way**

The western part of the character area has high value as the Lavenham Conservation Area extends into the farmland. The steep valleyside fields immediately east of Lower Road (known locally as the bottoms) are included because of their role within the views from the historic core.

South of the Preston Road the valleyside was within the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area designated for its scenic value.

The area has a network of well used footpaths which are easily accessed from the village and which present attractive views of the village.

### **Condition and strength of character**

This landscape is productive farmland so is under intensive arable production yet it also feels well managed. This part of the parish is distinctive, picturesque and in good condition, any sense of boundary loss is reduced by the distinctive topography and repeating pattern of lightly wooded field boundaries. Hedges are generally in reasonable condition although in places only remnant sections remain.

### **Issues / Change pressures**

- Views of poorly assimilated new development on elevated land along Bears Lane have had some adverse impacts of views towards the historic village.

Change in other character areas can have profound effect on adjoining landscapes.

- Flooding can be an issue on Lower Road at the bottom of Prentice and Bolton Streets.



## LR6: Clay Hill: Illustrative photographs



Views over the rolling farmland that forms the valleysides.



This character area back drop in key 'Lavenham' views



## LR6: Clay Hill - Landscape Value and visual sensitivity

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Lower valley slopes adjacent to village are in the Conservation Area. (Also valleyside were previously within the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area).	Visual prominence	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Part of the land parcel is seen prominently in views from the historic village core. The valleyside topography is sensitive - mitigation and screening are difficult on sloping land.
Other aspects of landscape value	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Good network of hedges and oak trees. Historic patterns seen in ancient lanes and boundary patterns.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Multiple receptors types - views from village residences, a number of roads, footpath users and views are also a focus for tourists.
Landform	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Rolling topography particularly distinctive and important aspect of character.	Tranquillity / activity	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Tranquillity is moderate.
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Medium field sizes. Underlying ancient patterns and winding lanes endure.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Composition of views often highly scenic
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Interface is long established with only minor modern elements. Countryside flows across Lower Road into small fields.	Vulnerability of key views	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Land parcel falls with multiple significant views (1, 5, 8 and 9).

### Change management in LR6 must:

- Protect this character area from development. The land parcel is judged to have HIGH landscape value and HIGH visual sensitivity. Its sloping, visually prominent slopes would be unable to assimilate development without harm to its character. The river corridor constitutes a long established edge to the village on its east side, any break beyond this would be visually obtrusive. There may be some contained areas adjoining existing settlement west of Lower Road that are less sensitive, but more detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of development here (Conservation Area).
- Conserve the scenic views - the dramatic rolling valleyside is a key component of the views out from Prentice and Bolton Streets. For this reason the area included within the views is designated as part of the Conservation Area, it forms part of the setting of Lavenham's medieval core.
- Demonstrate regard for the character of the area in considering other types of land use change to ensure no harm to the important views from the historic core.
- Seek opportunities to improve condition of the river corridor and remove invasive species.

### Overall sensitivity indicator:

Landscape Value	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low
Visual Sensitivity	Very high	High	Moderate	Modest	Low



### **Settlement interfaces and road network**

At the northern end, the area meets the edge of the historic core of the village backing onto Bolton Street and Shilling Street.

The Common is a small green overlooked by cottages which sits at the junction of Lower Road and Brent Eleigh Road and helps form a distinctive arrival point to the village. The more modern Post War houses built along the Brent Eleigh road somewhat erode the otherwise historic feel.

The area is sensitive to views from the Brent Eleigh Road (A1141) as they track one another along the valley bottom.

### **Perceptual experience/Tranquillity**

The relatively busy A1141 along the valley bottom means this area is not particularly tranquil and there is activity from the passing traffic, and activity on the recreation ground.

### **Visual experience and views**

Much of the area is easily seen from the A1141 with striking views of the steep surrounding valley sides as backdrop. Dwellings here too overlook the valley bottom. But the area is not overlooked from the main village itself or the surrounding countryside owing to tightly enclosure by trees.

### **Indicators of value and rights of way**

Part of the area is within the Conservation Area including the recreation ground, the Common and the small meadows to the north. These are designated because they provide important setting to the settlement.

It was also just inside the western edge of Babergh's Brett Valley Special Landscape Area (policy now withdrawn). The recreation ground is highly valued green space. The area offers routes into the countryside, with links into footpaths which head south along the river, and east up the hill side.

### **Condition and strength of character**

The area is in reasonable condition but modern land uses have replaced traditional grazing. Aspects such as equestrian tape fencing have a negative visual effect.

### **Issues / Change pressures**

- Expansion of the business park has increased its visual impact in the valley bottom.
- Pressure for development on adjoining valleysides to the west could have significant impact on the character of the valley bottom.
- Expansion of equestrian land use can have adverse visual impacts.
- The functions of this area as floodplain and habitat should be protected.



## LR7: The Common: Illustrative photographs



View from Lower Road towards the site of the old brick works



Enclosed view along Lower Road



The recreation ground provides a popular local resource for families

## LR7: The Common - Landscape Value and visual sensitivity

LANDSCAPE VALUE FACTORS:		VISUAL SENSITIVITY FACTORS:	
Designations	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: The north of the character area falls within the Conservation Area. Area used to fall within the Brett Valley SLA.	Visual prominence	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity The land parcel is not seen in views from the historic village core. It is prominent in views from principal route through Lavenham
Other aspects of landscape value	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Recreation ground of high value to residents. Provides access to rural footpath network. The Common is a historic landscape feature.	Types of receptors experiencing visual change	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity The parcel is most prominent to passing traffic - lower sensitivity Residents on Brent Eleigh Rd and The Common would be sensitive to change.
Landform	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Flat, valley bottom landscape is key part of the character of this area	Tranquillity / activity	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Tranquillity limited - roads cross the area
Pattern/ enclosure & condition	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Strong time-depth indicators endure such as the small field size, intact vegetated boundaries and enduring meadow land-use.	Aesthetic perception	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Settlement edge feel - ruralness eroded by land uses and human activity limiting scenic qualities.
Settlement edges, & gateways	HIGH / MOD / LOW value: Sensitive village edge setting contiguous with the oldest parts of the village. Prominent on arrival from Brent Eleigh.	Vulnerability of key views	HIGH / MOD / LOW sensitivity Defined view 6 is from the Common out to the valleysides to the east. Views back from Clay hill also include this character area (defined view 2).

### Change management in LR7 must:

- Protect the valley meadowland feel of the character area. Prevent further development on the valley floor.
- Protect the historic character of the arrival point on Brent Eleigh Road where roads and lane converge at The Common.
- Protect the recreation ground and avoid development of any kind. There may also be pressure for development on the village edges west of Lower Road. Development that would harm the low key, 'back lane' feel of Lower Road is not acceptable. The small scale meadows and vegetative features contribute to the character of the village edge and must be conserved. Ensure any highways design has as little impact as possible to conserve the character of Lower Road. Detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of development here and upon the Conservation Area.
- Other land use change would have to demonstrate a high regard for the character of the area and its visual prominence from the Brent Eleigh Road. Some of the most direct views are experienced from the elevated footpaths on Clay Hill (LR6) and effects on such views must be considered.
- Seek opportunities to improve condition of the river corridor and remove invasive species.

