

Stutton Neighbourhood Plan

Parish Landscape Study:

Key Views Assessment

June 2021 ^{v5}



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1. Introduction

This document is part of the evaluation of Stutton’s landscape character and sensitivity to help in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The overall aim is to identify and conserve aspects of landscape value and visual amenity in the village.

The purpose of Important View studies

1. As part of the assessment of local character, and the value people attribute to local landscape, understanding which views local people particularly appreciate is useful.
2. This assessment seeks to provide a brief but robust and objective evidence-base to inform and underpin a Neighbourhood Plan Important View policy. An ‘Important’ view is one that would be generally recognised as having notable qualities or a particularly attractive composition that might cause people to pause and appreciate the scene. More than an ‘everyday’ view, it is more likely to feature in people’s perceptions of what Stutton looks like in their memories, and provide heightened feelings of connectedness and wellbeing. They may be the reason that visitors are attracted to the village. Once identified, these views can be subject to policy which can try to conserve their composition and qualities.
3. Planning policy at all levels requires local character and distinctiveness to be recognised and responded to in new development and land use change. In the new Joint Local Plan, landscape is addressed by Policy LP19 which states:
 - To protect and enhance landscape character development must:*
 - a. Integrate positively with the existing landscape character of the area and reinforce the local distinctiveness and identity of individual settlements.
 - b. Proposals must be sensitive to their landscape and visual amenity impacts (including on dark skies and tranquil areas); subject to siting, design, lighting, use of materials and colour, along with the associated mitigation measures;
 - c. Enhance and protect landscape character and values and heritage assets such as; locally characteristic landscape features.....
4. It is therefore necessary to analyse and understand what shapes local character and distinctiveness in order that planning policy can be effectively applied. The Stutton

parish Landscape Character and Sensitivity Appraisal provides a framework to aid decision making and this Important Views appraisal will support that work.

5. This document defines 9 views in Stutton which are considered by residents to be particularly important and that contribute notably to its character and the experience of the village. They underpin policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and will form part of Parish Council decision making about proposed development or land use change in the future.

View criteria

6. There is not an accepted definition of what constitutes an Important view in any of the published and accepted landscape guidance. The selection of views is also a result of people’s perceptions, so is also somewhat subjective.
7. However, Important Views are usually understood along the lines of a view that defines the special character and qualities of a settlement and contributes to its ‘sense of place’. Such views could have a particularly notable or distinctive composition or scenic quality, that makes them stand out in the eyes (and memories) of local people and visitors. 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, and perhaps come with particular recognised cultural associations. They also contribute to felt experience, feelings and emotions - and to wellbeing.
8. The following factors are considered:
 - Scenic value relating to the composition of rural views - including complexity, appreciation of topography, depth of field, naturalness, and arrangement of natural and vegetative features.
 - Number of people likely to be experiencing it - i.e. value relating to shared experience. The more people that experience a viewpoint, the higher the value attributed. For example, a view from a well-used footpath on a village edge, identified by numerous people as important, might be considered more valued than one selected from an isolated point on a quiet lane.
 - Presence of a landmark feature, perhaps with skyline presence, aiding orientation in the landscape or along a route.

1. Introduction continued:-

- View contributes to the setting of a Heritage asset.
- Other locally distinctive points of interest or cultural associations that particularly define the character of Stutton. Views that are indicative of a special 'sense of place' which reflect its intrinsic character and Important characteristics.

