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Lavenham Landscape Character Assessment

for Lavenham Parish Council

Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015

Issue V1

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This document is comprises a number of sections which are collectively referred to as the Lavenham Landscape Character Assessment

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[Lavenham and its landscape](#) page 3

A brief overview of Lavenham and its historic landscape setting, concluding with an examination of the current pressures faced by the landscape.

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[Landscape Sensitivity Study](#)

Presents in mapped form the results of the sensitivity study that seeks to judge the ability of 7 land parcels to assimilate development without significant harm.

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A set of general and land parcel specific, landscape-related development guidance, based on the findings of the sensitivity study

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Statement relating to the intention to retain an area of Special Landscape Area to the east of the village

Also available are two appendices detailing the approach, methodology and definition tables which may be of interest to professionals and decision makers. These are available as appendix 1 and 2 to this document:

Appendix 1

[Supporting document: Landscape Charater Assessment](#)

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Approach and methodology

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What is Landscape Character Assessment?

1. Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and analysing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive and create a sense of place. It does this by mapping and describing the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes and experiential characteristics that make one area distinctive from another. Landscape is a result of the interaction of the natural, physical components of the environment with the human element - historical and cultural land use and interventions. It is not just experienced visually, but through sounds, smells, memories and cultural associations.
2. LCA helps to inform, plan and manage change and can be useful when undertaken at a scale appropriate to local and neighbourhood plan-making. Landscape Character Assessment helps us to understand the ability of different landscape to withstand different types of development pressures and draw out the particular issues to which any future development should respond.
3. This landscape character assessment was completed in conjunction with a landscape sensitivity study. It is presented as section two in this report. The character study forms the baseline information on which the sensitivity assessment was based.
4. The assessment was been prepared on behalf of Lavenham Parish Council in October/ November 2015. It provides a parish-wide assessment of the character of the landscape around Lavenham. It does not include the built-up area of the village itself, instead focusing on the fringes of the village and the land parcels which abut its boundaries. The study area for this assessment is presented in figure LCA-02. The study was carried out by Lucy Batchelor-Wylam on behalf of Land and Sculpture Design Partnership in October/ November 2015.
5. Landscape character assessment analyses the differences in topography, soils, hydrology, woodland and tree cover, land use and farm type, and settlement pattern to divide the landscape around the village into 8 different character areas, named after a local feature. These are mapped and described in this document. Their boundaries generally follow some line in the landscape feature such as field boundaries or roads. Because there is often a transition zone between one character and another, on the ground, it should not necessarily be expected that landscape character abruptly changes at each boundary. When considering areas near to a boundary the character description and guidelines for both areas may be relevant

What is the purpose of this report?

6. The information in this Character Assessment can be used in many situations. Its primary purpose is to assist the preparation of the Lavenham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and to inform the Lavenham Sensitivity Study.
7. The suite of documents will help the local community plan for change at neighbourhood level and understand what impacts development could have on Lavenham. They will help developers with site selection and the design of new development, or those assessing the impacts of development. They will be of use to those managing change to protected heritage assets or managing change in the countryside. The landscape assessment intends to provide a framework for decision-making that respects landscape character and local distinctiveness, this is particularly important as the County designation of 'Special Landscape Area' is planned to be phased out
8. It is essential 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 important tourism industry.
9. For full details of the approach and methodology used please refer to Appendix 1.

Photo by Bryan Panton





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 1,700 people and many more people who come to work in its diverse economy.

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 is to the west of the River Brett which rises in farmland to the north of the village, before flowing south-west towards Hadleigh and Higham where it joins the Stour. 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 Brett, 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 Brett 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 Brett 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 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 town 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. The town's prosperity at this time can be seen in the lavishly constructed wool church of St Peter and St Paul which boasts one of the highest church towers in England at 43m.

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



Shilling Street 1926-42

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 the town was comprehensively rebuilt 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 period also had an impact on the wider landscape. There are records of 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, probably set up and used by a prosperous cloth merchant family of the time ¹.
10. But the town'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 the town 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

12. Some improvement came with the arrival of the railway in 1864. Victorian cottages 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. 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 the Medieval village to dominate.

¹ An Historical Atlas of Suffolk. Dymond & Martin. Suffolk County Council 1999



Post war
development at
Meadow Close

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 Guild) 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. The newest area of development, nearing completion at the time of writing, is 'The Halt' on the old Armorex site. A prominent addition of 44 dwellings on the north edge of the village. The design principle seems to have been to reflect local vernacular in a contemporary way, with mixed success.

Transport corridors

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

20. From the south, along the Melford and Sudbury Roads the experience of arrival is a 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 only large woods in the parish.

The railway

21. 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 100 years after its opening in 1865 and a key local goods line as well as a passenger route.
22. 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.

23. 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.
24. 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 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.



View from
footpath east of
Lower Road

25. 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.

Cultural associations

26. The village has a number of cultural associations. In the late 18th century, the village was home to poet Jane Taylor, and it was while living in Shilling Street that she wrote the poem *The Star*, from which the lyrics for the nursery rhyme 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'² are taken.
27. 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) and *Part 2* (2011) were filmed in De Vere House on Water Street. Other filmmakers who have used the village as a location include Stanley Kubrick and Pier Paolo Pasolini.³
28. 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

Development pressures

29. Lavenham is currently facing pressure for residential expansion. It has an aging population profile and more affordable housing is required in the village. This will ensure the working population is able to live close by, that young families are able to stay, and that larger houses can be made available as elderly resident have options for downsizing. The lack of many infill sites in the village means that expansion into surrounding countryside is likely. But the social benefit must not come at a cost to the character of the historic village. Siting of new development must be carefully considered to protect the important tourism industry and the heritage on which it hinges.
30. Increases to the tourism market will bring further pressure on the transport 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. There may be ongoing adverse impacts on agricultural landscapes due to unpredictable changes to the ever changing agri-environment support schemes and fluctuations relating to world food

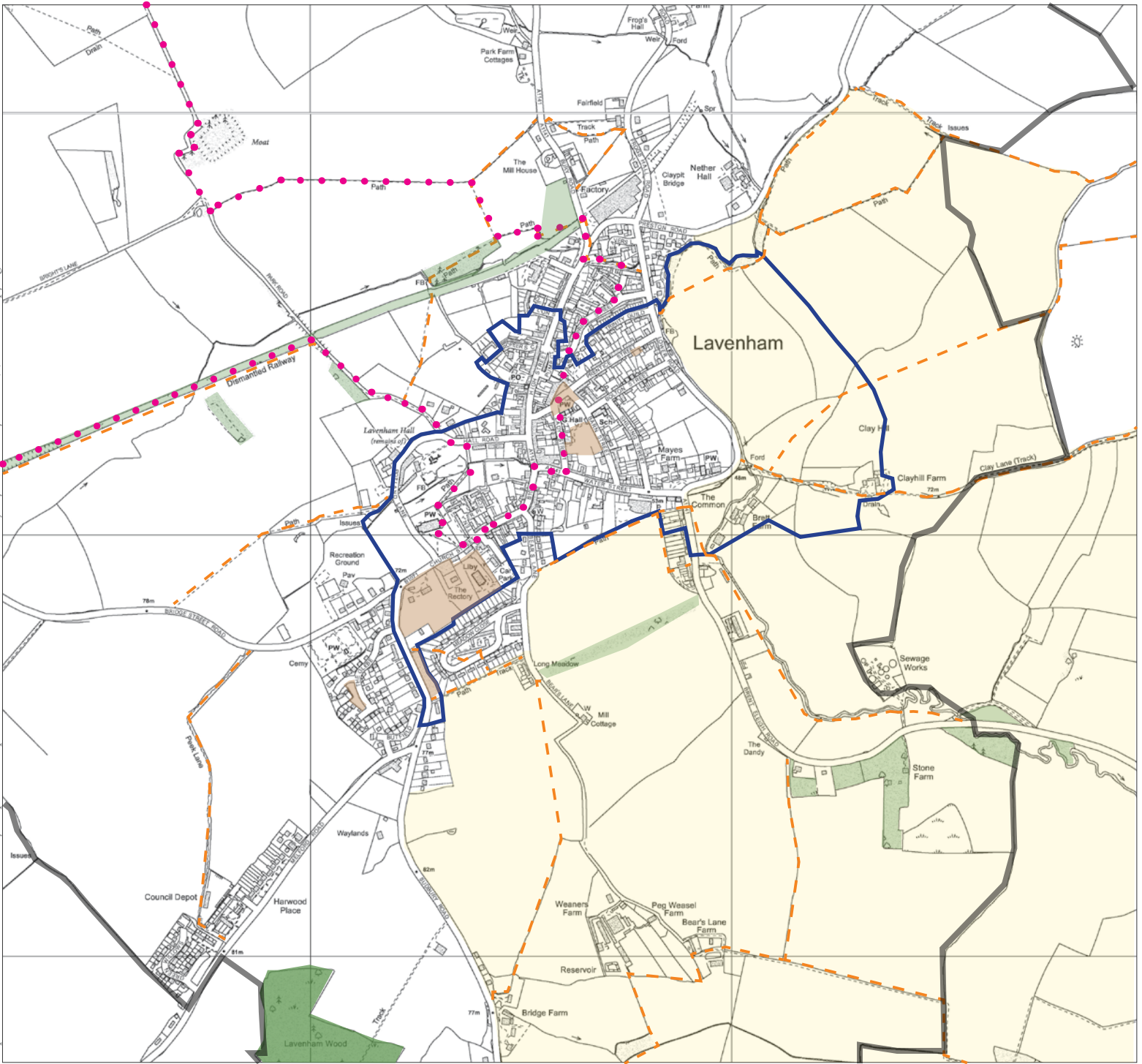
production. There may conversely also be opportunities to restore character through policy change. Our changing climate also unpredictable future for farming practise and landuse. Forces for change include further amalgamation of fields and farms; further boundary loss through lack of management; loss of pasture to arable land; increased pressure on marginal land such as for equestrianism or small holdings; land used for renewable energy or growth of biomass, and diversification schemes which have an impact on character.

31. Other key Forces for Change are noted in the Suffolk Landscape Guidance that accompanies the Suffolk character assessment.⁴
- 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

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twinkle,_Twinkle,_Little_Star









³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavenham#cite_note-22

⁴ Guidance Note Ancient Rolling Farmlands, Suffolk Landscape Guidance, SCC




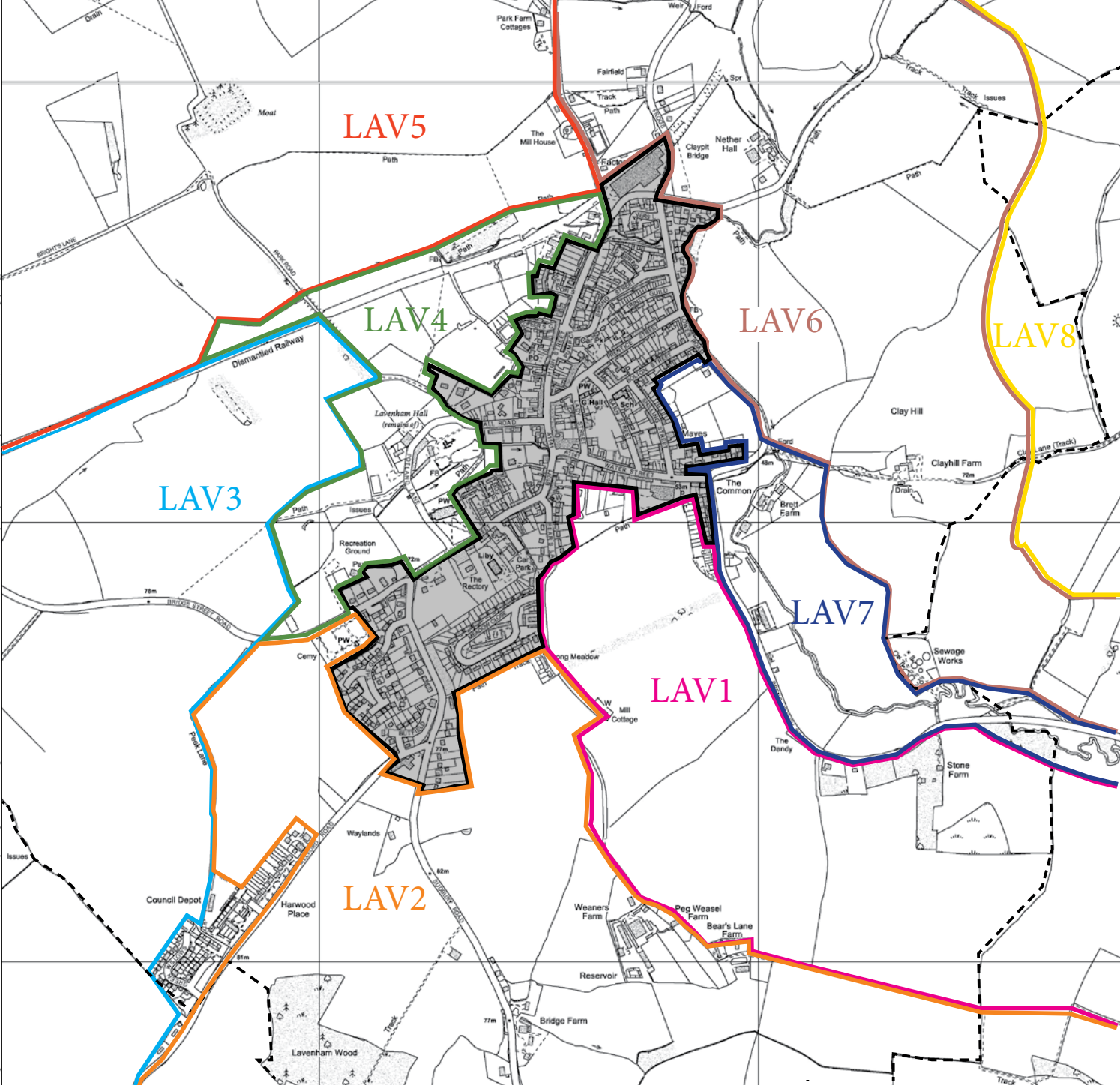
Plan showing designated areas and rights of way