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

## 1.6. Summary

1. Lavenham has a high quality landscape setting where the landscape and the historic village have a strong, distinctive relationship. Along with the clearly expressed medieval grid form and wealth of intact timber-framed buildings, views out to the surrounding landscape are an essential part of the experience of Lavenham. Together the combination of historic built form, landmarks and historic landscape make for memorable 'picture postcard' views, key to the charm that draws the many visitors each year. As a result, the village enjoys a strong economic position with many types of business operating for both residents and visitors, providing a hub for the local rural area. Protection of the landscape is therefore as important as protecting the built heritage.
2. The eastern, historic side of the village occupies a valleyside location with attractive rolling farmland, that forms a rural backdrop, little changed over the centuries. It is highly sensitive in both landscape and visual terms. Long outward views are possible from within the historic core which are particularly valued and sensitive. The valley bottom is also sensitive for its role in expressing the valley topography, for its historic enclosure patterns and traditional land uses, as well as its biodiversity value relating to the Lavenham Brook. Further development here should be resisted as it would have an adverse impact on character.



*Rolling valleysides provides a distinctive setting and village approach on Brent Eleigh Road*

3. The landscape on the western side of the village is a little less distinctive, as the land flattens out along the plateau, but retains a well wooded and rural feel. The 20th

century has had more impact here, with significant expansion of the village. Beyond the Conservation Area, away from the Hall and Church, the flatter fringes of the village have seen expansion in a series of estate developments that continue to this day. These have profoundly affected the character of the approaches to the village from the west and northwest. Pressure for development of fringe 'greenfield' sites is likely to continue and must be resisted unless exceptionally sensitive.

4. Whilst the gently rolling plateau of the Ancient Farmlands to the west does potentially have better capacity to accept settlement expansion, because they are generally less sensitive in landscape terms than the valley landscapes, they remain visually sensitive. Successful development hinges on the provision of structural planting. Stark, poorly assimilated village edges have a very negative impact on perceptions of character. New edges **MUST** be assimilated by native planting of hedges, trees and copses to frame and soften the village gateways.
5. On the north side of the village the visual sensitivity is generally lower. This part of the fringe is generally less visible and accessible, but is sensitive in landscape terms because of its intact historic character - it has a pattern of smaller scale enclosures, grazing meadows, mature trees along the village fringes, hedges and indented edges, and often has a direct relationship with the Hall, farm and church. Together, these features contribute to the character of the village and need protecting. The conditions combine to make it possible that individual plots or small developments might be assimilated without adverse impact on the character of the landscape or on visual amenity if undertaken sensitively, but estate development is not appropriate.
6. In summary, conditions on Lavenham's fringes are such that both landscape and visual sensitivity judgements register between 'modest' to 'high'. But it is the detail that gives rise to these judgement that is of primary importance when understanding the ability of the landscape to accept change. Understanding the specific context and limitations of any piece of land under consideration is more important than relying on any broad brush judgements that apply to the wider fringe. Any development proposal in Lavenham would be expected to have first taken account of this study and then developed more detailed context studies that justify the approach and design of any proposal.



### Future change management

7. Given the identified unsuitability of much of the landscape for development, owing to its sensitivity, the LNP Review Group considered whether there was sufficient justification for allocating any further sites for development. A minimum of 118 new dwellings in Lavenham were indicated for the period April 2018 to 2037, of which 113 were already either completed or in the housing development pipeline by March 2022. On that basis, it was felt the allocation of specific new development sites was not necessary.
8. However, it is recognised that speculative applications are still to be expected, but the parish must use this report to help withstand development in unsuitable locations, and along with the 2023 Design Guide, require high standards in places where development can be supported.
9. Aside from development, the landscape is also likely to face other pressures. Although always subject to change, the environment now faces considerable future uncertainty with climate change. In addition to putting forward objectives to protect and maintain the parish landscape, the working group wish to look for opportunities to make improvements and develop a resilient landscape. Developments in the future will be expected to provide a net gain for biodiversity and the parish should work hard to ensure these are delivered.
10. Given the climate emergency we are facing, the government has set ambitious tree planting targets. Opportunities should be taken to plant trees in this parish that can enhance the landscape without adversely affecting its local distinctive field patterns and character. Tree planting objectives could include:
  - Increase woodland cover and develop well managed woodlands.
  - Encourage land owners to improve hedgerows by filling gaps and reinstating lost hedges. Manage at appropriate height for biodiversity.
  - Plant diverse range of native species in edge, understory and canopy layers. Manage to increase biodiversity. Seek advice from ecologists and arboriculturists.
  - Look to provide linked woodland areas with public access to enable movement and connect paths.
  - Promote structural landscaping to assimilate new built form and screen any unsightly structures or car parking etc. Can also use to help address night time light pollution.
  - Use trees to enhance the entrance routes into the village, to improve the attractiveness and demarcate boundaries (both roads and footpaths). Create or enhance access to public rights of way in the area.
  - Look for opportunities to plant skyline trees in new development - not just the small fruit tree varieties which tend to be specified, and which rarely achieve any impact. This requires commitment to increased foundation depths/technical solutions and associated uplift in costs. Ensure such trees or boundary hedges are managed by third parties rather than left to householders.
11. The 2023 Design Guide is welcomed to support the parish council to help deliver both sustainable development as well as protect the village's considerable wealth of architectural and landscape assets. 'Landscape-led' practice, putting considerations of landscape structure, and its numerous associated environmental benefits (flood amelioration, biodiversity, air quality, etc) should be at the forefront.



This development edge planting is of insufficient scale in such a prominent hill top location, and is vulnerable to losses.



Existing mature trees should be carefully integrated within new development



An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood, showing a dense cluster of houses with various rooflines and colors, interspersed with green trees. The image is semi-transparent, serving as a background for the text.

Section 2

# Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity

## Section 2: Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity

### Context and justification

1. The 2006 Babergh Local Plan defined the rolling river valley landscape to the east of Lavenham as a 'Special Landscape Area', (see figure 2.1) one of several that covered Suffolk's river valleys. Originally put forward under the old Suffolk Structure Plan, the justification for SLA boundaries, or the definition of their qualities, was never published. It was accepted that they covered either scenic river valley landscapes, or sometimes areas with historic interest, such as parklands.
2. The policy that guided how development in these defined areas was to be approached, was set out under Babergh Local Plan (2006) policy CR04. It stated:

