

Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal

for

Coggeshall Parish Council

Planning | July 2017

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Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal

for Coggeshall Parish Council

Executive summary

In March 2017, Coggeshall Parish Council, via its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, commissioned The Landscape Partnership to undertake a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal of certain areas within the Parish of Coggeshall in order to determine the sensitivity of the various landscapes within the parish to change and their capacity to accommodate new development. The Appraisal builds on and extends a piece of work that The Landscape Partnership undertook for Braintree District Council in 2014/2015: Braintree District Settlement Fringes Evaluation of Landscape Analysis Study of Coggeshall, June 2015.

The study will assist the Parish Council in making informed decisions as to whether any future development could be absorbed into the landscape and, if so, what scale of development would be appropriate and what mitigation measures might be required to ensure that there would be no unacceptable residual effects on the landscape.

A combination of desktop study and fieldwork was used to identify parcels of land with common characteristics within the study area, and a range of landscape and visual criteria were identified, assessed and scored in order to evaluate the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape, parcel by parcel, to accommodate development.

Parcels were rated as having Low, Medium-Low, Medium, Medium-High or High capacity to accommodate development based on the criteria and assumptions set out in Section 1 of this report below. Three parcels were identified as having a Medium capacity to accommodate development. These were located immediately adjacent to the existing settlement fringes, between the settlement edge and the A120. These parcels included:

- Parcel B: Land to the east of Coggeshall between the settlement and the A120 which has a close connection to the existing settlement edge and a relatively low visual influence on the surrounding landscape (due to topography and existing hedgerows), and which could be considered a natural extension of the village's development. The acceptability of development within this parcel would be dependent on the implementation of suitable mitigation measures to lessen the effect on views from the surrounding residential properties which overlook the site, and the effect of any proposals on the Essex Way and on the brook which crosses the site. A suitable buffer to the A120 would need to be provided which should include woodland planting to further screen views from this direction and create a robust and defendable green edge to the settlement.
- Parcel C: Land to the north of Coggeshall between the settlement edge and the A120 which also has a close connection to the existing settlement edge. This parcel includes school playing fields and it may well be the case that it is inappropriate for parts of Parcel C to come forward for residential development. It is more visible from the wider countryside than Parcel B; however,

the character of this parcel is influenced by its proximity to the settlement fringe and the A120 making it comparatively less sensitive than other areas to development. Given its visibility in long distance views from points to the north and west, it is likely that any new development would have to be of an appropriate scale and form i.e. two to two-and-a-half storey housing, so as to integrate with existing development within the settlement. The style of the housing would also have to be appropriate to the character of this part of the settlement. Any proposals to develop the parcel would have to give careful consideration to the effect on views from residential properties surrounding the site, and to potential effects on the public footpath which crosses the parcel.

- Parcel F, known as Cook Field. A small parcel of land adjacent to the southern edge of Coggeshall which has been allocated for development in the emerging draft Braintree Local Plan, but which has a number of characteristics and features which are sensitive to built development. If development here is to be successful, it is important that the potential for adverse effects on the Conservation Area and on the experience of those using the Essex Way is taken into account at the scheme layout stage and that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented. A discussion of these, and of potential mitigation measures, is included in Section 5 of this report.

The appraisal considered only aspects relating to landscape character and visual amenity, and development in these parcels may not prove to be feasible or practicable for other reasons, for example an inability to provide suitable access arrangements or unavailability of the land.

The analysis found that most landscapes within the parish of Coggeshall had a Low or Medium-Low capacity to accommodate development. Parcels within the Low category fell, largely, within the following types:

- Localised valley landscapes with complex topography which it was considered were unable to accept development without adverse effects on the character or scale or land-cover of the parcel.
- Parcels containing large areas of woodland (including some Ancient Woodland) where development would cause significant harm to the setting of existing landscape features. Ancient Woodlands in particular are features that could not be replaced, meaning that it would not be possible to mitigate their loss.

Any development within these parcels would have significant adverse effects on the character of the parcels themselves and/or on landscape features such as streams and woodlands. It is not considered possible to mitigate these effects.

Those parcels which fell into the Medium-Low category generally had little or no connection with the existing settlement. They fell into the following categories:

- Parcels which lie beyond the A120 in areas of open countryside. These areas are characterised by agricultural landuse and a rural settlement pattern and as such have limited capacity to absorb new development without comprising the character of the landscape.

- Parcels on the southern edge of the parish. These areas are remote from the settlement with little visual or physical connection and are separated from the village by intervening features such as the River Blackwater. These parcels are generally located on the valley side and so any development here would have the potential to be prominent in long distance views.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the appraisal

- 1.1.1 In March 2017, Coggeshall Parish Council, via its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, commissioned The Landscape Partnership to undertake a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal of certain areas within the parish of Coggeshall, Essex (see Figure 01: Location plan) in order to determine the sensitivity of the various landscapes within the parish to change and their capacity to accommodate new development.
- 1.1.2 The study area encompassed a set of parcels of land and individual plots identified by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.
- 1.1.3 The appraisal builds on work undertaken by The Landscape Partnership in 2015 for Braintree District Council which assessed the landscape surrounding a number of settlements within the district, including Coggeshall [Braintree District Settlement Fringes Evaluation of Landscape Analysis Study of Coggeshall, June 2015] – see Figure 02. This report evaluated the findings of an earlier Landscape Capacity Analysis commissioned by Braintree District Council in 2007, and provided a finer-grained assessment of the area around the settlement and its ability to accommodate development [Landscape Capacity Analysis, Chris Blandford Associates, 2007].