KEY:

-  Parish boundary
-  Special Landscape Area as defined in Babergh Local Plan (2006)
-  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 defined in Babergh Local Plan (2006)





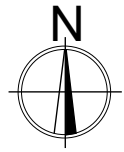
			
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Figure number:	LCA -01		
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






Plan showing the 8 landscape character areas

KEY:

-  Built-up area boundary
-  Parish boundary



Character areas:

-  Boundary of LAV1: Pit Meadow
-  Boundary of LAV2: Lavenham Wood
-  Boundary of LAV3: Bridge Street Road
-  Boundary of LAV4: Western Meadows
-  Boundary of LAV5: Brights Drift
-  Boundary of LAV6: Clay Hill
-  Boundary of LAV7: The Common
-  Boundary of LAV8: Clay Lane Plateau

Lavenham Landscape Character Assessment

Figure title: Character Areas			
Figure number: LCA -02			
Scale: 1:10,000	Date: Nov '15	Drawn: LBW	Rev: -
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Key characteristics

- Fairly steeply sloping valley side of arable farmland between the plateau edge and valley bottom.
- Medium-large field size, fields bounded by hedges and hedgerow trees
- Longitudinal pattern of field boundaries dominates, following C.20th rationalisation of ancient enclosure patterns.
- Strong, vegetated and long-established interface with historic village edge to the north.
- Area unsettled except a small number of farmsteads
- Ancient hedged lane along boundary with adjacent character area to the west (LAV2).
- Steep valley side location affords long scenic views out. Intermittent views in are experienced from approach on Brent Eleigh Road, but views from the village core are not easily achieved.

Location

This character area comprises the north-facing valley slopes to the south of the village. It lies west of Monks Eleigh Road, and east of Bears Lane.

Topography

Relatively steep and even-sloped valley side to the west of the River Brett. Land falls from approx. 75m AOD to the valley bottom at approx. 50m AOD.

Geology and soils

Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

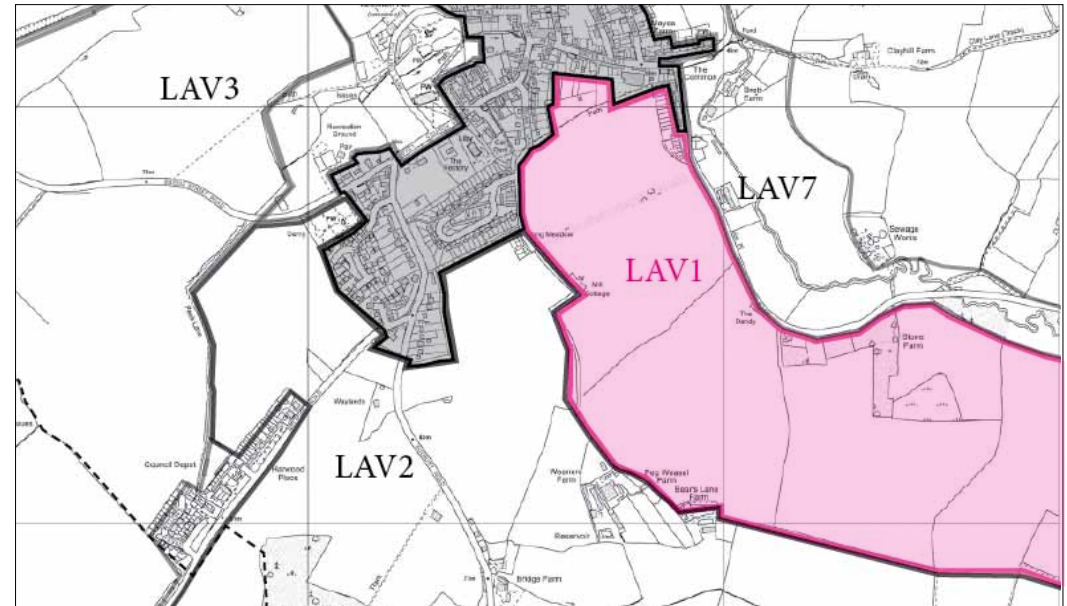
Area comprises arable farmland. Field sizes are relatively large. Boundaries usually take the form of hedges, and have a dominant axis running down the valley side towards the river. They often take a slightly meandering line and form strong linear features in an otherwise fairly open landscape.

Historic landscape/Time depth

To the south of Lavenham the landscape is generally an ancient farming landscape. Here, only a little evidence of the pre-18th century irregular enclosure pattern remains. Early OS maps show a mix of loosely geometric fields - larger in size on the upper slopes, smaller towards the valley bottom but during the C.20th successive boundary removal has amalgamated the land into larger field sizes. Hedges, ditches and roadside banks are still found. The old maps refer to an 'Osier Ground' here - likely a source for the village's basket making industry, as well as a gravel pit.

Trees and Woodland Cover

Hedgerows are mix of hawthorn, field maple and suckering elm with hedgerow oaks. The



Location of LAV1

narrow Bears Lane is hedged to either side, also with oak trees at intervals. There is little woodland in this character area. The dense plantation strip planted along an old boundary, is a prominent vegetative feature.

Scale and enclosure

This landscape is medium-scale and open towards the valley bottom, with long views afforded to the opposite valley side.

Settlement, road network and relationship with village edge

Aside from a few roadside dwellings in the valley bottom the area is unsettled. The area adjoins the southern edge of the village - Water Street - where deep gardens with mature trees form a strong, long-established vegetated boundary. Also adjoins small area of modern village infill on the east of Bears Lane at the village edge.

Tranquillity

Rural area around Lavenham is fairly quiet but proximity to village and main roads brings intermittent noise from vehicles and other working machinery.

Visual experience and views in/out

Within the character area the open, sloping valley sides afford long views over the Brett river 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. (See 'The Lolls' Defined View in the NDP) .

Upward views are also experienced, although intermittently, from points along the Brent Eleigh Road in the valley bottom on the approach to Lavenham.

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 in the NDP).

The LAV2 area is not easily seen from within the main village.

Indicators of value and rights of way

Area forms the western edge of Babergh's Brett Valley Special Landscape Area which covers land south and east of Lavenham, designated for its scenic quality (although this designation at risk following Babergh and Mid Suffolk's 2015 joint Designations Review)

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

Condition and strength of character

The irregular forms of the ancient farming landscape have been eroded by amalgamation and rationalisation of 20th century arable farming but the strong combination of linear field boundaries and valleyside topography is distinctive and forms a robust sense of character. Field hedges are gappy and grown out in places but the area's condition is otherwise generally good.

1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view



Valued view from footpath on Clay Hill



For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.

Key characteristics

- Very gently undulating plateau on interfluvium between the upper reaches of the river Brett to the east and Stour valley system to the west.
- 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 pre-18th enclosure pattern but much amalgamation has created an open feel but with wooded horizons.
- Busy roads limit sense of tranquillity
- Somewhat scenic especially where longer views of the adjacent rolling river valley are possible
- Settlement comprises scattered dwellings and farm. Incursions have been made into the landscape for 20th century for residential estates, including post-war social housing at The Meadows, and The Glebe. Ribbon development along Melford Road and Sudbury Roads, is uncharacteristic and isolated from main village.

Location

Land to the south-west of the village, bounded by Bears Lane on the east side and as far west as Peek Lane (BOAT) including fields behind The Glebe and Harwood Place.

Topography

Very gently undulating land between 70 and 80m AOD, on the edge of the plateau between the Brett river valley to the east and the Stour and its tributaries to the west.

Geology and Soils

Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

Land use is arable farmland with one large geometric block of woodland - Lavenham Wood.

Trees and woodland

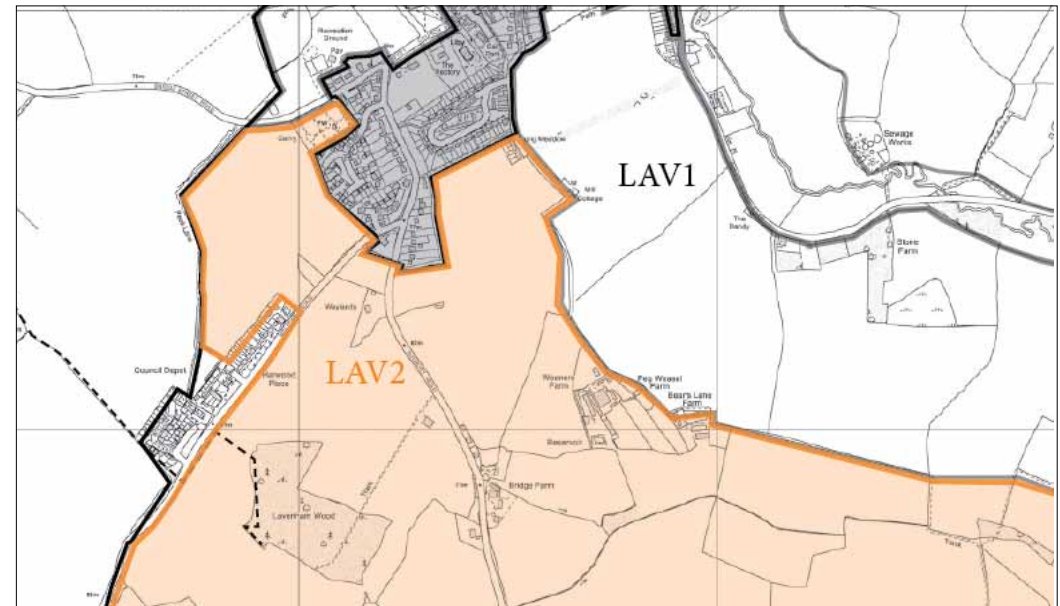
Lavenham Wood is a large block of ancient and replanted woodland and this, along with field boundary hedges and oaks at intervals along the narrow lanes, give this area of farmland a well-wooded feel.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Remnant irregular field boundaries and the winding Bear and Peek Lane 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.

Scale and enclosure

The lack of relief and fairly large field size creates a moderate scale landscape with strong 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 retain some historic character and are more intimate, they provide contrast in an otherwise fairly open landscape



1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view

Location of LAV2



Settlement, road network and relationship to village

The area bounds the local authority built housing estate at the Meadows and adjoins the rear of the Glebe. The boundaries of these areas of modern expansion are not well integrated with the adjoining rural landscape and tend to be abrupt and weak, lacking definition from mature vegetation.

Mid to late 20th century ribbon development along the Melford Road - Harwood Place and Green Willows are disconnected and somewhat isolated from main village.

Settlement also found as farmsteads with associated worker cottages or isolated cottages.

Perceptual experience/tranquillity

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

Visual experience and views in/out & intervisibility

Away from the more intimate lanes, the visual experience is generally of open farmland with wooded horizons. Views in are readily experienced from the road network as well as from dwellings on the southern edge of the village and along Melford Road.

Views are not possible from the historic core of Lavenham.

Views out are often curtailed by the lack of relief and the boundary hedges /trees which prevent distant views, except to the east where the rolling valleyside forms a distant backdrop. Views into C.20th housing on the edge of Lavenham add detracting features.

Indicators of value and rights of way

The easternmost field, contiguous with the valleyside, is within the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area which covers land south and east of Lavenham, designated for its scenic quality (although this designation at risk following Babergh and Mid Suffolk's 2015 joint Designations Review). Lavenham Wood is partly designated Ancient Woodland and a SSSI.

Three footpaths pass through the area, linking the village edge with 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 edge, and where boundary hedges have been removed. Glimpses of C.20th buildings associated with the farms are also somewhat detracting features. Hedges in good condition where they remain, particularly along the roads. Ancient Woodland forms block on skyline with strong presence.



View northward from Washmere Green/Sudbury Rd junc-



View southwards from church tower over The Glebe

For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.

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 landscape, but scattering of boundary oaks along an old field boundary
- Well-vegetated old railway line (Lavenham Walk) forms a strong linear feature to the north
- Little change to village edge during C.20th. Historic interface is porous and low density.
- Church tower forms a skyline landmark
- Slough Farm is the only settlement, a somewhat gentrified farmstead on Bridge Street Road

Location

A block of land west of the village - bounded to the north by the old railway line and by Peeks Lane by-way to the south, and bisected by Bridge Street Road. Eastern boundary is the low lying pastureland on the edge of the village.

Topography

Gently undulating valley side sloping gently towards the village from (approx) 80m AOD to 70m AOD.