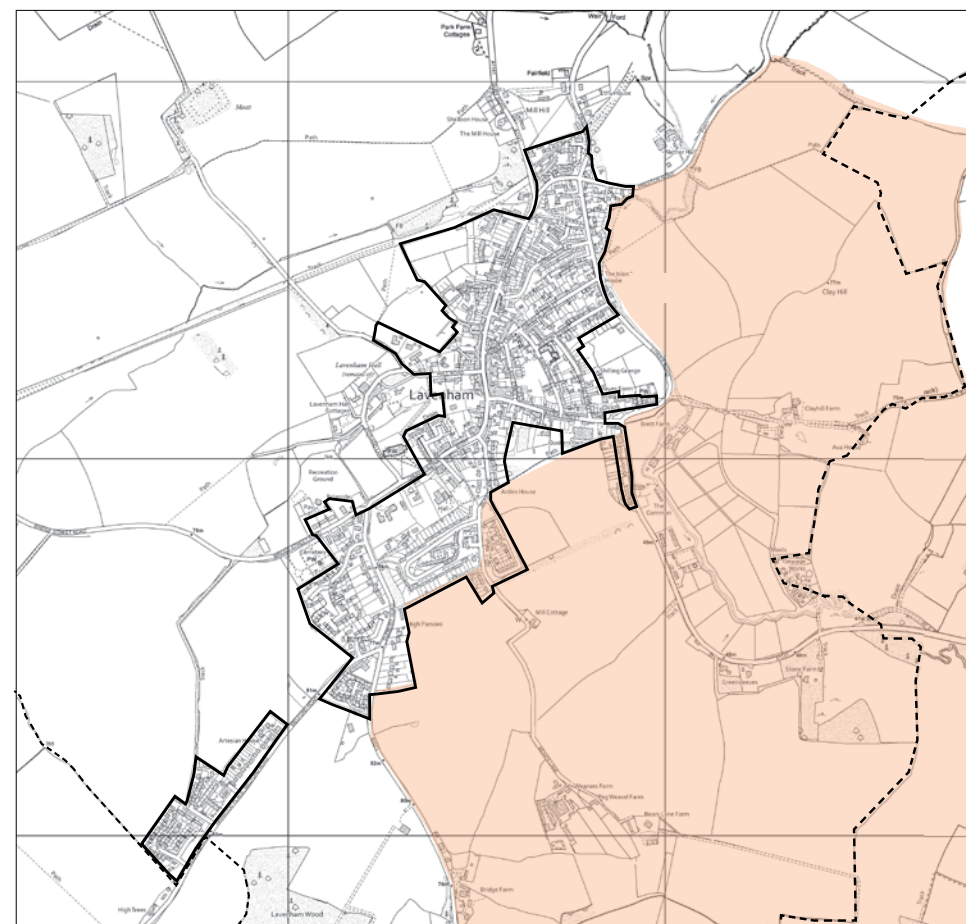
*'Development proposals in Special Landscape Areas will only be permitted where they:*



- *maintain or enhance the special landscape qualities of the area, identified on the relevant landscape appraisal; and*
- *are designed and sited so as to harmonise with the landscape setting'*

In recent years, the 'relevant appraisal' generally meant the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment ([www.suffolklandscape.org.uk](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk)) undertaken by Suffolk County Council (last updated in 2011).

3. However, given the lack of justification, and a broader approach to landscape protection, in line with the NPPF, the SLA policy has been abandoned. Instead, the JLP1 addresses landscape protection under a broader landscape focused policy. Given the scale of the County-wide assessment, there is insufficient scope to identify areas of high landscape value at the parish level. So there remains a valid need, outside AONB landscapes, where the contribution of the landscape is demonstrably important, to identify valued and sensitive areas.
4. Work on the Lavenham character assessment and the key defining views, indicate that parts of the landscape contribute particularly strongly to the distinctive character of the village. The status of the village as a key tourist draw within Suffolk, bringing significant economic value, only adds to the necessity to protect the character of the landscape. In order to access an additional level of landscape protection, Lavenham Parish Council, therefore, wish to define an area of greater landscape value and sensitivity.

Figure 2.1: The 'Special Landscape Area, as defined in the outgoing Local Plan:



KEY:  Lavenham Village  Previous extent of the SLA  Parish boundary

### The NPPF and 'valued' landscapes

5. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states: 'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...' However, the definition of a 'Valued Landscape' is not provided in the NPPF. It has consequently been the subject of various well documented planning appeals and inquiries which have sought to test and unpick how the definition of landscape value should be applied outside of designated landscapes.
6. To help address this grey area, the Landscape Institute recently published new guidance to help clarify how landscapes of greater value than the 'everyday' should be defined. Guidance Note TG02/21 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations' (published in 2019) states that a 'valued landscape' is an area identified as having 'sufficient landscape qualities to elevate it above other more everyday landscapes'. However, it states 'it is not possible to set a definitive threshold. It is a judgment that must be made on a case-by-case basis, based on the evidence. There should be a weight of evidence that supports the recognition of a landscape as valued above more everyday landscapes.'
7. The approach in TG02/21 is also in line with accepted national guidance on:
  - Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014)
  - Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (Natural England, 2019)
  - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Ed. (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013)
8. The guidance supports identification of higher value landscapes at the Neighbourhood Plan level. It advises, in paragraph 2.2.1; '*Landscape value at the local authority or neighbourhood level can be assessed and mapped spatially, i.e. through identifying areas for local landscape designation. Studies to support spatial designations should identify the landscape qualities of each area of landscape proposed for designation.*'
9. It gives guidance on the approach, in paragraph 2.3.2 it states; '*In undesignated areas, landscape value should be determined through a review of existing assessments, policies, strategies and guidelines and, where appropriate, by new survey and analysis*' and suggests assessing value under the following 8 headings:
  - Natural heritage
  - Cultural heritage
  - Landscape condition
  - Associations
  - Distinctiveness

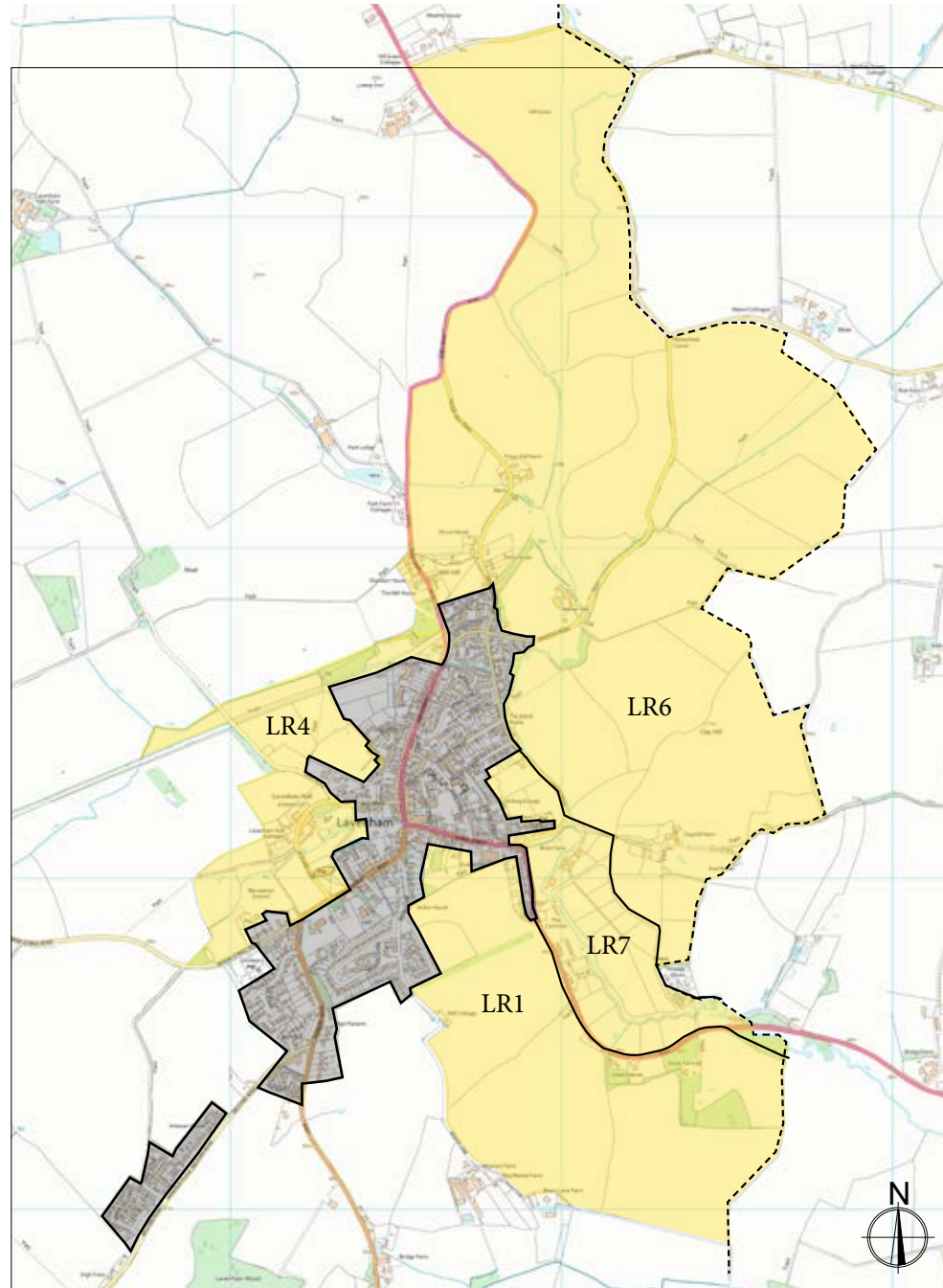
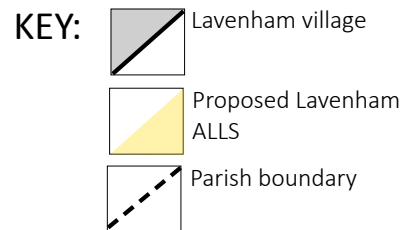
- Perceptual (Scenic)
- Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)
- Functional aspects.