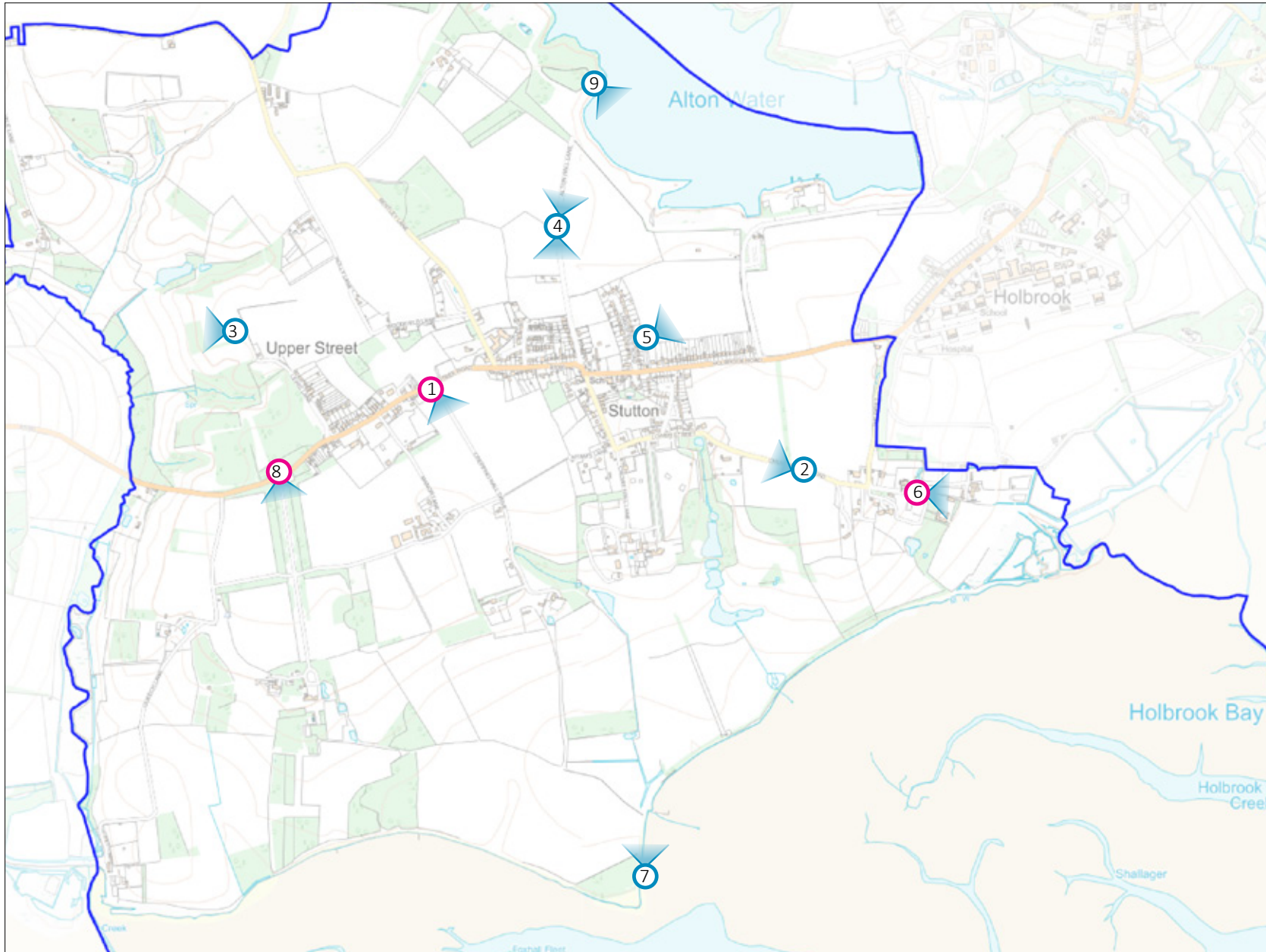
Selection process

9. With these criteria in mind, the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group also agreed that each view must:
 - be publicly accessible
 - be greatly valued by local residents
 - be enjoyed by visitors
 - contribute in an important way to the character, and rural nature, of Stutton
 - illustrate the village's history and how the land has been used and settled
10. The Group created opportunities for village residents to nominate Important Views. This commenced with a Village Hall consultation event in September 2019 where a parish map was provided and pins were offered to participants to identify which views were particularly valued. In January 2021 a newsletter was delivered to every house which asked people to email the Big Conversation with their thoughts about views. The village website also had a Comments Box (on the Home Page and the Big Conversation page) in relation to this subject.
11. The final Important Views were selected by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group in spring 2021. From Fourteen views initially selected the number was reduced to nine after the Working Group reviewed them all against the agreed criteria. Some of the initial views were discarded if it was felt they didn't meet the criteria strongly enough.
12. The group worked with the author to provide the supporting text justifications and change management objectives. The text sets out the aspects of value in each view and focuses attention on what may threaten them and considers how this could be addressed.
13. The final set of nine Important Views are mapped and presented on the following pages. Some are identified as specific point views, and some are representative of a number of similar or sequential views which might be experienced along a road or footpath. These



are presented on the map with a differing symbol to differentiate between point views and sequential views.

14. 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. The selected views, however, are held in high public regard and demonstrate particular qualities or features.