Geology and Soils

Lime-rich loamy and clayey soils overlying chalk with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

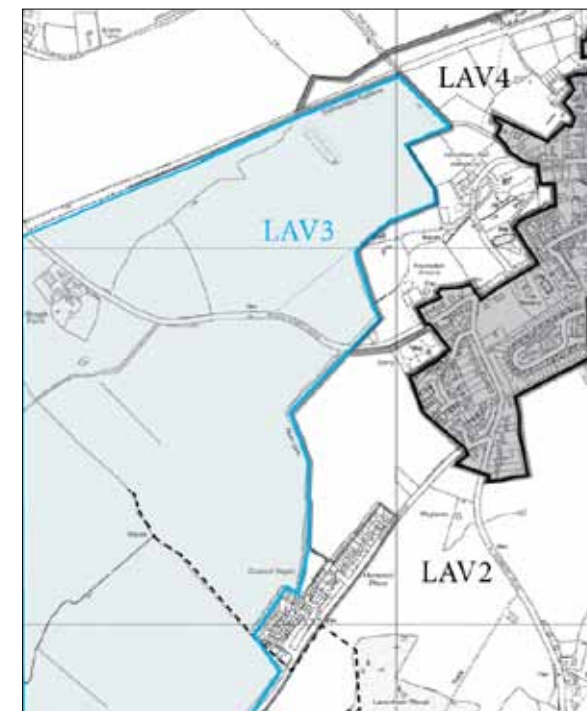
Although some 20th century amalgamation has taken place today's field pattern was generally in evidence at end of 19th century, as shown on early OS maps. There are fewer hedges than in the adjacent character area LAV2 although there are notable lines of boundary oaks along old hedgeline boundaries. The hedgelines were part of a field system that was bisected by the railway arriving in the 1860s. Today, the field system partly endures south of the railway line but north of it, the field pattern has been lost altogether through 20th century amalgamation.

Trees and Woodland

Field oaks at intervals on field boundaries but no woodland present. The wooded old railway line forms a strong linear feature through the landscape.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Historically this was an area of ancient farming practices with early enclosure. Following amalgamation large field sizes have resulted but the irregular shaping suggest an earlier pattern. Hedges are scant here but boundary oaks endure. The Victorian era railway had a big impact on the area, severing it with the plateau to the north.



1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view

Location of LAV3



Scale and enclosure

This is a reasonably open landscape with fairly flat relief and little vegetation so there is little sense of enclosure although the horizons are wooded.

Settlement, road network and relationship with village edge

The only settlement beyond the village boundaries is Slough Farm. This exhibits a common local trend whereby older dwellings become extended and the associated barns converted and gentrified. This has a subtle effect on character and demonstrates the social change taking place in agricultural landscapes.

The adjacent village edge is 'soft' - glimpses of houses in amongst tree cover.

Perceptual experience/Tranquillity

Prevailing quiet rural area feel but reasonably busy lane between Lavenham and Melford brings frequent traffic noise and activity.

Visual experience and views on/out

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 well absorbed within vegetation so is not easily perceived. The church tower is a prominent landmark. The well vegetated old railway line forms a strong linear feature along the northern boundary of the area.

Indicators of value and rights of way

There are two footpaths through this area, one beside the railway line and a second linking Bridge Street Road with Potlands 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.

View from Bridge Street Road eastwards



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. The overall condition is fair.

For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.

View of Bridge Street Road at Slough Farm



View westward from Church tower



Key characteristics

- Gently sloping valley sides and valley bottom
- Seasonally wet grassland used solely for grazing (sheep and horses)
- Dense hedgerows with trees define 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 vegetation traditional landscape with strong sense of time-depth.

Location

The area comprises a series of meadows bounding the village on its west side, from a narrow strip just north of the old railway line to as far south as the playing fields on Bridge Street road.

Topography

Gently sloping valley sides and valley bottom.

Geology and Soils

Lime-rich loamy and clayey soils overlying chalk with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

The area comprises grassland meadows, often with an irregular ancient field pattern. They are often seasonally wet so unsuited for arable production which has allowed their historic character to endure. Field sizes are relatively small and are irregularly shaped in the northern part of the area. Hedges form boundary features, predominantly field maple. The grassland is used as grazing for sheep and horses.

Trees and woodland

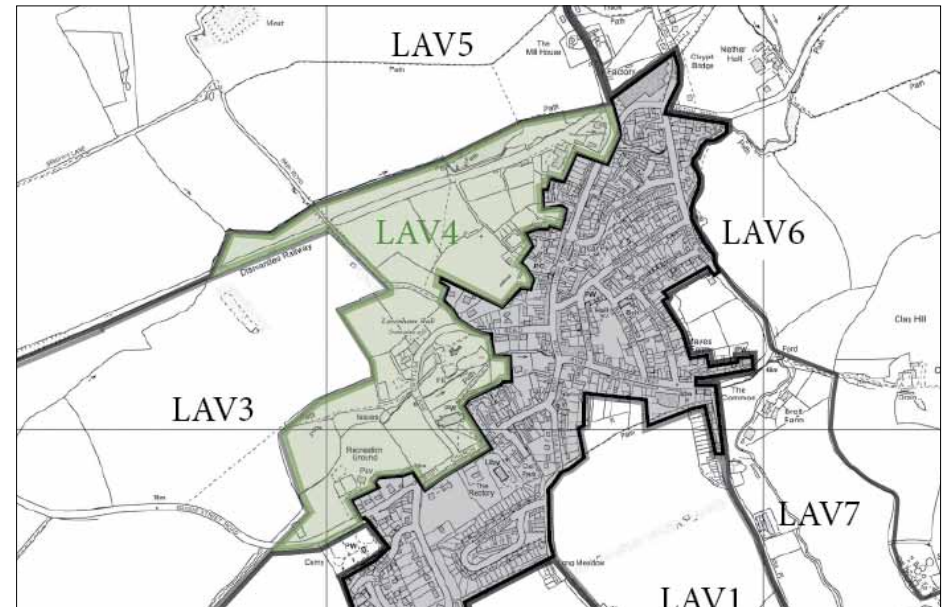
The woodland belt alongside the old railway line forms a strong linear feature in the valley bottom. The fields are enclosed by substantial species-rich hedgerows and associated ditches with mature hedgerow trees - ash, willow, oak. A single mature black poplar punctuates the skyline.

Historic landscape/Time depth

The randomly shaped fields and old hedgelines indicate the ancient field pattern has endured. Together with the continuation of grassland management there is a strong sense of time-depth.

Scale and enclosure

Relatively small scale and intimate and contrasting strongly with the openness of the character areas adjacent to the north and west (LAV3 & 5).



1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view

Location of LAV4



Settlement, road network, and relationship to village

The area bounds the village where, along Hall Road, there are old farm cottages, and converted farm buildings. 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 in/out

Simple attractive pattern of meadows and hedgerows. Finer grain than is found in other parts of the parish owing to the small field size.

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. There is a view in from Park Road shown in the photograph (top).

Views out are likely to be restricted owing to the reasons stated above, but there is some intervisibility with the open plateau farmland to the north (LAV 5).

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.

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.

For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.

View into meadows from Park Road



View into meadow north of railway line from Park Road



View from footpath west of Potlands Lane looking west



Key characteristics

- Open, arable clay-plateau farmland with a somewhat elevated feel.
- Flat or gently falling towards the valley bottom in the south-east
- Very large field sizes created from amalgamated field systems
- Underlying ancient organic patterns persist but don't always register
- Remaining hedgerows are well managed and predominantly field maple, intermittent and remnant standing oaks.
- Long views to distant wooded horizons
- Quiet and tranquil part of the parish
- Important area for recreation for village owing to attractive walks.

Location

A large swathe of arable farmland to the north-west of Lavenham, north of the old railway line and west of the A1141 Bury Road.

Topography

Flat and gently rolling plateau top, rising from approx. 60m on the village edge to 80m AOD on the top of the interfluvium.

Geology and soils

Rolling clayland landscape of lime-rich loamy and clayey soils overlying chalk with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

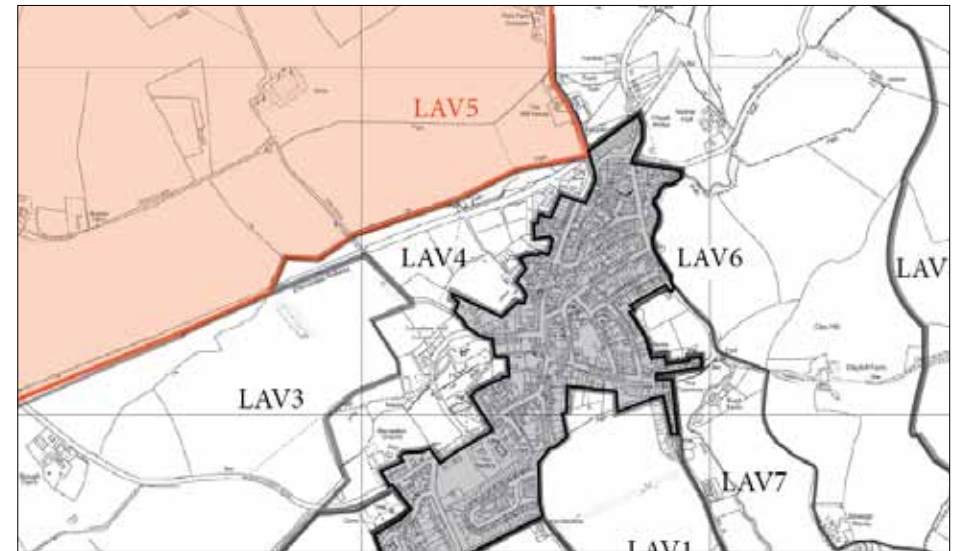
Expansive arable farmland with occasional woodland. Field amalgamation has led to considerable boundary loss, a feature common to the surrounding plateau landscape. Area is contiguous with Lavenham airfield, an American Air Force base in WWII. A line of Pill boxes is still seen north of the railway line.

Trees and Woodland

Small woodland block at the end of Park Road containing a four-sided moat - the likely site of an old manor house. It is not woodland on early OS maps so dates from the last 120 years. Hedges, where they endure, are well managed and in good condition. Field maple dominates hedges. Linear rows of trees along field boundaries and within fields as remnant features.

Historic landscape/Time depth

This is a modern agricultural landscape, where very large field sizes have been created from progressive amalgamation of the medieval field system. Reference to early OS maps show smaller field sizes which help explain the form of the current field boundaries. Historic features from the Medieval era remain such as the moated site north of Park Road. The naming of this road is an indicator of medieval deer park, one is recorded in the vicinity between 1200-1600.



Location of LAV5

1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view



Scale and enclosure

Relatively large scale open arable land. Can feel very featureless away from boundary hedges or trees. In contrast there is a feeling of intimacy between the high hedges on Park Road.

Settlement, road network and relationship with village edge

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 relationship with the edge of the village except for a number of dwellings north of the old railway line on Bury Road.

Tranquillity

Quiet and tranquil part of the parish owing to isolation, some road noise close to the Bury Road but generally lack of activity or sources of disturbance.

Visual experience and views in/out

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.

Condition

The historic character has been eroded but otherwise the landscape is in good condition. Remaining features such as hedges are well managed.

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.

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.

For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.



View east from the top of Park Road



View west from the top of Park Road



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

Key characteristics

- Steeply rolling valleyside landscape alongside the Brett River
- Arable land use in moderately large fields which retain their underlying ancient irregular patterns
- Field boundaries often substantial hedges studded with trees - oak trees dominate, giving landscape a lightly wooded feel.
- Attractive landscape composition of rolling valleyside, and its interaction with historic village edge and river corridor
- Area highly valued with Special Landscape Area policy designation and network of well used footpaths offering picturesque views of Lavenham

Location

A belt of rolling valleyside land between the valley bottom landscape and the edge of the plateau, to the east of Lavenham from Bury Road in the north to Clay Lane in the south and beyond.

Topography

Attractive rolling valley side, often steeply rolling and complex adjacent to the winding river channel. The distinctive dissected topography is a key element of its character.

Geology and soils

Lime-rich loamy and clayey soils overlying chalk with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

Landuse is arable farmland, with medium-sized fields - smaller in the lower slopes and larger on the plateau edge. Field boundary forms are a mixture of straight-sided fields intersecting ancient organic shapes which are a relic of early, piecemeal enclosure.

Historic landscape/Time depth

The ancient pattern has been eroded as fields have become amalgamated into larger parcels which are easier to farm with modern machinery. The large field size is not always sensed owing to the undulations which create localised screening.

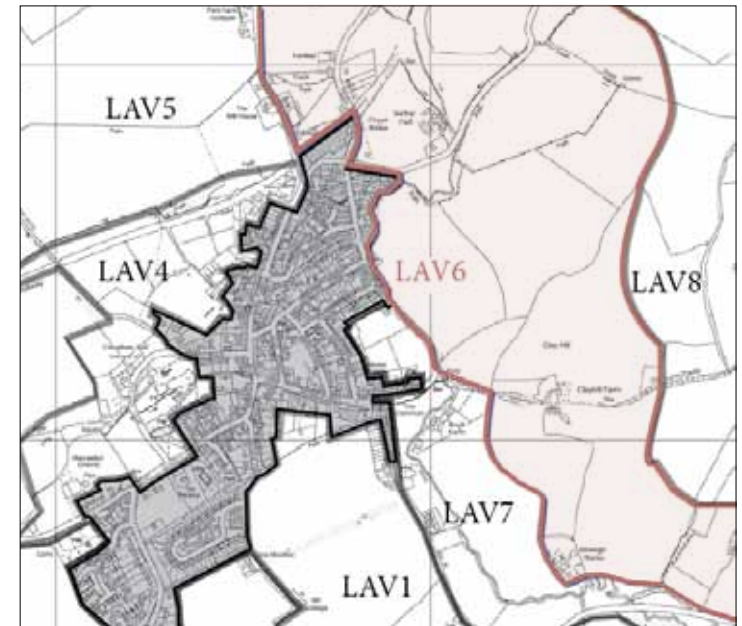
Trees and woodland cover

Hedges form field boundaries, usually continuous but some are gappy. Field boundary trees, usually oaks are often prominent and add to the lightly wooded feel of the landscape.