10. This approach is in line with that taken in this report and provides evidence of landscape value under a similar and comparable set of headings. Based on the findings, it is therefore valid to redefine an area for protection for the 2023 Neighbourhood Plan review.

### The newly defined area

11. The proposed boundaries for the new area are character areas that were judged, in line with the accepted sensitivity methodology, to have 'HIGH' sensitivity value, in either landscape or visual terms. The term agreed on for these areas is: Areas of Local Landscape Sensitivity (ALLS).
12. The proposed ALLS comprises four of the rural fringe character areas, as mapped on figure 2.2:
  - The Lavenham Brook valley bottom (LR7).
  - The east sides of the Lavenham Brook (LR6).
  - The west sides of the Lavenham Brook (LR1).
  - The meadow system to the west of the village (LR4).
13. These areas are highly sensitive owing to one or more of the following factors:
  - Enduring historic, small scale field patterns.
  - Prominently seen in important views out from the historic core.
  - Prominently seen in important views towards the village.
  - Particularly scenic combination of rolling topography with good landscape structure of trees and hedges.
  - Traditional land management practices endure.
  - Associations with heritage assets to which it provides setting.
  - Notable amenity and recreational value.
14. The intention is to protect the Area from development that will harm its character or prove intrusive within its views. Any proposals for development in the Lavenham ALLS will have to accord with the requirements of the NP policy of the same name. The supporting text should make reference to Section 1 of this document, where the specific sensitivities, that are present in each area, are set out.

Figure 2.2: The proposed Lavenham Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity (ALLS)



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An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood, showing a dense cluster of houses with various rooflines and colors, interspersed with green trees. The image is in a light, monochromatic color scheme, likely sepia or a light brown tone, which serves as a background for the text.

Section 3

# Defined Views Appraisal

# Section 3: Defined Views

## 3.1 Introduction

### The purpose of Defined View studies

1. As part of the assessment of local identity and value, identifying which views people particularly enjoy and which views help define a sense of place is very useful. Once identified, these views can be subject to a Neighbourhood Plan policy to try to conserve their special qualities. This supports the aim of planning policy, at all levels, which requires local character and distinctiveness to be recognised and responded to appropriately.
2. Whilst there is not an accepted definition of what constitutes a 'Defined' or 'Important' view, in any of the published and accepted landscape guidance, they are usually understood along the lines of a scene that helps define the special character and qualities of a place. They might feature distinctive and/or historic buildings, local landmarks, or an appealing or historically intact arrangement of topography, natural features and built form that together help give a settlement its identity. They also contribute to experience, feelings and emotions - and to well-being. Views must be publicly accessible and available.
3. Lavenham parish group consulted on this for the 2016 Plan and published a Defined Views Assessment which identified 12 defined views.

### View criteria / justification

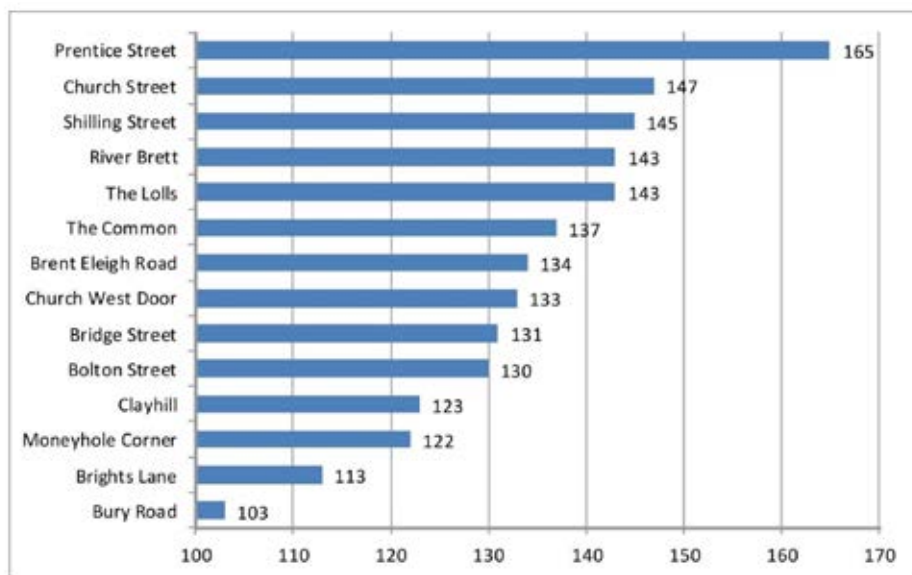
4. The selection of a defined view should be justifiable, intelligible, and the process transparent. The following factors might apply:
  - The overall impression should be of higher than usual scenic value. This might arise from a number of factors - landscape composition and complexity, an appreciation of topography, the depth of field, its naturalness, and arrangement of natural and vegetative features.
  - Views which are indicative of a special 'sense of place' which reflect the intrinsic character of a place.
  - The value might be enhanced because high numbers of people experience the view. For example, a view from a well-used footpath on a village edge, identified by numerous local people as important, might be considered more valued than one selected from an isolated point on a quiet lane.
  - Views that attract visitors to the area would be highly valued.

- Views that feature local landmarks, perhaps with skyline presence, aid orientation in the landscape or along a route.
  - The view might contribute to the setting of a Heritage asset. It might help illustrate the village's history and how the land has been used, managed and settled.
  - It might have particular cultural associations (for example, as with Constable and the Stour Valley).
5. Selection should also be subject to public consultation to ensure the views put forward are an accurate reflection of the value attributed by the community.