2. Important view locations



List of Important Views:

-  Point views
-  Representative view - series number of similar views available
- View 1: Crepping Hall Drive footpath - southwards
- View 2: Church Field Road - looking west
- View 3: Lewis Lane - westwards
- View 4: Alton Hall Lane - north and southwards
- View 5: Footpath north of Holbrook Rd - looking northeast
- View 6: Stutton Church - view east towards Bay
- View 7: Shoreline views
- View 8: Stutton Hall driveway - looking south
- View 9: Alton Water - looking southeast

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 1 - Crepping Hall Drive



Location and description:

View southward down the Crepping Hall driveway from the main road giving a wide angle view from the south-east to the south-west. The view comprises the long straight drive, open farmland to either side, with distant wooded skyline, and a big sky seen overhead. The holly lined driveway is a distinctive feature and emphasises the estate farm character. The wooded skyline ahead prevents longer views as far as the estuary.

The view is through parish character area FCA 4.

Justification:

This view is through the designated AONB landscape, it is rural and scenic. It also offers a key local amenity as the driveway is a very well used footpath which connects into a wider network. It offers greatly valued local amenity. Both residents and visitors enter the AONB here and can continue southwards past Crepping Hall to access the estuary - this is a key access point for the River Stour. Visitors park at the nearby village hall.

This view is also experienced by traffic passing between the two settlement clusters. It offers a sudden long view and rural feel after the contained views experienced in the settlement

clusters. The landscape here emphasises the way the village and the farmland interacts and fits into the Suffolk countryside.

Change management objectives:

Protect the unspoilt nature and rural estate farm character of the AONB landscape.

Maintain the openness of the long view and conserve its unspoilt rural character.

Protect the gap between the two village clusters because the expansive rural views provide a distinctive experience at the heart of the village.

Conserve the special character so that people continue to enjoy recreation in this area - there is a good network of footpaths in the parish that attracts visitors.

Conserve and manage the holly avenue as a distinctive feature

Maintain a low key approach to signage related to the business park

Maintain the heath and wellbeing benefits offered by the ready access to the rights of way network, and access point for the River Stour.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 2 - Church Field Road



Location and description:

Historic narrow lane offers views eastwards towards the village edge en route from Stutton Green. The view comprises Church Field Road ahead flanked by open farmland to either side. Plantation woodland is seen to the right (north) and the edge of Crowe Hall parkland is seen on the skyline to the left (south) A big sky is seen overhead. There are no detracting elements. The parish character area FCA 2 is defined by the wooded edges.

Justification:

This view is through the designated AONB landscape. It is particularly rural, tranquil and quiet. It is publicly accessible - Church Field Road offers a key local amenity as it is used as a route to Stutton Green and the Holbrook Bay/RHS walks - an access point for the River Stour. Intermittent glimpses of the estuary are possible to the south - this is highly valued as it is one of the only places where public glimpses of the river are achievable from the village edges. Views here provides a reminder of the proximity of the river, that is lacking elsewhere. The narrow, ancient lane connects the main village to its church, from which it is set apart. It contributes notably to character on this side of the settlement and provides a tranquil

experience when travelling between the settlement and the church.

This lane has designated 'Quiet Lane' status.

Change management objectives:

- Protect the unspoilt nature and rural estate farm character of the AONB landscape.
- Protect the views that form the rural gap between the main village cluster and Stutton Green
- Protect glimpses to the estuary because they are very rarely achieved from the village. Look for any opportunities to enhance views of the water. (The two large parklands of Crowe Hall and Stutton Hall occupy the shores and usually prevent longer views to the Stour).
- Conserve the unspoilt character of the views so that people continue to enjoy the informal recreation on offer.
- Maintain and enhance (through new planting) the stock of roadside trees as they contribute notably to local character.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 3 - Lewis Lane



Location and description:

View westward through farmland from footpath along Lewis Lane, north of the residential zone. The view comprises the rolling valleysides of the Samford Valley offering a scenic view. The variety in terms of the topography and rich texture experienced contrasts with the flat plateau views that characterise the majority of the farmland views in the parish.

The view is through parish character area FCA 5.

Justification:

This view is over land now designated AONB, it was added in the 2020 AONB boundary extension. Heading north along Lewis Lane, the enclosed track suddenly opens out to reveal long views. It is a place for pause to allow the eye to be drawn to the distant valleyside and attractive network of hedges and oak trees that divide up the farmland. The skylines are wooded and the landscape feels in good condition.