Scale and enclosure

This is a medium scale landscape. There is a degree of openness from the large fields but there is also a degree of enclosure from the rolling landform and substantial tree studded hedges. Unlike some other lanes in the area Preston Road has quite an open character and the descent into the valley affords long views across to Lavenham.

The overall impression is of curves and organic forms.



Location of LAV6



1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view

Settlement, road network and relationship with village edge

Settlement comprises village edge farmsteads only. There are no major roads through the area, Preston Road carries traffic to villages to the east of Lavenham and brings intermittent road noise. The character area has an abrupt, linear and well defined boundary with the village edge created by the river channel and Lower Road.

Perceptual experience/Tranquillity

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

Visual experience and views in/out

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 prominent landmark. Views out from the historic core from Bolton and Prentice Streets overlook this character area which make it particularly sensitive.

Indicators of value and right 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 Lane are included because of their role within the views from the historic core.

South of the Preston Road the valleyside is within the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area (Local Plan CR04) designated for its scenic value (although this designation is at risk following Babergh and Mid Suffolk's 2015 joint Designations Review)

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 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.

For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.



View down Prentice Street to the NE



View from bottom of Clay Lane looking NE



View from Frog Hall Lane looking east

Key characteristics

- Valley bottom landscape on edge of village
- Mixed land use, includes recreation ground, grazing, and common land with settlement on the edges.
- Vegetation focused along river corridor and domestic boundaries
- Valley sides contain views out
- Recreational ground with play equipment is a valued village asset

Location

This longitudinal area comprises the valley bottom east and west of the River Brett to the south-east of Lavenham. It is a series of low lying grasslands on the village edge. The most northerly part is somewhat different, it is a small cluster of old meadows elevated just above the valley bottom, associated with Lower Road.

Topography

Gently sloping valley sides and valley bottom.

Geology and Soils

Lime-rich loamy and clayey soils overlying chalk with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

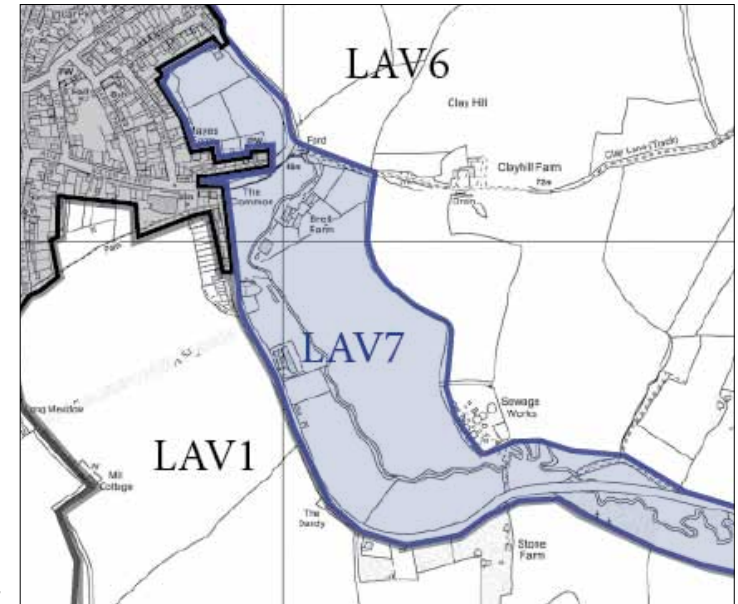
The area comprises a mix of land uses. It is predominantly flood plain, valley bottom grassland, - seasonally wet so unsuited for arable production. Behind the old Brickworks, the three small meadows, well integrated into the edge of the historic village, are also under grass, but do not appear to be grazed. Much of the character is grazing for horses. There is also a water treatment plant just outside the parish boundary, Lavenham Studios business units and a number of dwellings along the edge of the area.

Trees and woodland

The river corridor is lightly wooded, often with riparian species such as willow and alder. The land behind the brickworks, as well as Lower Road adjacent, features substantial boundary vegetation. Just beyond the parish boundaries to the south there are poplar plantations.

Time-depth

There is a reasonable sense of time depth owing to the presence of the long established, seasonally wet pastures along the river, which have endured as they have never been suitable for agricultural production. The meadows north of the old brickworks site feel ancient owing to their small size and intact boundaries. The open space forming the common is an indicator of the traditional settlement pattern, but this is somewhat eroded by the Post War houses built along the Brent Eleigh road. Aspects such as equestrian fencing also have a somewhat negative effect.



Location of LAV7



1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view

Scale and enclosure

Relatively small scale and intimate owing to the enclosure provided by the enclosing valley sides and intermittent tree over.

Settlement, road network, and relationship to village

The area has a close relationship with the Brent Eleigh Road (A1141) as it follows the route of the river along the valley bottom. It affords views into the character area along the approach to Lavenham from the south.

Perceptual experience/Tranquillity

The presence of 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 in/out & intervisibility

Simple pattern of meadows, fairly open internally, but with trees and hedgerows giving an enclosed feel on the edges. This means much of the area is easily seen from the A1141 as it passes alongside, but is not easily seen from points within the village or the surrounding countryside.

Views out are intermittent and restricted to where the valley side is open. There are striking views of the steep surrounding valley sides from the A1141.

Indicators of value and ROW

Part of LAV7 is within the Conservation Area - the area north of Brett Farm comprising the recreation ground, the Common and the Brickworks meadows.

It is just inside the western edge of Babergh's Brett Valley Special Landscape Area which covers land south and east of Lavenham, designated for its scenic quality (although this designation at risk following Babergh and Mid Suffolk's 2015 joint Designations Review).

The recreation ground is highly valued green space. It links into a footpath which follows the route of the river on the east bank.

Condition and strength of character

There has been little change in this landscape over time because it is unsuitable for cultivation as farmland and its propensity to flood has prevented development. Land uses present have eroded the historic character although the framework of the underlying landscape endures.

For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.



View along Lower Road



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



The recreation ground

Key characteristics

- Very gently rolling plateau with an elevated feel.
- Arable land use dominates this character area
- Field pattern of ancient random enclosure
- Hedges with regular trees provide strong boundary features and help give a lightly wooded feel.
- Hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees
- Views are contained on the flatter topography by the well vegetated field boundaries

Location

The eastern-most parts of the parish, comprising the edge of the plateau between Lavenham and Preston.

Topography

Very gently undulating plateau top.

Geology and soils

Rolling clayland landscape of lime-rich loamy and clayey soils overlying chalk, with impeded drainage.

Landcover/landuse

Arable farmland with substantial hedges and ditches dividing moderately large fields. The somewhat dissected form of this landscape has reduced the scope for the really extensive field amalgamation found in some other parts of the county.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Underlying pattern of ancient random enclosure still appreciable despite modern amalgamation of fields into parcels more easily worked with modern machinery. The organic forms are still visible in aerial photography.

Trees and woodland cover

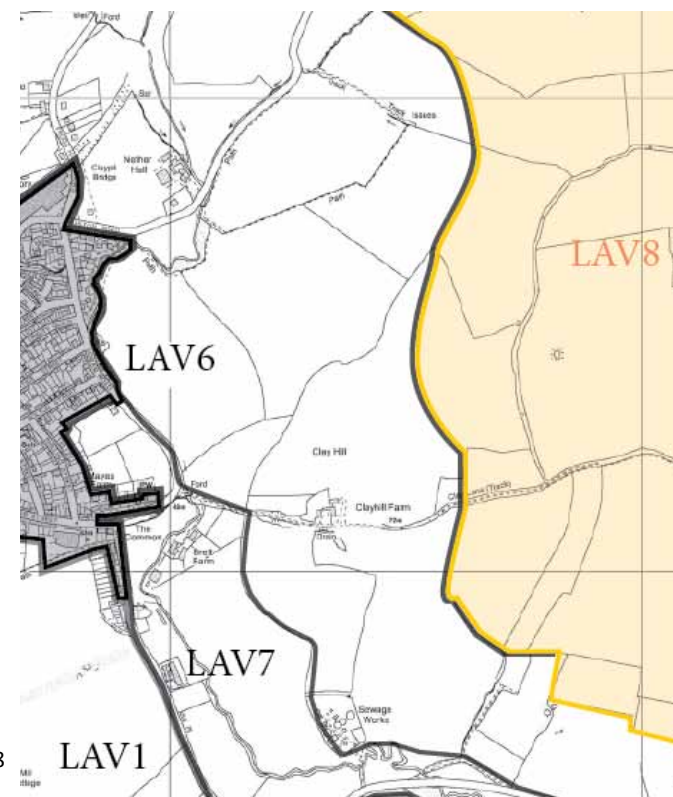
Some very substantial hedges with trees on field boundaries and along Clay Lane (a green lane) contributing to a lightly wooded feel.

Scale and enclosure

Moderately open with elevated points enjoying long views over the Brett valley but substantial field boundaries and green lane creates pockets of localised enclosure. Hedges have a strong visual impact. Overall feel is lightly wooded with trees forming the skyline.

Settlement, road network and relationship with village edge

Isolated farmsteads approached along ancient lanes. This area is separated from the village of Lavenham by the valley side character area LAV6 so has little direct relationship, but the elevated land affords attractive long range views toward the village.



Location of LAV8

1884 map overlaid on modern day aerial view



Perceptual experience/tranquillity

Its quiet and peaceful with occasional distant noise from village or road.

Visual experience and views in/out

This elevated land often offers attractive long views over the valley and towards Lavenham where the church tower is a skyline feature, although the hedges often contain views out at short range. Views in to the area are hard to achieve from the valley as the land rises and dense hedges provide screening.

Indicators of value and rights of way

South of the Preston Road the valleyside and plateau is within the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area (Local Plan CR04) designated for its scenic value. (although this designation at risk following Babergh and Mid Suffolk's 2015 joint Designations Review)

The area has a number of footpaths which connect Lavenham with the farmsteads and Preston.

Condition and strength of character

This landscape is productive farmland so is under intensive arable production yet it also feels well managed with grass margins around fields and well managed hedges. This helps give it a robust character despite the loss of boundary features over time.

For judgements about landscape sensitivity, and guidance notes relating to potential development in this character area, please refer to the results of the Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity Study.

View toward the SW from footpath on edge of the Clay Hill plateau



View toward the plateau from the top of the church tower





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Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity study

Part two of the Landscape Character Assessment
for Lavenham Parish Council
Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015

What is landscape sensitivity?

1. Landscape sensitivity is the ability of the landscape, given its particular character or visual qualities, to accommodate change without undue detrimental effect. Change usually refers to new development, in this case it focuses on the need to build additional houses in the parish of Lavenham.
2. Landscape sensitivity studies seek to identify the features and attributes that give a landscape its unique sense of place, and assess how sensitive they would be in the face of change. As well as impacts on physical aspects, the process also considers visual aspects of the landscape; who would experience the changes, where they would be experienced from and whether valued views are at risk.
3. A number of separate analyses are made and each attribute type is assessed for its sensitivity. These separate judgments are then often combined into a final measure of sensitivity. When the process is repeated across a number of land parcels the comparable sensitivity of different areas is revealed. The results of this process can then be used in a number of ways. They can help a landowner or developer identify the particular issues likely to arise within each land parcel to help with site design and mitigation proposals. They can be used to guide development control decisions, or in plan making to help steer development to the least damaging locations, or to where mitigation measures would be most successful.

What is the purpose of this report?

4. The landscape setting of Lavenham has significant economic and cultural value. It forms an essential component of the village's function as a tourist destination. It is highly valued, not just to its visiting tourists but also to those who live and work there. With the economy so hinged on tourism, protecting the assets on which the industry is based is paramount.
5. However, Lavenham is a working village, not a living museum, and faces growing pressure to provide new

housing, especially for its young, working families who struggle to afford to live there. It is imperative to find a way to deliver the number of dwellings anticipated, including a significant proportion of affordable units, without damaging the special historic character and landscape setting.

6. This study was commissioned by Lavenham Parish Council to inform its Neighbourhood Development Plan process. It aims to assess the ability of different land parcels on the village periphery to accommodate residential development without undue negative effects on the special landscape or visual qualities found there. It was commissioned as the second part of the Lavenham Landscape Character Assessment which provides the baseline information on which this sensitivity assessment is based.