### Neighbourhood Plan 2016

6. Work on important views began back in 2000. Original survey work undertaken by a local Countryside Group at this time identified 14 potential significant views. These were subsequently incorporated into the approved Lavenham Design Statement (2002).
7. The 2016 Neighbourhood Plan group went on to use these 14 views as the basis for consultation. A Neighbourhood Plan Workshop was held in March 2014. Residents were shown the fourteen views on photographs and maps. From their local knowledge they were asked to score the views within the range of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'very important' to 5 'least important'). Residents were also asked about other views which might consider worthy of protection.
8. The results from the survey are shown in figure 3.1, which ranks the views in order of their value to residents. The view from Prentice Street is clearly considered the most important, with other views out from the historic core taking second and third places.
9. The survey resulted in some small changes to the original list of 14 views. The NP group decided to remove the view with the lowest score - 'Bury Road' and also 'Church West door' because as it was deemed very similar to that named 'Bridge Street'.
10. A final set of 12 views was taken forward. The Defined Views were published as 'Appendix 3' to the 2016 Neighbourhood Plan.

Figure 3.1  
Results of the Defined Views consultation for the 2016 Plan.



approximately a 50% overlap. These were digitally stitched together, using photoshop, to form panoramas. They are a Type 1 Visual Representation<sup>1</sup> (for illustrative purposes and not be treated as 'verifiable'). Whilst specific points are mapped, some views might be representative of a number of similar or sequential views which might be experienced along a road or footpath.

14. Importantly, and this was missing from Appendix 3 in 2016, each representative photo is accompanied by a short paragraph explaining why the views are considered particularly special, and which features within the view are the key aspects of value. This provides a more focused basis for protection of those aspects through NP policy.
15. However, it should be noted that the final list is not an exhaustive list of the only views with special qualities in the parish, there are many other views that contribute to local distinctiveness and rural character and it should not be inferred that other views in the parish have little value and are not worthy of protection. For example, Place Services identified a set of notable viewpoints within Lavenham in their 2018 Heritage Sensitivity Assessment (for the Joint Local Plan). These viewpoint locations are presented in appendix 2 of this document. It is worth noting this study, which had a focus on heritage, identified a set of different important views to these valued by the community.

### Neighbourhood Plan 2023

11. For the 2023 plan, the previous work on Defined Views was reviewed by the Neighbourhood Plan group. It was decided that, given the views have changed little, and public consultation was a key part of the selection, the 12 defined views remained relevant and there was no need to restart the process.
12. The 12 views are re-presented here with updated photographs. This was necessary because development had affected some of the views and it also brought the method of photography in line with Landscape Institute guidance on photographic image presentation (Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19 17 September 2019).
13. Photographs were taken during May 2022 and replace the set of original photos taken for the 2016 plan. These are presented on the following pages and numbered according to location. The photos were taken with a Canon 700D SLR with a 50mm fixed lens. The panoramic photos presented are made up from two or three consecutive images, with

<sup>1</sup> Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19 17 September 2019

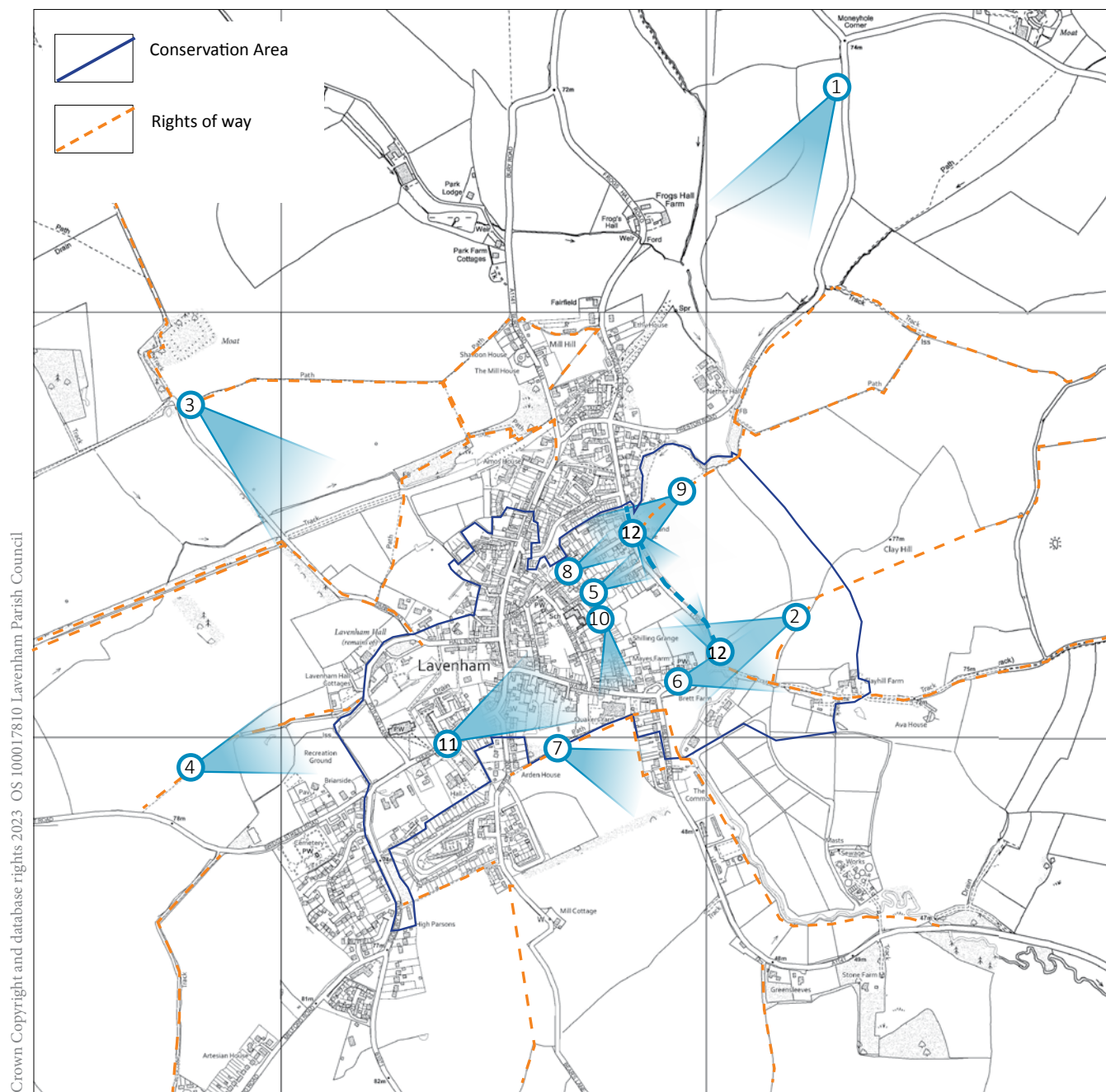
### 3.2. Defined view locations



Defined View location and direction of view

- View 1. Moneyhole Corner (Towards the southwest)
- View 2. Clay Hill footpath (Towards the southwest)
- View 3. Brights Lane (Towards the southeast)
- View 4. Bridge Street Road footpath (Towards the east)
- View 5. Bolton Street (Towards the east)
- View 6. The Common (Towards the east)
- View 7. The Lolls (Towards the east)
- View 8. Prentice Street (Towards the east)
- View 9. Nether Hall Farm footpath (Towards the west)
- View 10. Shilling Street (Towards the south)
- View 11. Church Street (Towards the east)
- View 12. Lavenham Brook (Various, along blue dashed line)

The pinpoint location is intended to be representative, a series of similar views might be available in the vicinity. The aspects of value in each view are set out and justified on the following pages.