Lewis Lane is a well used public footpath route, used by a significant number of people, and much valued for its special views.

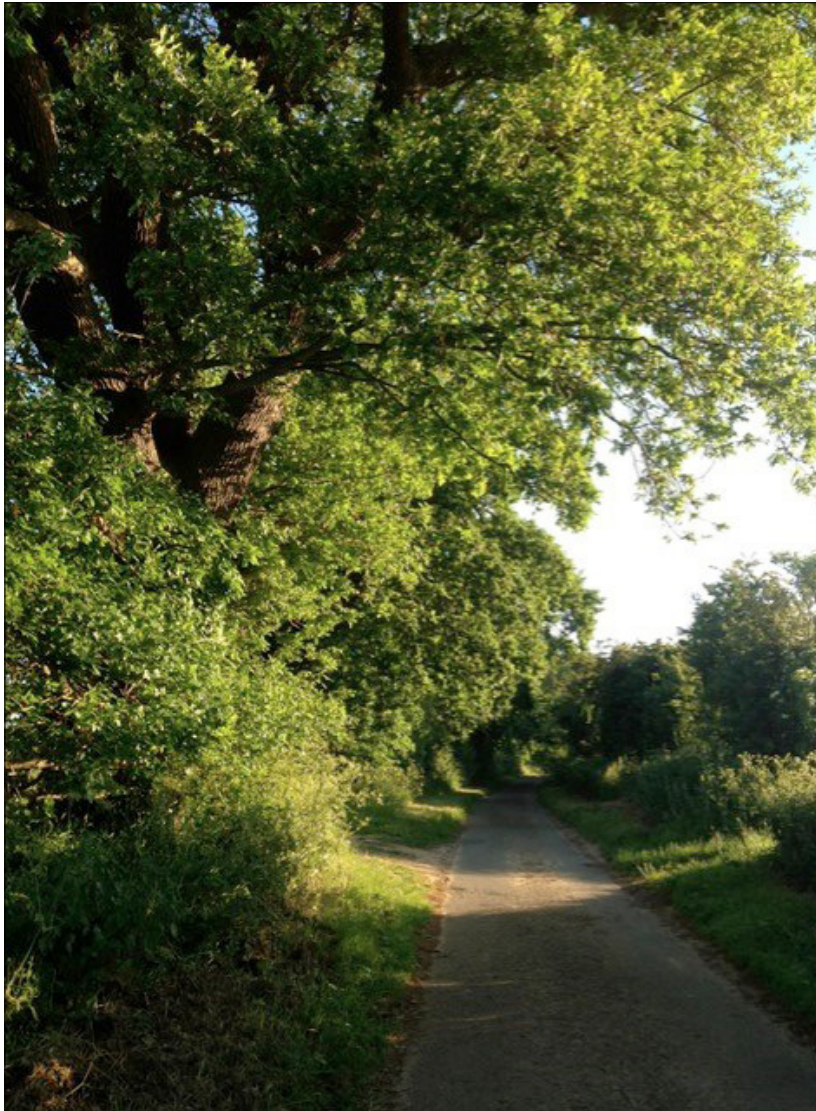
Change management objectives:

Protect the unspoilt nature and rural estate farm character of the AONB landscape.

Protect the openness of the view.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 4 - Alton Hall Lane



Location and description:

View southward from Alton Hall Lane - a quiet, historic, tree-lined lane, also known locally as 'Watery Lane'. The views comprise the lane itself and the tranquil farmland setting on either side. These views are not in the AONB.

Alton Hall Lane offers an important pedestrian access route to Alton Water - its surfaced nature means its an important lane for walkers, cyclists, buggies and wheelchairs.

The view is through parish character area FCA2.

Justification:

The views from Alton Hall Lane are greatly appreciated by local residents. Villagers feel strongly about the importance of retaining the attractive rural views along this lane which also features a number of old oak trees. It is very well used for recreational walks and enjoyed for its quietness and deeply rural atmosphere. It provides an extension to the rural experience for visitors to Alton Water and residents appreciate the tranquil experience it offers on the very edge of the village.

This lane has designated 'Quiet Lane' status.

Change management objectives:

Protect the unspoilt views between the village and Alton Water.