Context

7. Lavenham is one of 10 villages designated a 'Core' village in Babergh District Council's Core Strategy. Together the 'Core' villages need to deliver approximately 1050 houses for the district over the plan period. The Core Strategy does not go so far as apportioning numbers to each village. The Neighbourhood development plan considers Lavenham would seek to deliver less than its equal share of the numbers required from Core Villages due to the constraints created by limited education infrastructure, sensitivity of the landscape and its heritage assets. Since publication of the Core Strategy, a number of houses have either recently been built or granted permission - the Halt on Preston Road comprises 44 dwellings and permission was granted in 2015 for 12 affordable dwellings on disused garages at Meadow Close.
8. The Parish Council wants to find land to site a maximum of a further 60 units. Therefore this study uses the figure of 60 houses as the largest of the three development scenarios tested, assuming the remaining units could be delivered in a single development.

9. The need to build more houses is recognised by the Parish Council as an opportunity to deliver a more sustainable community with a more evenly distributed age structure. Currently the average age of the population of the village is markedly skewed to those over 50. The desire to encourage younger/working age people to stay/return hinges on the provision of more affordable housing for families as well as smaller dwellings for its retired population to inhabit, thus freeing up family-sized dwellings. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy requires 35% of dwellings to be affordable. It states '*This is appropriate to all locations, whether it is a small group of dwellings in a village, an infill development in a town*'. (para 3.5.3.4)
10. The NDP emphasizes the need for affordable units and recognises that available infill plots within the current village boundaries are limited. It therefore follows that new dwellings are likely to be proposed on land beyond the current settlement boundary. For more information on housing provision see section 7 of the NDP.
11. Lavenham Parish Council do not want to allocate individual sites in the NDP but want a framework within which to understand the relative likely impacts of development on different areas around the village edge. To best understand the effects of accommodating different forms of development LSDP were commissioned to undertake an assessment of the sensitivity of different landscape areas to residential development. It is intended to assist both the District and Parish Council make informed and robust decisions on planning applications for new residential development. It will also be available for other future purposes, although the primary focus is that of residential development, the findings can equally inform decisions about other types of development.
12. In reality many other factors could constrain development including flood risk, infrastructure capacity, ecological impact etc. More detailed work on all types of impacts needs to be carried out to determine the acceptability of individual development sites.

Sensitivity Study aims and objectives

13. The main aims of the study were to:

- Identify land parcel units with common character from the Lavenham Landscape Character Assessment
- Analyse the sensitivity of key **landscape** characteristics, for each parcel, to residential development
- Analyse the sensitivity of key **visual and perceptual** characteristics, for each parcel, to residential development
- Assess the relative sensitivity of the land parcels to three residential development scenarios of increasing size.

The residential scenarios tested were:

- Small group development: (circa. 10 dwellings or fewer)
- Small estate development: (circa.20-25 dwellings)
- Large estate development: (circa. 50-60 dwellings)

Please refer to the methodology at Appendix 2 for full details.

- Put forward suggested guidance to help guide appropriate mitigation in each parcel.

14. The results of the study are presented as series of sensitivity analysis tables and maps that show the comparative sensitivity across the seven land parcels.

Explanation of some key terms

What is landscape character?

Landscapes all have constituent physical elements (such as topographical features, settlement, woodland, field boundaries etc) There are also perceptual attributes to landscapes such as feelings of tranquillity, enclosure or openness. All such factors combine to create areas with common patterns of distinctive attributes. These are known as landscape character areas (LCA).

Further factors come into play to determine the relative value of landscapes, such as the condition their attributes are in and how highly they are valued by people.

What is meant by landscape sensitivity?

Landscape sensitivity is a measure of how vulnerable to change the key attributes of the landscape are (regardless of how visible they are). It is defined in terms of the interactions between the landscape itself, the way it is perceived and the nature of the development under consideration.

Or to put it another way, given the nature of the landscape's characteristics, how far could the effects of residential development be effectively mitigated?

A simplistic example helps demonstrate. The character of open landscapes with rolling landform, but little tree cover, would be more sensitive to residential development than a landscape with flatter topography and regular woodland blocks. In the second scenario, the landscape is less sensitive because development would be absorbed into the landscape more easily and mitigation through blocks of screening planting would be both effective and 'in character'.

What is meant by visual sensitivity?

Visual sensitivity brings in a measure of how visible the changes would be to people. It

examines who (how many) would see the changes, whether the changes affect key views, and what value is attached to the context of the view.

For example, views out from Lavenham's historic Market Square area would be very sensitive as they form part of a highly valued (designated) setting, enjoyed by a high number of people, including tourists. In contrast, views from a minor lane, with a low volume of traffic, where change would have little effect on the setting of the village's historic assets would be considered less sensitive.

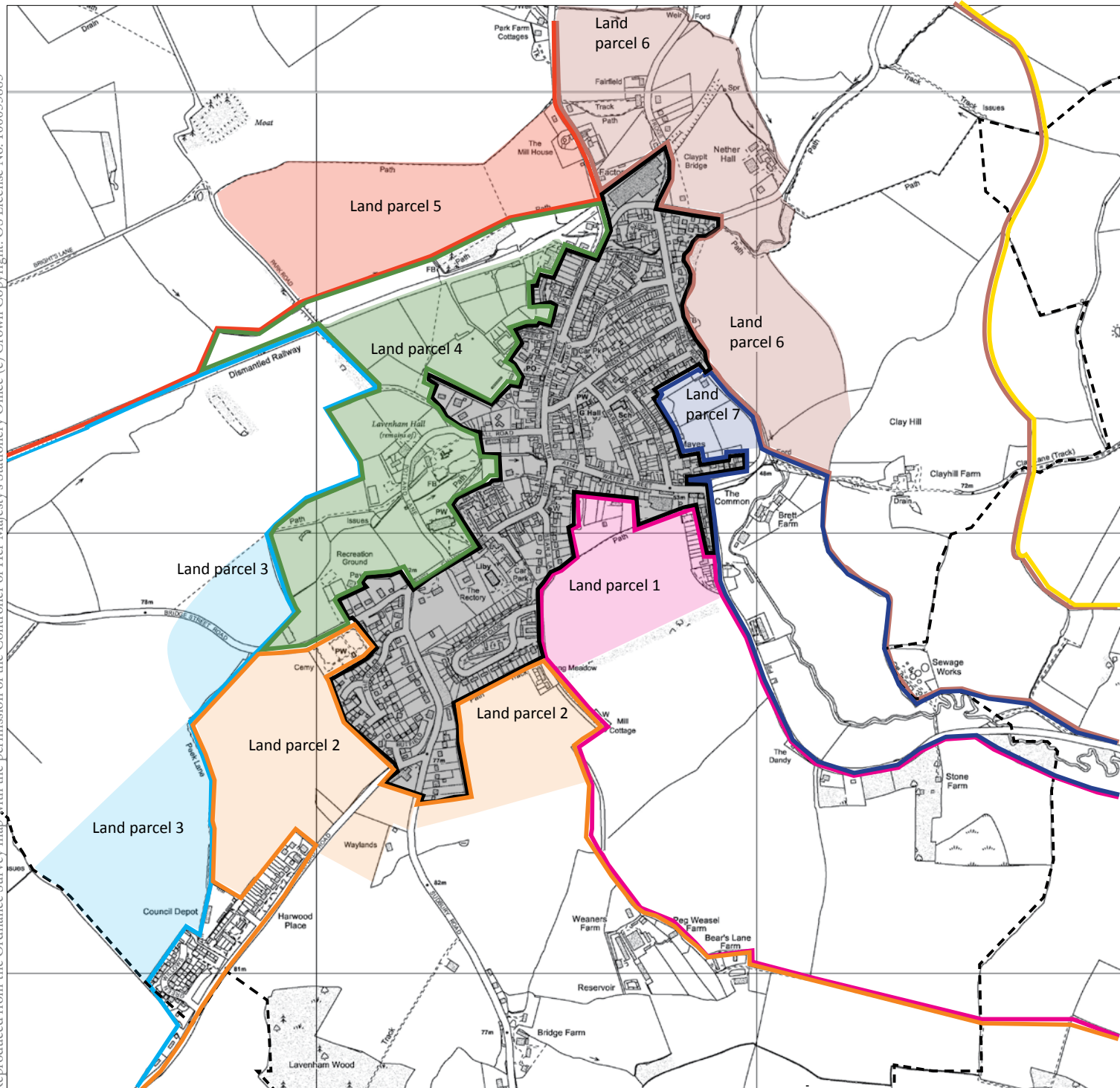
Visual sensitivity is deemed particularly important in Lavenham where conservation of the appearance of the medieval village core, and its setting, is central to its continued role as a major visitor destination within Suffolk. Detrimental effects to the views enjoyed by its visitors need to be avoided as far as possible.

Combined sensitivity

'Combined sensitivity' is the term used in this study to represent an overall judgment that combines both landscape and visual sensitivity judgements. It is judged on a five-point scale from 'low' to 'high'.

It has some use for showing comparative sensitivity of different parcels but it is rather blunt instrument and the types of sensitivities individual to each land parcel must be understood individually. For example, a parcel could have high landscape sensitivity, owing to its well preserved intact historic features, yet be screened from general view giving a low visual sensitivity value. The resulting aggregated judgement of 'medium' does not adequately convey the specific issues that would be pertinent when considering the suitability of a development proposal. Both levels of analysis should be used in considering the potential effects of land use change.

The measure of combined sensitivity is finally considered in relation to the three development scenarios tested. The output from this process is a series of maps which show the 'overall sensitivity' of each land parcel to each development scenario.



Plan showing the 7 land parcels

KEY:

- Built-up area boundary
- Parish boundary



Character areas:

- Boundary of LAV1: Pit Meadow
- Boundary of LAV2: Lavenham Wood
- Boundary of LAV3: Bridge Street Road
- Boundary of LAV4: Western Meadows
- Boundary of LAV5: Brights Drift
- Boundary of LAV6: Clay Hill
- Boundary of LAV7: The Common
- Boundary of LAV8: Clay Lane Plateau

Land parcels adjacent to settlement boundary.

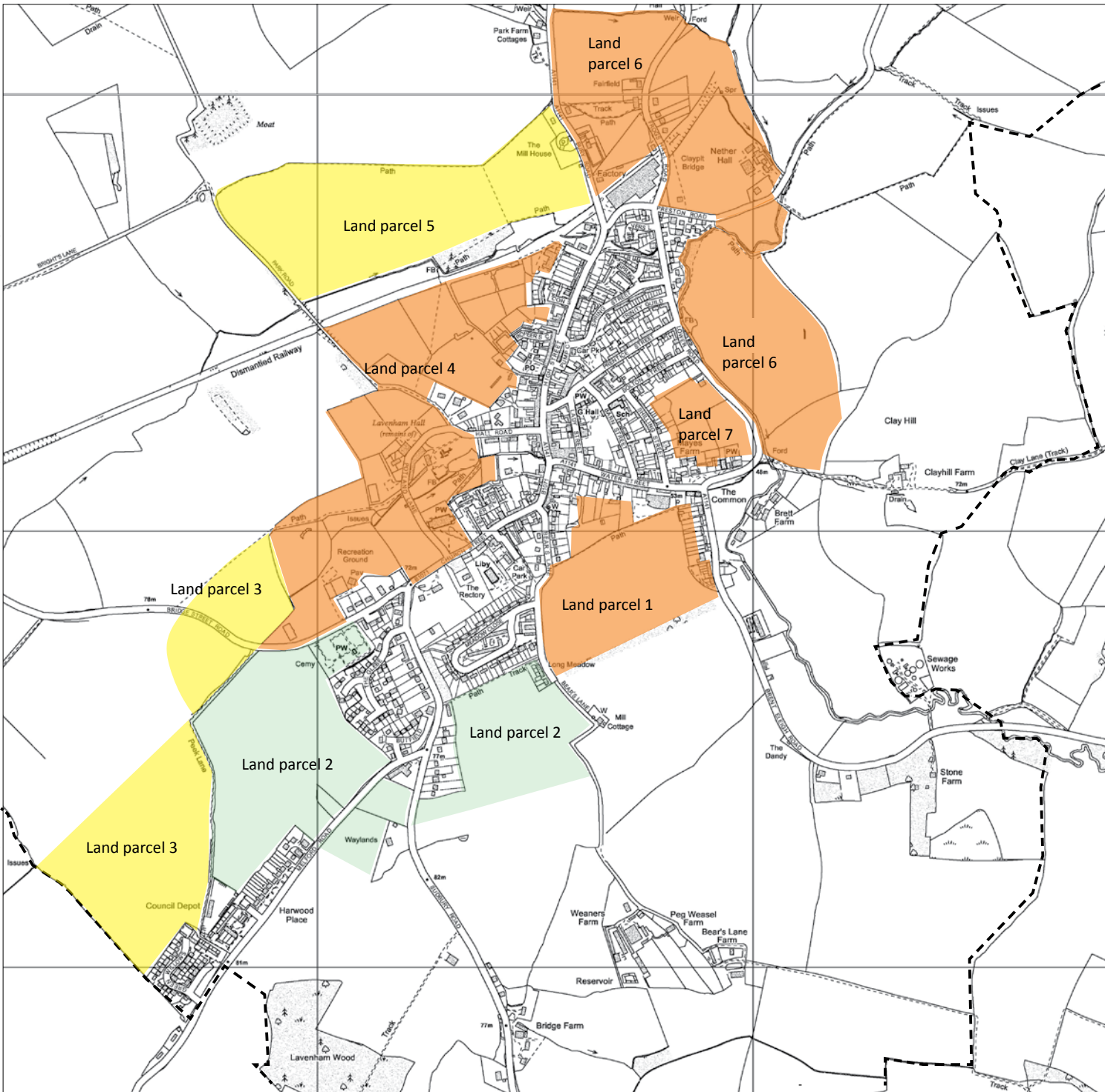
- Land parcel 1
- Land parcel 2
- Land parcel 3
- Land parcel 4
- Land parcel 5
- Land parcel 6
- Land parcel 7

Colours correspond with the Character Area sheets which provide a description of each area.

Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity study

Figure title:	Study Area: Land parcels		
Figure number:	LSS -01		
Scale: 1:10,000 (A3)	Date: Nov '15	Drawn: LBW	Rev: -

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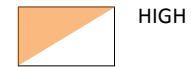


Plan showing landscape sensitivity

KEY:

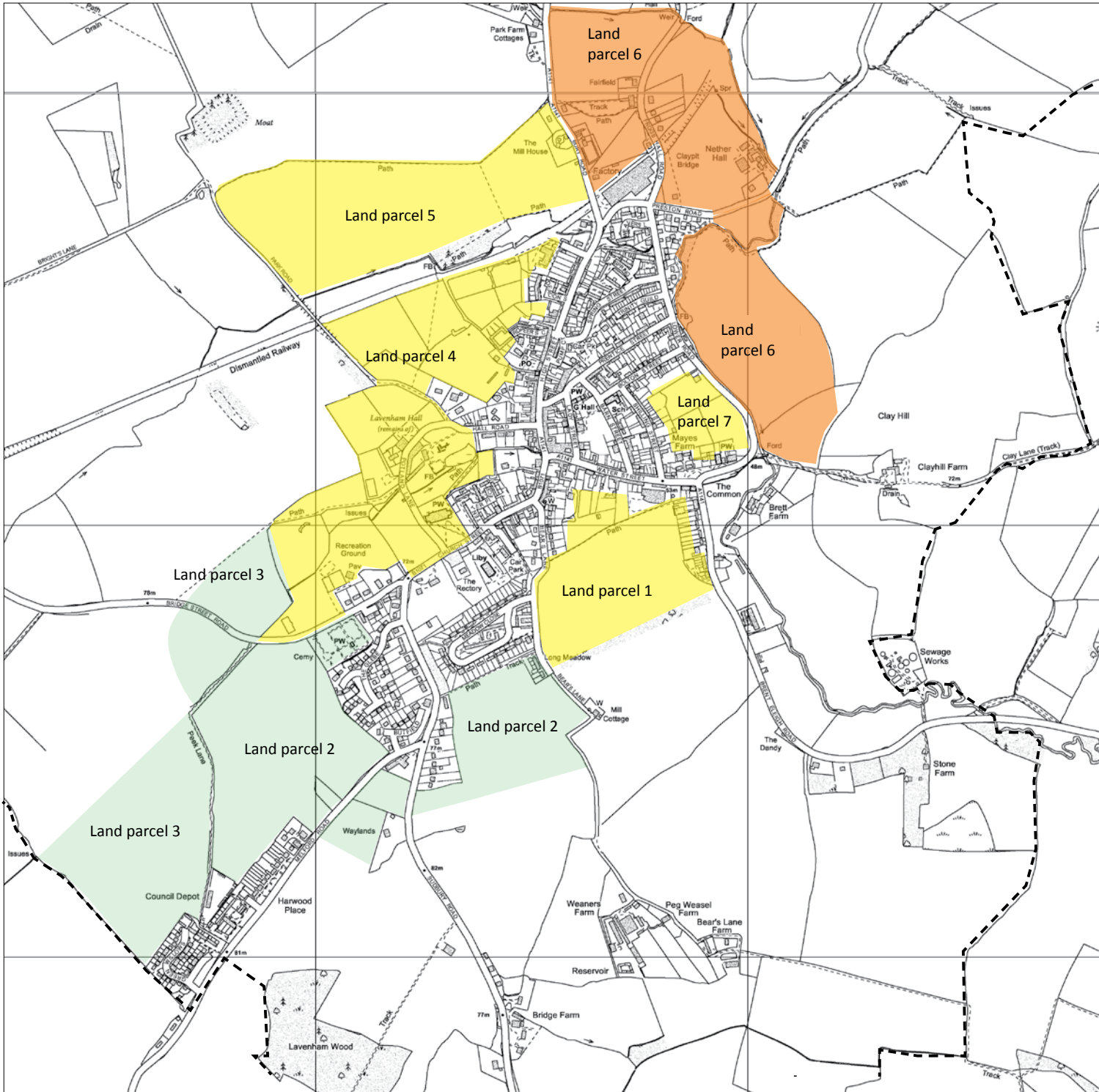


Landscape sensitivity



Refer to the results tables in the supporting document at appendix 2 for written explanation of judgements

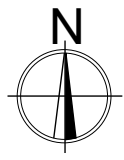
Figure title:	Landscape Sensivity to low rise residential development		
Figure number:	LSS -02		
Scale:	Date:	Drawn:	Rev:
1:10,000 (A3)	Nov '15	LBW	-
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Plan showing visual sensitivity

KEY:

 Parish boundary



Visual Sensitivity

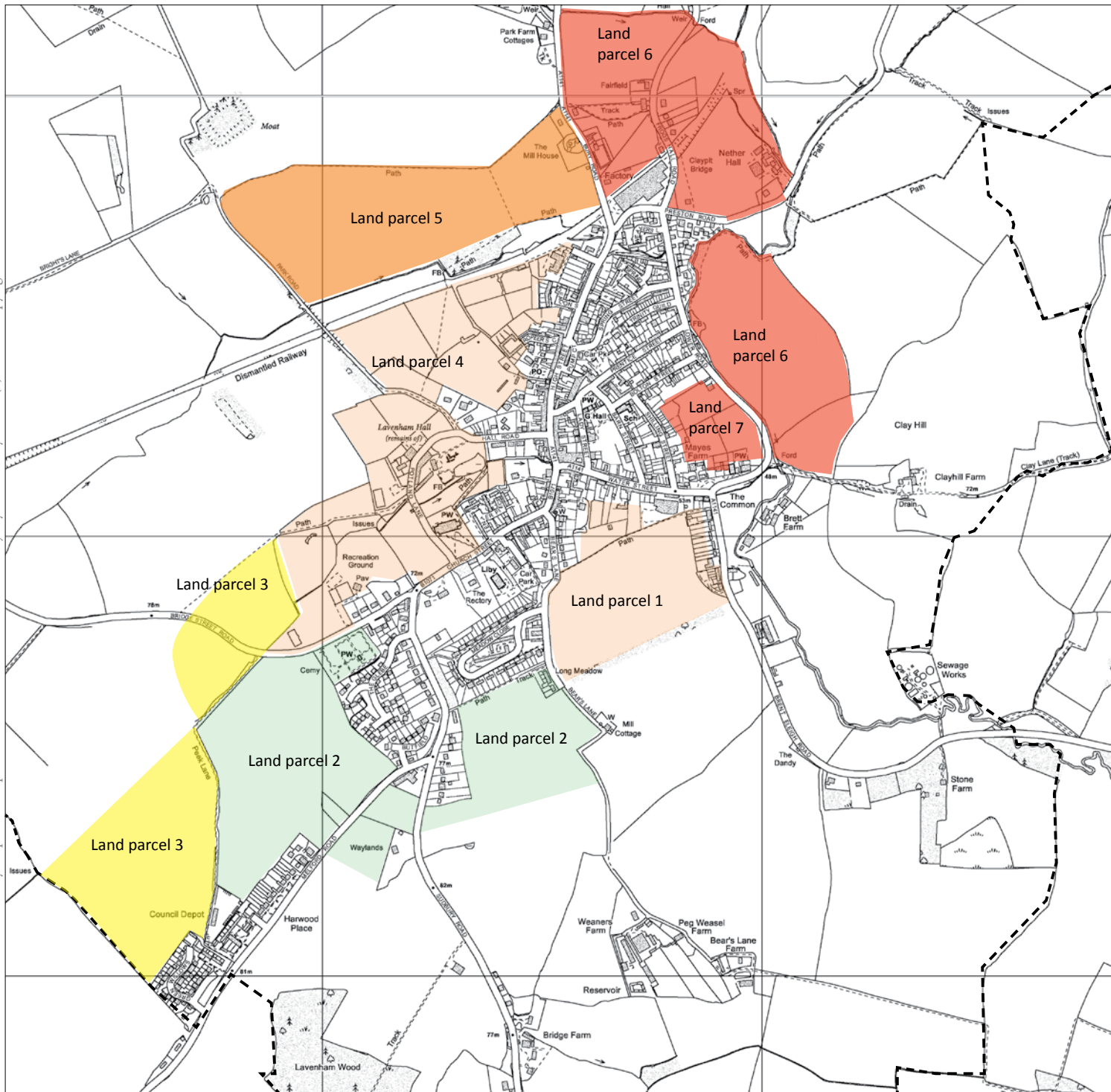
-  HIGH
-  MEDIUM
-  LOW

Refer to the results tables in the supporting document at appendix 2 for written explanation of judgements

Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity study

Figure title:	Visual Sensitivity to low rise residential development		
Figure number:	LSS -03		
Scale:	Date:	Drawn:	Rev:
1:10,000 (A3)	Nov '15	LBW	-

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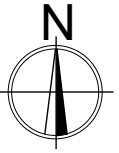
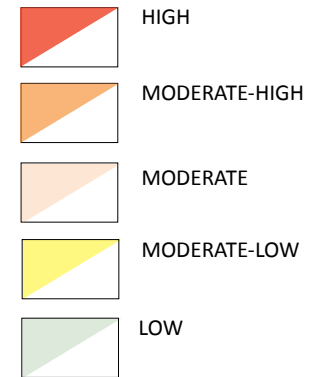


Plan showing combined sensitivity to small group development

KEY:

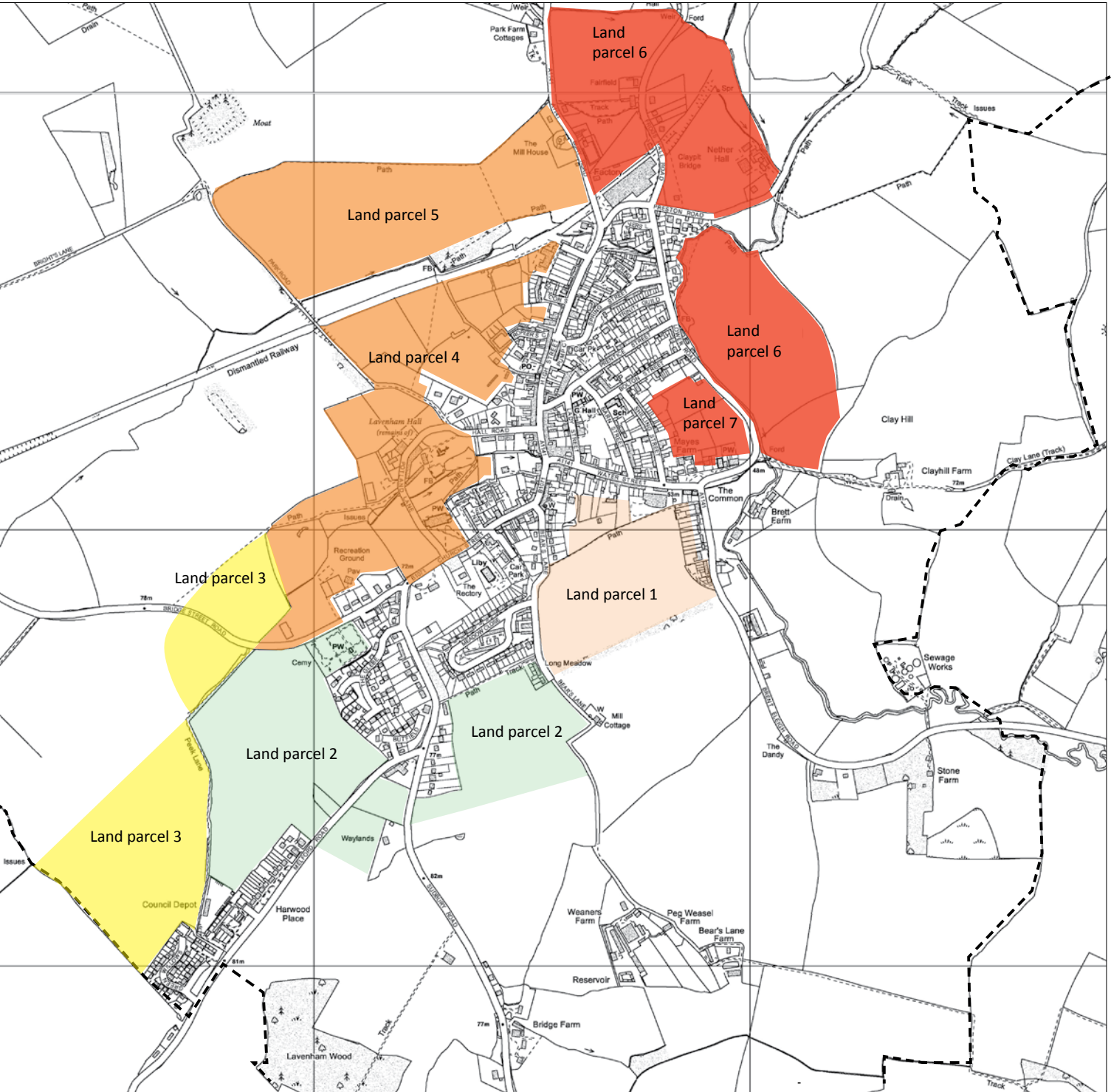


Combined Landscape and visual sensitivity



Refer to the results tables in the supporting document at appendix 2 for written explanation of judgements