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### 3.3 Viewpoint photographs

#### Defined View 1 - Moneyhole Corner



##### Location and description:

This view of the village is taken from a pull-in on the lane south of the junction of Rookwood Lane and the Preston Road known as Moneyhole Corner. Vehicles heading south into the village experience a sequence of views of Lavenham towards the southwest, over Nether Hall Farm in the foreground.

It is a long length, wide-angle view from the elevated part of the valleyside. It comprises the rolling valley farmland, fringed with woodland and hedges, with Lavenham nestling on the lower slopes.

The view is generally over rural character area LR6.

##### Justification:

This is considered an important 'defining' view because it overlooks the historic western side of the village, and the settlement's valley location can be clearly understood. The combination of well vegetated, gently rolling hillsides and the cluster of settlement, assimilated within

trees and hedgerows, is scenic - a view of a 'rural idyll'. The view is also of some length and worthy of pause to take it in. The pull-in on the roadside could well be the result of people doing just that.

The Church tower is very strongly recognisable landmark feature in the centre of the view and an important aid for local orientation.

There are no detracting features in the view.

##### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural character of the landscape that provides setting to the village.
- Protect the primacy of the church tower - protect the skyline from competing features.
- Maintain the amount of woodland on the valley sides.

## Defined View 2 - Clay Hill footpath



### Location and description:

A sequence of moderate distance, westward views are available from numerous points on Clay Hill from the well-used public footpath. The village is seen spreading across the valley bottom up to the plateau edge - the river valley topography can be clearly seen and understood.

The viewpoint is located in character area LR6.

### Justification:

A scenic, rich view of the historic side of the village worthy of pause and contemplation. The built form is studded with mature trees which add to the sense of a long established settlement. The view comprises rich mix of grassland, arable land, and settlement, all framed and bounded by thick hedges and trees. The historic, tall church tower is seen prominently in the skyline, a key device for local orientation.

New housing at Osier View is seen sitting rather starkly on the top of the valley side, just

below the skyline to the south. Tree growth on the valleyside beneath may help screen and assimilate the development over time.

### Change management objectives:

- Protect the fringes of the village from further unsympathetic development and retain its distinctive rural setting.
- Maintain the dominance of the church tower in the skyline - protect the skyline from competing built form.
- Enhance views to straight or stark edges of new development by assimilating behind structural planting (trees and hedges).

### Defined View 3 - Bright's Lane



#### Location and description:

A sequence of views from the well-used footpath that leads east from the top of Park Road where it turns west into Brights Lane. View length is generally moderate but extends further towards the east. The village sits beyond the top of the shallow valley side and is generally screened from view by intervening vegetation, however, the church tower is clearly seen to the south.

The view is located in character area LR5.

#### Justification:

This view is valued because of the scenic rural vista on offer from this elevated point. The tall church tower emerges from the skyline, unchallenged by other built form, and associates with the glimpses into the network of small, traditional pastures, which create a sense of history within the view. It provides a strong orientation point and landmark. The pill boxes are also glimpsed from this footpath, adding a further layer of historic interest.

#### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural character of the view and maintain the openness of the longer views to the east.
- Protect the setting of the church tower - protect the skyline from competing features.
- Conserve and manage the pattern of small meadows for their positive contribution to the view and to landscape character.



## Defined View 4 - Bridge Street



### Location and description:

A sequence of moderate length views, towards the east, are available from the footpath that connects Bridge Street Road to Potland Lane. The foreground comprises arable land backed by traditional pastures, well managed with new parkland trees recently planted.

The tall church tower projects into the sky - the only significant built form in the view.

The viewpoint shown is located in rural character area LR3.

### Justification:

This view is highly valued because of the direct view of the church tower on offer. The beauty of the whole west facade can be appreciated from this angle and it appears to have a purely rural setting, the settlement behind can't be seen. The mature trees in the view are important for providing that sense of isolation, as well as framing the views of the tower, creating a strong landmark.

### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt character of the land within the view, west of the church. Continue to manage the meadows in LR4 in a traditional way.
- Protect the isolated setting of the church tower - protect the skyline from competing features.
- Conserve and manage the stock of mature trees within the view.



### Defined View 5 - Bolton Street



#### Location and description:

Relatively short length view, from the historic core, at the top of Bolton Street. The view is 'outward', to the countryside east of the village, the opposite valleyside providing backdrop to the distinctive street scene.

The view is towards character area LR6.

#### Justification:

The combination of the historic cottages and houses, many of which are listed, stepping down the steep valleyside, seen against the rolling backdrop of the landscape is one of Lavenham's most distinctive characteristics and key to 'sense of place'. As well as being valued by residents, views like this are of strong interest to visitors.

Parked cars and overhead lines are the only detracting features.

#### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural character of the landscape as backdrop to key views from the historic core.

## Defined View 6 - The Common



### Location and description:

Short-range, outward views to the east experienced along Lower Road and from around The Common. Cottages frame the view towards Clay Hill on one side, trees that line the recreation ground on the other. The Lavenham Brook flows under Clay Lane seen ahead.

The view is towards rural character area LR6 and 7.

### Justification:

These views are valued as they allow the countryside to have a strong influence on this rural corner of the village. Land rises quite steeply giving a clear sense of the valley topography, and the organic shapes of the ancient lanes and field enclosure patterns. This well vegetated village edge conveys a strong sense of history, little influenced by modern development.

### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural character of the landscape as backdrop.
- Protect the mature trees and hedgelines that frame the views.



## Defined View 7 - The Lolls



### Location and description:

View from the valleyside on the footpath east of Bears Lane that connects to Brent Eleigh Road. The view faces eastward over the valley bottom with the wooded valleyside opposite acting as backdrop. Viewpoint photo shown is from halfway down the footpath - views from more elevated points are becoming screened by a belt of tree growth (appears to be self seeded birch) which prevents longer views.

The view is in character area LR1.

### Justification:

This footpath is close to the village and is well used - the view is therefore highly valued by residents. The view is a scenic combination of rolling topography, fringed with trees, with houses nestling in the valley bottom. Land use is generally pastoral.

### Change management objectives:

- Protect the rural character of the view and its openness which promotes understanding of village's position with the valley of the Lavenham Brook.

## Defined View 8 - Prentice Street



### Location and description:

Relatively short length view, readily available to tourists, just east of the Market Place. The view is out to the countryside east of the village, the rolling landscape providing backdrop to the distinctive street scene.

The view is towards character area LR6.

### Justification:

Historic cottages and timbered houses line Prentice Street, the green backdrop highlighting aspects such as the characteristic stepping roofs. The green and rolling backdrop is one of Lavenham's most distinctive characteristics and key to 'sense of place'. As well as being valued by residents, views like this are of strong interest to visitors. Parked cars and some overhead lines are the only detracting feature.

This view was voted the most important view in Lavenham by residents.

### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural character of the landscape as backdrop to key views from the historic core and Prentice Street.



### Defined View 9 - Nether Hall Farmland footpath



#### Location and description:

View towards the historic side of the village from the well used footpath that climbs the valley side before turning north towards Nether Hall Farm. It takes in the east side of the historic core and is primarily a roofscape but glimpses of Prentice Street are possible. The church tower is just glimpsed in the centre of the view overhead.

The view is through character area LR6.

#### Justification:

This is a particularly distinctive view of the village, the historic buildings appreciated alongside steeply rolling topography at fairly close range. The skyline is formed of roof lines and punctuated by trees. It is a very scenic and charming combination with no detracting elements.