Maintain the openness of the long views from the lane at the village edge.

Protect the tranquillity of the lane.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 5 - Footpath north of Holbrook Road



Location and description:

View eastwards across farmland from the village edge towards Alton Water to the north and the clocktower of the RHS to the east.

Some detracting in the view is experienced from the campsite at Alton Water.

The view is through parish character area FCA2.

Justification:

This route offers views from the public footpath and is well used as a rural walk. It is highly valued by dog walkers and walkers accessing the reservoir walks.

The views give a sense of place within the parish. The iconic Royal Hospital School clock tower is seen on the horizon, a strong and distinctive landmark emerging from tree cover. Landmarks are important in aiding orientation.

Change management objectives:

Maintain the openness of the view towards Alton Water.

Seek opportunities to enhance the view by screening visually intrusive land uses at Alton Water with structural planting.

Conserve the views towards the clocktower.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 6 - Stutton Church - view east



Location and description:

View over the meadows of Grade II listed Markwells Farm towards Holbrook Bay. The photograph is taken from the churchyard looking east, but views are also offered along the footpath that leads through the grounds of the house and its gardens, through to the estuary.

This view is through parish character area FCA3.

Justification:

This is a richly textured and scenic view of a reed-edged pond, attractive colour-washed historic house and its spacious setting composed of wildflower meadow, hedges and trees. The scene is all backed by distant views of the valleyside beyond.

The focus of the view is the historic house, which is set off by designed but low key landscape gardens which draws the eye through the meadows and lines of trees.

This view is within the AONB and leads walkers down to the creek at Holbrook Bay and the onward walks towards Harkstead. These are very well used and greatly valued recreational paths.

The views are an important illustration of the village's history.

Change management objectives:

Conserve the character of the view and appreciation of the historic farm and its relationship with the church.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 7 - Estuary views



Location and description:

Representative shoreline view - from Stutton Ness to the northeast. Views comprise a mosaic of rich visual textures - open water, mud at low tide, shingle and sand beaches, wooded cliffs, rich vegetation communities etc, as well as the dynamic experiential aspects - exposure and weather, calling and movement of sea birds, and the sounds and smells of the river itself.

Justification:

Just one of a series of highly scenic shoreline views that contribute to the significance and scenic beauty of the AONB. The proximity and access to the river is a key feature of living in Stutton for many residents. This is also an important place for visitors.

There is public access along the shoreline and often also on a parallel path along the shallow cliffs. The amenity value of the shoreline is very important for tranquil recreation - walking, picnicing, swimming, fishing, gathering etc. It is an important place for migratory birds and watching birds offers a further activity and visitor attraction.

There are visual reminders of the village's history in trade on the river and of the dynamic nature of the river.

Change management objectives:

Conserve the special character of the estuary views including consideration of the skylines above the shore on points inland, recognising the potential for impact on the character of the AONB and wider estuary.

Maintain access to the estuary through the farmlands.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 8 - Stutton Hall drive



Location and description:

View from the main road adjacent to the gatehouse. A similar closer range view is also obtained half-way down the driveway where a footpath crosses the drive, diverting walkers to either east or west.

This view is through parish character area FCA 5.

Justification:

This is a simple but distinctive view through historic parkland which leads the eye to a glimpse of the Tudor chimneys of Stutton Hall, within a circle of sky at the end of the avenue.

The driveway is a public footpath and allows the public to enjoy the approach to the impressive Hall through the lines of parkland scale trees. It provides access to the circular walk along the estuary via either Stutton Mill or Crepping Hall.

Change management objectives:

Conserve the special character of this historic view and maintain public access.

3. Viewpoint photographs

Important View 9: Alton Water



Location and description:

A view from the footpath along the reservoir edge southeast to the sailing centre. A block of woodland occupies the centre of the view behind the top of the dam, and a water tower and the RHS clocktower break the skyline and provides orientation.

This view includes parts of parish character area FCA 2.

Justification:

This is a scenic view across water, one of many views on offer on the circuitous path around the reservoir. It shows the combination of water, marshy edges, boats, trees and built form that make up these attractive views.

They are of key interest to visitors as well as local residents and are highly valued for the tranquil amenity they offer.

Change management objectives:

Conserve the undeveloped character of the shorelines and the tranquil atmosphere.

Protect views to the RHS clocktower as it provides important orientation.

Protect the public access around the reservoir.