Figure title:	Sensitivity to SMALL GROUP residential development		
Figure number:	LSS -04		
Scale: 1:10,000 (A3)	Date: Nov '15	Drawn: LBW	Rev: -
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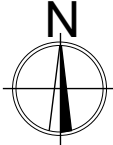
Plan showing combined sensitivity to small estate development

KEY:

Parish boundary

Combined Landscape and visual sensitivity

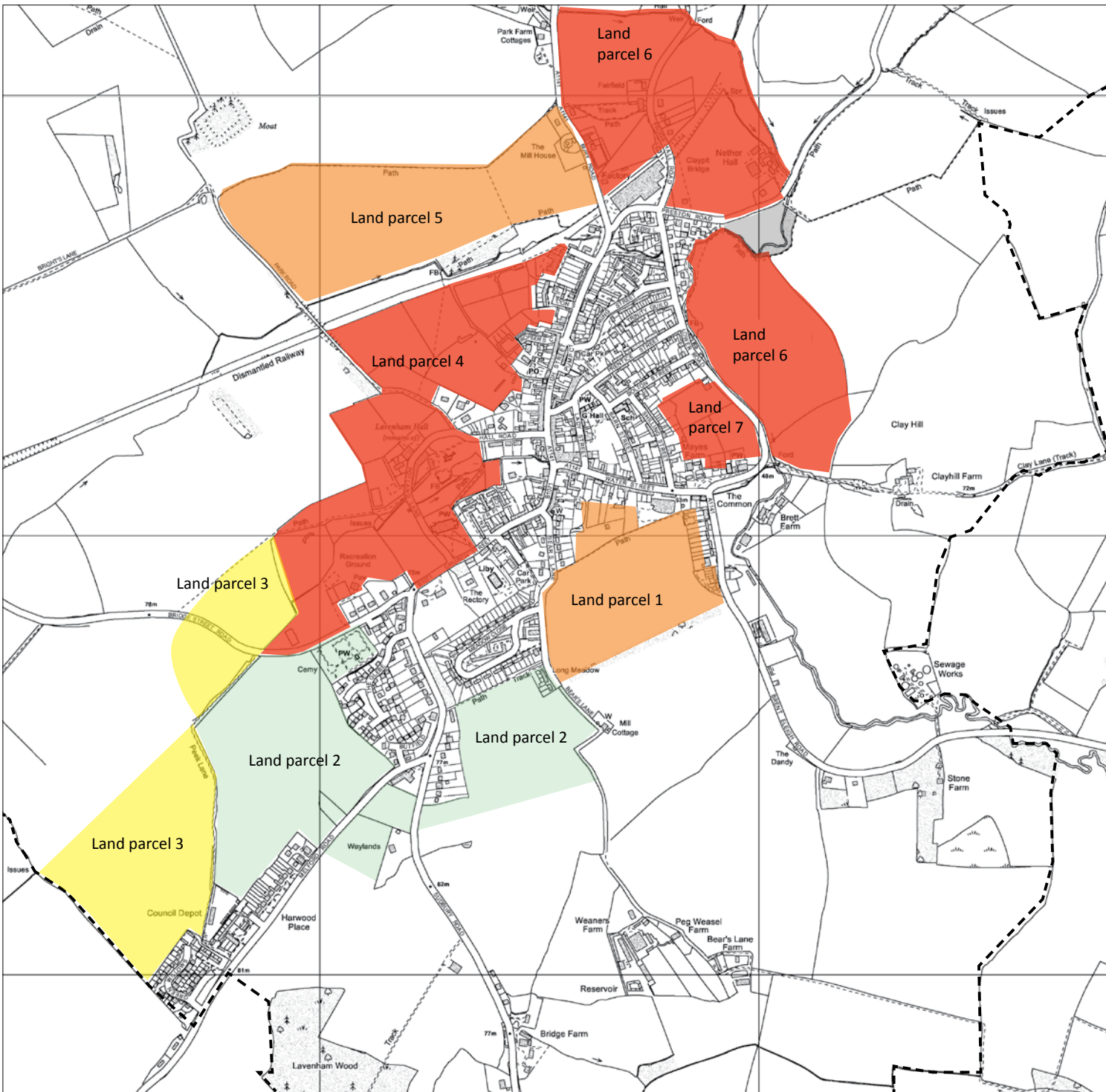
- HIGH
- MODERATE-HIGH
- MODERATE
- MODERATE-LOW
- LOW



Refer to the results tables in the supporting document at appendix 2 for written explanation of judgements

Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity study

Figure title: Sensitivity to SMALL ESTATE residential development			
Figure number: LSS -05			
Scale: 1:10,000 (A3)	Date: Nov '15	Drawn: LBW	Rev: -
LAND AND SCULPTURE DESIGN PARTNERSHIP Octagon House, The Water Run, Hitcham IP7 7LN T: 01449 740727 E: lsdp@btinternet.com			

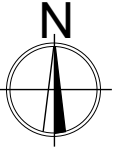
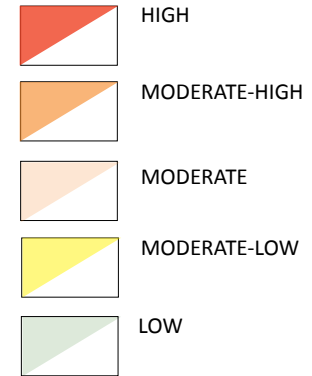


Plan showing combined sensitivity to large estate development

KEY:



Combined Landscape and visual sensitivity



Refer to the results tables in the supporting document at appendix 2 for written explanation of judgements

Lavenham Landscape Sensitivity study			
Figure title:	Sensitivity to LARGE ESTATE residential development		
Figure number:	LSS -06		
Scale:	Date:	Drawn:	Rev:
1:10,000 (A3)	Nov '15	LBW	-
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Summary of results

15. The detailed results of the sensitivity study are set out in tabulated form in Appendix 2. Each judgement for each of the landscape and visual elements is recorded and justification provided. The combined judgements are then presented in graphic form on the maps in figures LLS 02-06.

Landscape sensitivity

16. The areas of highest landscape sensitivity are found in the meadows west of the village and the rolling valley sides to the east and south. Here, the factors indicating higher sensitivity are either a valley side location (parcels 1 & 6) or relatively fine grain intact historic meadow landscape (parcel 4 & 7). The area with the lowest sensitivity are towards the south-west of the village, on the edge of the plateau, where the historic pattern has been lost to field amalgamation and where late 20th century development has already made incursions into the landscape.

Visual sensitivity

17. Although a general similar trend is appreciable, the areas of highest visual sensitivity do not correlate exactly with the areas of high landscape sensitivity, except for parcel 6 where both types of sensitivity are high. The area is over-looked from the historic core, and is highly valued as part of the setting of the historic village. Its value is demonstrated by its inclusion within the Conservation Area and the Special Landscape Area. The meadows to the west (parcel 4) have an overall moderate visual sensitivity - but in reality parts of this area have high visual sensitivity, such as where they form the setting to the church, whereas other parts of the parcel have a low visual sensitivity e.g. places that are harder to experience, such as behind Norman Way. More detailed analysis is always necessary to understand sensitivity on a site level.

Visual sensitivity is lowest to the south-west in parcels 2 and 3. This area is not seen from the historic core, it is not part of any highly value views, and there is existing development or vegetation providing screening.

Combined sensitivity to small group development

18. Small group development is defined as 10 plots or fewer. There is an overall trend for the sensitivity to decrease from the north-east to the south-east where it is lowest.

Parcels 6 and 7 are most sensitive to development and would be at risk from even small sized developments. Parcel 5 also is sensitive (mod-high) as development here would constitute a break into open countryside so even small developments would be hard to assimilate. Parcels 1 and 4 have moderate sensitivity. There is likely some scope for small developments here but careful mitigation would be necessary. There is most scope within parcels 2 and 3. Here the landscape and visual conditions are such that small developments could be assimilated relatively well, given appropriate mitigation.

Combined sensitivity to small estate development

19. Small group development is defined as approx 24 plots. The overall trend is similar to that for the smaller sized development with a clear north-east / south-west gradient from high to low. Parcels 4,5,6 and 7 have high or mod-high sensitivity to a development of this size. There is limited scope for small estates of this size although, more detailed work may reveal sites with more scope, particularly when paired with sensitive mitigation proposals. Parcels 1 and 4 may have some limited scope but again, parcels 2 and 3 would best assimilate a development of this size. Landscape and visual conditions are such that small developments could be assimilated here without significant harmful impacts. Potential developers must follow both the general landscape guidance and the site specific guidance.

Combined sensitivity to large estates

20. Large estate development is defined as a development with circa 60 plots. As might be expected there are few parcels with sufficient ability to absorb a development of this size around Lavenham. It is likely development at this scale would cause significantly harm to the valley side and historic meadow landscapes. There may, however, be scope in parcels 2 or 3 - the plateau edge parcels with consistently lower sensitivity. Here, given careful site selection, the landscape could potentially assimilate a large development, as long as a well considered mitigation strategy is put forward. Potential developers must follow both the general landscape guidance and the site specific guidance.

21. The results of the study indicate that sites to the south-west of the village have the best ability to assimilate residential development, even larger estates. All proposals must include appropriate mitigation measures and opportunities should be sought to make improvements to landscape condition and improve the relationship between the settlement edge and the open countryside.

Landscape Guidance

The need for guidance

22. Lavenham needs to deliver a strategy for diversifying its aging population. It needs to provide additional houses for working families to maintain a socially and economically sustainable community. Owing to the high house prices commanded in this honey-pot village, additional affordable housing is particularly needed. New development dating from the last 20 years has delivered an inadequate supply of affordable housing and it is now essential for robust application of Babergh's 35% affordable units policy in any new developments. The highly valued, historic nature of the village setting means it is very sensitive to potential changes from new development.
23. Development on 'greenfield' sites are likely to play a part in the delivery process because there are insufficient brownfield and infill sites available. Applications for new development in Lavenham are anticipated on undeveloped land beyond the built-up area boundary. Lavenham Parish Council will, through their NDP, promote stringent standards for the siting and design of new development to prevent suburbanising Lavenham's landscape setting, and damage to its famous views. Ultimately, the sustainability of its continued economic success depends on conserving its special historic character and unspoilt landscape setting.
24. This document provides a set of general guidance points relating to development and the landscape. It should be used by landowners and potential developers, and by those negotiating and determining planning applications. The aim is to achieve sensitively sited, high quality residential design appropriate to the highly valued and special character of this area.
25. It is recognised that some of the requirements add cost but it is also likely that development in Lavenham will be attract a premium to help offset this, with minimal negative impact on the affordable housing sector.
26. This guidance section comprises a set of general guidance applicable to all development, as well as the additional guidance notes applicable in each of the land parcels.
27. In relation to design standards policy D2 in the NDP must also be referred to. Further useful guidance for planning within the setting of heritage assets is to be found in 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3'. Historic England. 2015.

Section G1. General landscape guidelines applicable to all development

- All developments of 10 houses or more must submit a design brief in advance of an application and actively engage with the determining authorities in advance of a submission.
- The design of new development must be of high quality, a standard approach delivered by volume-housebuilders will not be sufficient. Use of high quality building materials and methods is expected.
- New developments must relate well to the existing patterns of development and link into existing routes. Ensure the built form gives shape to the roads rather than the other way round.
- Create or enhance access to public rights of way in the area.
- Any development should relate appropriately to the orientation of the landform and topography. Consider organic shapes that correspond with the underlying random historic field patterns and the grain of the landscape.
- Residential units should be delivered at densities that reflect those found in neighbouring areas.
- Prominent new rooflines must be avoided by generally limiting development to two storeys and by limiting storey height. The scale of new buildings must not be noticeably greater than in neighbouring areas. Proposals for dwellings of three storeys will require strong justification and evidence that no significant harm will result.
- Avoid damage to the important inward and outward keyviews. Although this does not mean that additional views or other elements or attributes of setting do not also merit protection and consideration.
- Seek opportunities to create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of the setting.
- Demonstrate a considered approach to architectural styling. Reproducing the traditional vernacular may or may not be appropriate, depending on context. Contemporary design may be acceptable, but its impacts must be very carefully considered. The use of traditional materials is preferred; their use is not incompatible with contemporary architecture.