#### Change management objectives:

- Protect the character of this view from modernising influences to retain its strong historic feel.
- Maintain the historic skyline.

## Defined View 10 - Shilling Street



### Location and description:

Moderate length view, southward, from the top of Shilling Street in the historic core. It comprises gently winding, sloping street lined with old cottages in coloured painted renders. In the distance, farmland is clearly seen as backdrop to the scene rising up behind Water Street.

The view is towards character area LR1.

### Justification:

This view to a rural, tree studded skyline is of significant importance to both residents and visitors. The combination of historic cottages and houses, seen against the unspoilt rolling backdrop of the landscape is key to sense of place in Lavenham.

Parked cars are the only detracting feature.

Residents voted this view the third most important in Lavenham.

### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural character of the landscape as backdrop to views from Shilling Street.

## Defined View 11 - Church Street



### Location and description:

View from Church Street just east of the junction with the car park, looking towards the northeast. Church Street is wide at this point and lined with some prestigious buildings (some are grade II\* listed). Overhead, distant countryside is glimpsed.

The view takes in a small part of rural character area LR6 Clay Hill.

### Justification:

View along what will shortly become the High Street, framed by 'wonky' ancient buildings which wrapping around the corner. It epitomises the curves and 'leans' that characterise the historic core, and heralds the entrance into the heart of the village. Overhead, the top of the valley side is seen. Rolling farmland topped with trees is seen along the skyline, reinforcing the sense that landscape setting is part of Lavenham's unique character.

Views like this contribute significantly to the distinctiveness and identity of Lavenham and help draw its many visitors.

Residents voted this view the second most important in Lavenham.

### Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural character of the landscape where it forms backdrop to Church Street views.



### Defined View 12 - Lavenham Brook - various views



#### Location and description:

A number of short range views along the Lavenham Brook are possible from Lower Road - this photo is just one representative view. It is towards the footbridge at the east end of Prentice Street and the view faces southeast.

The views are experienced on the village edge where it adjoins rural character area LR7.

#### Justification:

The Lavenham Brook is valued for its naturalness and its role in shaping the landform. It is little more than a wide stream at this point but it contributes to sense of place very positively. A public recreation route passes through this area strengthening its value to the community. The river banks can sometimes feel little domesticated and mown, as it passes along the edge of the village, but on the whole it retains a natural character, as in the photo above. Biodiversity is higher along the river - a Kingfisher was seen on the day this photo was taken. Some road safety signage is somewhat over dominant on the north of the fenceline seen in

the photo above.

#### Change management objectives:

- Protect and enhance the natural character and biodiversity value of the river corridor.
- Manage nettle and encroaching non-native invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam which is present on the banks in places.
- Review road safety signage if the opportunity arises.

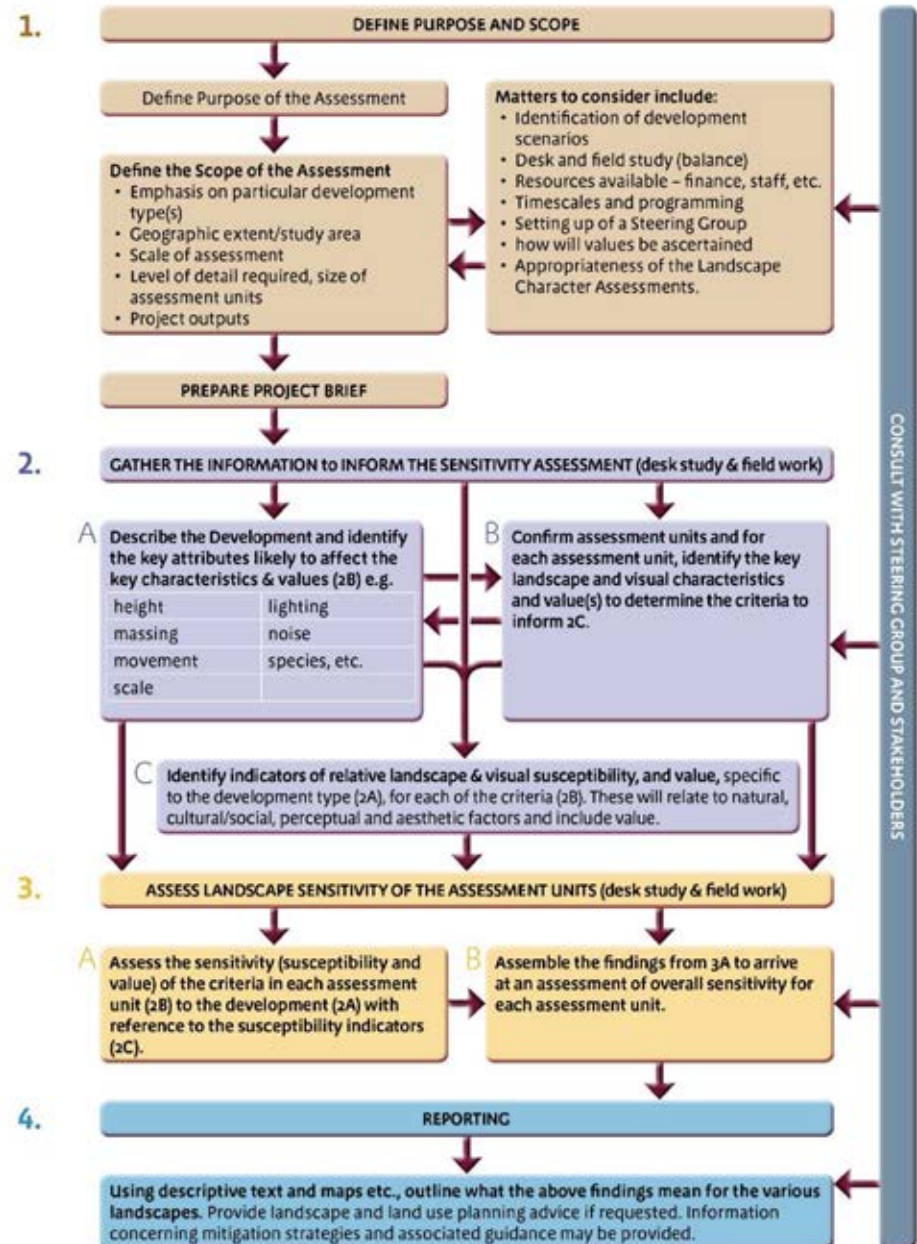




# Appendix

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

Figure 3 The process of Landscape sensitivity assessment



## Appendix 2: Appendix 1: Assessment Sheets for Babergh. Heritage and Settlement Sensitivity Assessment for Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts. Place Services March 2018



**Settlement Name: Lavenham**

**District: Babergh**

### Settlement Description:

Lavenham is a well preserved medieval market town, renowned for the quality of the surviving historic built form, not least the Guildhall in the marketplace, which is an exceptional example of sixteenth century craftsmanship. The quality of the built form was the result of the settlement's wealth, gained through its pre-eminence in the wool trade and as a result of the market charter granted to Lavenham by Henry III. The historic built form is concentrated along the main north-south High Street with a market square to the east, and around a series of east-west roads to the east of the High Street.

### Summary History:

The earliest recorded evidence of human settlement within Lavenham relates to the identification of a buried mosaic and building/bath, which are thought to be the remains of a Roman villa or bath house, and were found in the area of Grove House at the southern end of the settlement. The evidence was corroborated by excavations by Time Team outside of the village, which identified a Roman field system indicating the area was being farmed during the Roman period.