General guidance continued:-

- Retain and enhance vegetated boundaries as much as possible, particularly those of intact hedgerow and trees. Also retain existing natural features including ditches and hedgebanks as far as possible. Proposals, should seek to restore local landscape structure through appropriate planting – any unavoidable loss of trees or hedges must be more than adequately offset by new planting.
- Consider the perimeter to developments very carefully. Avoid hard edges directly onto open farmland which create a stark interface. Landscaped buffers are generally desirable to help developments integrate with open countryside.
- Screening planting should not be regarded as a substitute for well-designed developments. Screening can have a substantial effect on landscape setting as the development it seeks to mitigate so, where it is necessary, it merits careful design.
- Planting schemes, where provided to provide screening, are expected to be substantial enough to mitigate negative impacts. They should comprise predominantly native species although other species may be appropriate, where merited, for rapid screening, for example.
- Avoid use of landscape bunds for screening.
- In larger developments break up rooflines internally by creating space for ‘forest scale’ trees with appropriate foundation design, as needed, to enable this.
- Avoid standardised residential plot planting schemes with excessive use of ornamental species. Propose boundary treatments (walls, fences and hedges) that reflect the local character, inappropriate boundary treatments can have a substantial negative effect.
- Ensure adequate resources are planned for, and made available, to ensure successful establishment and on going management of structural planting schemes.
- Rigorously applied highway standards can have a sizeable adverse impact in rural areas. Use discretion to limit their application particularly where new access points are created onto existing roads. A minimal approach to lighting, signage, concrete kerbing, safety railings is recommended.

Landscape guidance - by land parcel

Section G2. Landparcel specific guidelines

29. The following guidance is applicable in individual land parcels and was generated from the findings of the Lavenham Sensitivity Study.

Land parcel 1	Land parcel 2
<p>There is some scope for development towards the plateau edge. Development down the valleyside would have a much greater adverse impact.</p> <p>Ensure retention of all existing natural boundary features including ditches, hedges and hedgebanks, and trees.</p> <p>Provide substantial boundary planting creating a landscape buffer between the development, open countryside and the Conservation Area to the north.</p> <p>The interface with the Conservation Area, needs particular careful attention. Significant adverse effects on views out from Lavenham Priory or other listed buildings are not acceptable.</p> <p>Ensure any highways design has as little impact as possible to conserve the character of Bears Lane.</p> <p>Existing patterns in the east-west boundary hedges could be replicated as well as efforts to restore historic field patterns lost during the 20th century.</p>	<p>There is scope within this land parcel for residential development. Larger estates could possibly be accommodated provided they were carefully sited – the land to the south of Meadow Close has the greatest potential to assimilate a larger development.</p> <p>Further work would identify the areas where development could be most easily accommodated.</p> <p>Opportunities exist to restore hedged field boundaries and increase woodland cover.</p> <p>Opportunities exist to improve the existing settlement edge and restore historic field patterns lost during the 20th century.</p>

Landscape guidance - by land parcel continued:-

Land parcel 3	Land parcel 4	Land parcel 5	Land parcel 6	Land parcel 7
<p>There is some scope within this land parcel for residential development in landscape and visual terms, however land here is isolated from the main village. The land to the rear of Green Willows is least sensitive but most distant.</p> <p>Further work would identify the areas where development could be most easily accommodated.</p> <p>Opportunities exist to restore hedged field boundaries and increase woodland cover.</p> <p>Opportunities exist to improve the existing settlement edge and restore historic field patterns lost during the 20th century.</p>	<p>Development must be avoided where both landscape and visual sensitivity is high, for example where it would significantly harm the setting of key heritage features such as Lavenham church.</p> <p>Development may be more acceptable in areas of the parcel with lower visual sensitivity.</p> <p>Ensure siting of new development is closely related to existing village</p> <p>Reflect grain of field boundary patterns</p> <p>Ensure retention of all existing natural features including ditches, hedges and hedgebanks, and trees.</p>	<p>Residential development is not generally appropriate in this land parcel. It would represent a break into open countryside, through the existing strong settlement edge provided by the well-vegetated old railway line.</p> <p>The far eastern part of the parcel is the least sensitive part of the parcel, where it adjoins existing settlement along Bury Road but it has recently been planted up as a community woodland so is unlikely to come forward. Detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of development here.</p> <p>Other land use change would have to demonstrate regard for the character of the area, and seek opportunities to restore hedged field boundaries and increase woodland cover.</p>	<p>Owing to the high landscape and visual sensitivity, residential development is not appropriate to the east of the river channel.</p> <p>There may be some areas in the north of the parcel, adjoining existing settlement, that are less sensitive, but more detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of development here.</p> <p>Other land use change would have to demonstrate regard for the character of the area and not cause harm to key views from the historic core.</p> <p>Opportunities to improve condition of river corridor and remove invasive species should be sought.</p>	<p>Owing to the high landscape and visual sensitivity, as well as other constraints, residential development is generally not appropriate on the flood plain.</p> <p>There may be some scope for limited development in the meadows west of Lower Road but more detailed work at a site level would be needed to assess potential impacts of development here.</p> <p>Development must not cause significant harm to key views out of the historic core, or to views back to the village edge from Clay Hill.</p> <p>The vegetative features are important part of the character of the village edge and must be retained.</p> <p>Ensure any highways design has as little impact as possible to conserve the character of Lower Road.</p> <p>Other land use change would have to demonstrate a high regard for the character of the area and its visual prominence.</p>

The Special Landscape Area

30. The 2006 Babergh Local Plan defined the rolling river valley landscape to the east of Lavenham as a Special Landscape Areas (Local Plan policy CR04). SLAs focus on the river valleys, and the policy states:

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

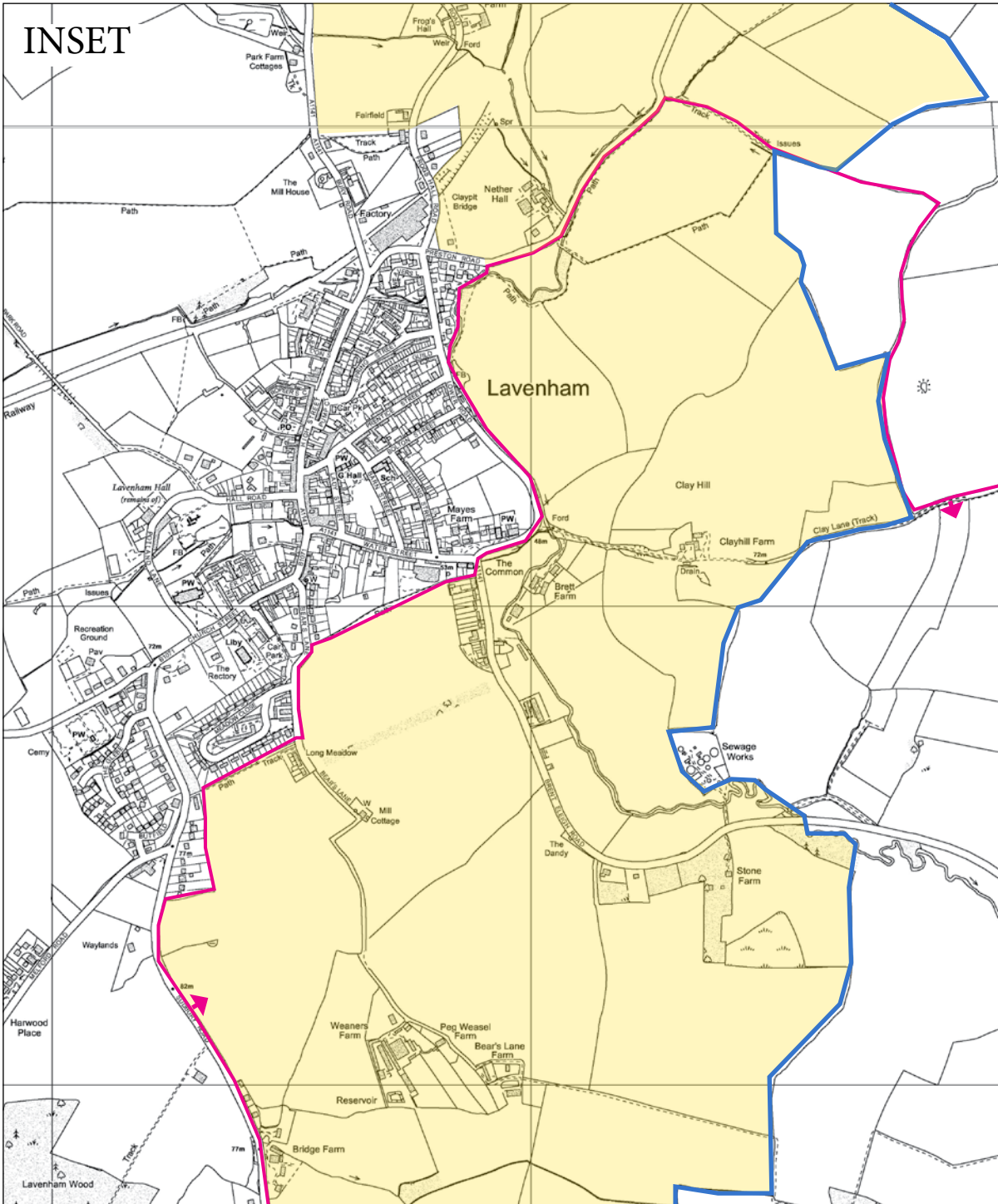
- maintain or enhance the special landscape qualities of the area, identified in the relevant landscape appraisal; and*
- are designed and sited so as to harmonise with the landscape setting’*

31. This policy designation is now under threat following Babergh and Mid Suffolk’s Local Plan Designations Review in early 2015 which states:

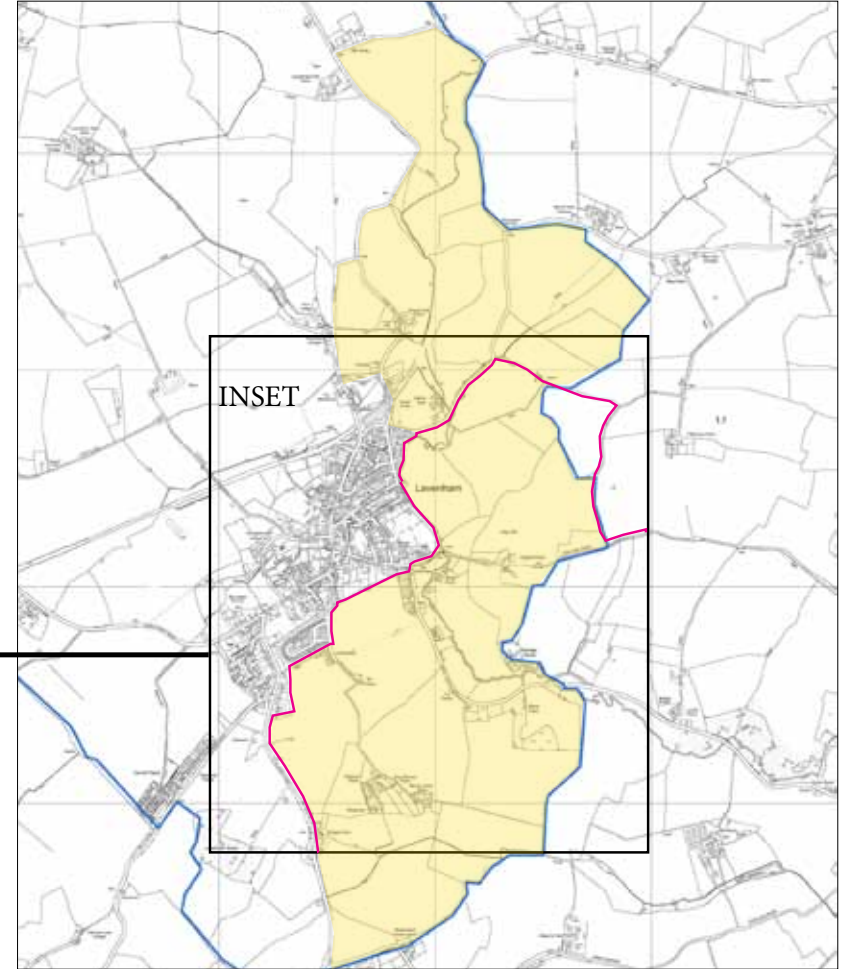
‘The (SLA) designation is no longer necessary, as the Districts are now covered by an up to date landscape character appraisal, which incorporates specific guidance as to what constitutes local character.’ Local Plan Designations Review 2015.

32. The wording appears to be a reference to the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (www.suffolklandscape.org.uk) undertaken by Suffolk County Council. However, the means for defining areas of higher value at a parish level are not in place within a County level assessment undertaken at 1:50,000.
33. The means for defining landscape quality are available following this parish level characterisation and sensitivity study. Therefore, in order to retain the additional protection afforded to sites within SLAs, Lavenham Parish Council wished to review and retain Special Landscape Area within the parish, based on the findings of this study.
34. The Lavenham Special Landscape Area is mapped overleaf on figure LSS-07. The Area has been extended to the north, beyond Preston Road, to follow the river channel as far as Rookwood Lane and its junction with Hill Green. The landscape to the north of the Preston road is of equivalent quality and contiguous with LAV6 - Clay Hill landscape character area and warrants inclusion as it is part of the rolling river valley landscape. In line with the existing SLAs, the boundaries have been selected to follow defined features such as highways.




35. Any proposals for development in the newly defined Lavenham Special Landscape Area will have to accord with Babergh’s existing policy wording which will be retained in its current form.



Plan showing the Lavenham Special Landscape Area



KEY:

-  Parish boundary
-  Boundary of Babergh Special Landscape Area: Local Plan (2006)
-  Lavenham Parish Special Landscape Area (within parish boundary)

Lavenham Landscape Character Assessment			
Figure title:	Lavenham Special Landscape Area		
Figure number:	LSS -07		
Scale: 1:25,000 (A3)	Date: Nov '15	Drawn: LBW	Rev: -
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