At the end of the Saxon period Lavenham was a manor held by a middle-ranking noble named Ulwin, but the manor passed to Aubrey (or Alberic) de Vere, a Norman baron, after the conquest, and he is recorded as owning the manor in the Domesday Book in 1086. The de Vere family was a prominent landowning family in East Anglia, and they continued to hold the estate until 1604, when it was sold to Sir Thomas Skinner. This residence was located to the west of the settlement, in close proximity to the current Lavenham Hall, which was constructed in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The site of the original hall is evident from a surviving medieval fishpond.

The town became increasingly wealthy throughout the medieval period, and was one of the richest towns in the country in 1524, mainly as a result of the profits of the cloth trade. This wealth is particularly evident in several high status buildings constructed in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. These included the Wool Hall, completed in 1464 and the Guildhall, an impressive timber-framed building which dominates the marketplace, and was built in 1529 as a hall of the Guild of Corpus Christi. The town's wealth was also evident in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which was built in a single phase between c.1480 and 1525. This was financed by the wealth of local families, including the de Veres and the Springs, and replaced an earlier church on the site, the fourteenth century chancel of which was retained in the current church.

The wealth of the settlement declined with the influx of cheaper imports, and competing industries from Europe, such as the influx of Dutch weavers in Colchester and Huguenot weavers in Braintree. This general decline in the cloth industry is one which is born across East Anglia, and is seen in other places such as Coggeshall in Essex. This led to the settlement's decline in significance, and it had lost its reputation as a major trading town by 1600. This waning of significance is perhaps best seen in the varying uses of the Guildhall, which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was used first as the Bridewell and then as a workhouse. It is also however one of the reasons why Lavenham's medieval character is so well preserved.

The railway arrived in the town in 1865 and continued in use through to 1965. The station was located at the northern end of the settlement, but has recently been demolished and replaced by a modern housing estate.

In the twentieth century there was an American Air Force airfield located in close proximity to settlement in Alpheton, but referred to as RAF Lavenham. It was manned during the Second World War but the land has since been returned to agriculture use, although some evidence of its structures and buildings remains, including the control tower.



### Historic Environment Designations

#### Conservation Area:

Lavenham Conservation Area

#### Listed Buildings: within the village

Grade I: 12      Grade II\*: 24      Grade II: 158

#### Scheduled Monument:

Market Cross in the centre of the town (1006062)  
Iron Gas Holder (1005965)

#### Registered Park and Garden:

None

### Landscape Designations

#### AONB:

None

#### SSSI:

None

#### SAC:

None

#### Ancient Woodland:

None

### Key Characteristics

#### Settlement:

*Note: The key positive features or qualities, which if lost or changed there would be a significant consequence for the current character.*

Lavenham is an exceptional example medieval market town with linear built form centred along the High Street, and around the edge of the market place. The historic built form also falls along linear streets to the east. To the west of the settlement is a church-hall complex, with both of the original church and hall having been rebuilt by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The High Street and Water Street is characterised by a considerable proliferation of high quality timber framed buildings with a comparatively high number being listed grade I or II\*. This is indicative of the wealth and significance of the medieval and is vital in both understanding its historic development, and in defining its character and appearance. The market square is similarly well preserved and includes an exceptionally significant example of a late medieval guild hall. Within the core of the settlement, and indeed on several of the approach roads, the historic street pattern is well preserved, and this too contributes to its character.





#### Surrounding Landscape:

*Note: The key positive features or qualities, which if lost or changed there would be a significant consequence for the current character.*

Lavenham sits within a valley which is predominantly characterised by agricultural use, and this is particularly evident from Lower Road. This means that the historic built form in the surrounding landscape mainly relates to dispersed farm complexes, which are located high on the valley sides surrounding the settlement. The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul sits on a high piece of ground and is visible from long distances in all directions.

#### Key Views

*Note: The key views towards, through, across and away from the settlement*

1. Views looking north along the High Street. This emphasises the character of the highly significant built form within the core of the settlement, as well as the surviving settlement pattern. It therefore allows a good understanding of the key characteristics of the settlement.
2. View looking south along the High Street. This again highlights the contribution which the historic built form makes to the character of the settlement.
3. View looking West along Water Street. This highlights the high quality nature of the built form on the secondary roads to the east of the High Street.
4. Views from within the Market Place. These have been partly intruded upon by the extent of car parking within the Market Square, but allow an understanding of the historic commercial centre of the town, as well as the prominence and exceptional significance of the built form which fronts onto the square.
5. View looking west from Lower Road. This shows the prominence of the church in views from within the settlement.
6. View looking north from Brent Eleigh Road. This view shows the prominent location of the church in longer views from within the wider landscape
7. View looking north east from the junction of Bridge Street Road and Sudbury Road, which shows the prominent and dominant location of the church at the entrance to the historic settlement from the south.

#### Value

*Note: Based on designation status (including setting of AONB/heritage assets, relationship of the settlement to the heritage assets), local or community interest or use (access/enjoyment & amenity value), setting for the wider settlement. Condition/rarity/quality.*

Lavenham is a medieval market town which is of very high value, the result of its medieval wealth, and its post-medieval stagnation as a market town. This relates not just to the complete nature of the surviving medieval town, but also to the exceptional quality and significance of the built form (in particular the Church of SS. Peter and Paul, the Guild Hall and the buildings on the High Street, Water Street and in the Market Place). This significance is best evidenced in the exceptional number of listed buildings, of which a significant number are listed Grade I or II\*. The church is also a prominent landscape feature, which is highly visible in views from all directions.

However, the settlement also has considerable areas of modern built form, particularly to the north and south, but also on the backlands to the west. The latter in particular has begun to impinge on the historic character of the settlement.



#### Susceptibility

*Note: The ability of the receptors (features, qualities, characteristics, condition) to accommodate the changes without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline.*

Given the significance and quantity of the heritage assets within the core of the medieval town, and their proximity and interrelationship with each other, the centre of Lavenham is highly susceptible to both infill or backland development. Certain assets, particularly the church, are also currently visible in long key views and these assets are susceptible to development which intrudes upon or severs these long views.

However, there are several edge of settlement, particularly to the north and south west where there is already large areas of modern development. This modern development now characterises these entrances into the settlement and these areas are of lower susceptibility. These areas of modern development vary in both age and quality and where further modern development is proposed (even in areas of lower susceptibility) care should be taken to ensure that the new development is in keeping with the character of settlement, and is of high quality.

There is currently a strong pervading character as a result of the complete and dominant character of the historic built form. This has been eroded by the areas of insensitive development and there is the potential that further insensitive development could exponentially harm the significance of the settlement.

#### Potential Enhancement

*Note: Areas that could potentially be improved or enhanced.*

The current prominence and extent of parking within the Market Square is an intrusive feature, which makes a negative contribution to the significance of the highly important heritage assets which surround it. The removal of general car parking from the square would therefore be beneficial in preserving and enhancing the conservation area and the setting of these assets.

#### Recommendations

The settlement is of high value, and is of national recognition and significance. However, existing areas of backland development have resulted in harm to the significance of the settlement which is of exceptional value and further similar development should be resisted. The church is particularly prominent in views in the wider landscape and would therefore need to be considered when considering new housing applications. There are some isolated areas of modern development to the north and southwest where further development could be located with more limited potential for harm.





Settlement Plan