2 Purpose of the report

- 2.1.1 Coggeshall Parish Council has commissioned this study to inform its Neighbourhood Development Plan and help it understand the sensitivity of the landscape within Coggeshall, and to provide a clear and concise evaluation of various parcels of land within the parish to determine the relative sensitivity of their landscape character to change. The study will assist the Parish Council in making informed decisions as to whether any future development can be absorbed into the landscape and, if so, what scale of development is appropriate and what mitigation measures might be required to ensure that there would be no unacceptable effects on the landscape.
- 2.1.2 It is important to note that the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Appraisal considers only landscape-related aspects in its assessment of the ability of a parcel of land to accommodate development. For example, no account has been taken of access or highway issues, or the presence of ecologically-important habitats. It is quite possible that a parcel of land could score well in terms of the ability of its landscape to accommodate development (e.g. it is relatively well screened or set in strong vegetation framework) but that such development is not deliverable on account of other aspects, e.g. access or flooding issues.
- 2.1.3 The Appraisal does not respect landownership boundaries and so takes no account of whether or not a landowner might wish to take land out of its current use and promote it for future development.

3 Approach and methodology

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The methodology used to assess the sensitivity and capacity of the various parcels was based on the approach promoted in Topic Paper 6, 'Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity' published in 2002, which forms part of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage guidance 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland'. The paper explores thinking and recent practice on judging capacity and sensitivity. The recommended methodology developed for this study adopted the following premise from Topic Paper 6:

"existing landscape character sensitivity + visual sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity"

3.1.2 The methodology is based on similar studies carried out by The Landscape Partnership in the past. The methods used are consistent with Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (as published by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage) and Topic Paper 6 (published by The Countryside Agency).

3.1.3 The study reviewed the character of the landscape within the various parcels, and identified which of the parcels have, in landscape-terms, the potential capacity to accommodate development, together with those with little or no capacity. The study does not identify specific development sites, but instead identifies broader areas in which it is more likely that development could be accommodated in the landscape without significantly affecting the character or quality of that landscape.

3.2 Desktop Appraisal

3.2.1 Alongside the development of the methodology, a desk-based study was undertaken, which involved gathering and reviewing current and background information, including previous capacity studies, environmental designations and other relevant baseline information. This included reference to:

- Natural England's Natural Character Area Profiles
- Essex Landscape Character Assessment
- Braintree Landscape Character Assessment 2006
- Protected Lanes Assessment July 2013 (Essex County Council)
- Braintree District Historic Environmental Characterisation Project 2010 (Essex County Council)
- Braintree District Council's New Local Plan

3.3 Study Area

3.3.1 The landscape capacity analysis was undertaken for those parcels of land identified by Coggeshall Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, i.e.

- Various parcels of land to the north and east of Coggeshall; not included in the 2015 Study:
 - Area B
 - Area C
 - Area D
 - Area E
- A parcel of land at the southern edge of the settlement known as Cook Field which has been allocated in the Draft Braintree District Plan for residential development, and which was part of Parcel 2d of the 2015 Study:
 - Area F
- Land to the south of Coggeshall beyond the extent of the 2015 Study:
 - Area G
- Land north-west of the Parish incorporating Bungate Wood and Holfield Grange (beyond the extent of the 2015 Study and understood to be broadly within the area of study for a future garden village):
 - Area H

3.4 Identification of sub-parcels

3.4.1 The landscape within the study area was divided into a series of parcels of land with common characteristics. The parcels were defined by desktop research and then refined and adjusted in the light of findings in the field as necessary. Characteristics that informed the identification of the parcels included:

- landform
- landscape designations
- hydrology
- landscape scale
- vegetation cover
- land uses
- pattern of settlement

- presence of views and landmarks features
- communication routes

3.4.2 These Parcels largely reflected the main natural elements of the landscape, such as rivers and floodplains, tributary valleys, valley slopes, ridgelines; and elements relating to land use, human influences, etc. The number of sub-parcels was determined by the complexity and variety of the landscape in each case.

3.4.3 The drawing of boundary lines was a necessary part of the process, but did not always mean that Parcels were dramatically different to either side of the line, as it is more typical for change to be a more gradual transition. The boundary lines for some Parcels mark more a watershed of character, where the balance of the defining elements has shifted from one landscape character to another. For practical purposes, the boundary was aligned on features that could be identified on the ground, such as boundary features or landscape elements. This analysis was typically at the field level scale with, where appropriate, some aggregation of field and landscape units of a similar character.

3.5 Field survey work

3.5.1 The field survey work was carried out by a team of Landscape Architects who used a standard pro-forma (see Appendix A) to record data in a consistent manner. The Parcels were photographed (where relevant) to capture landscape character, for internal purposes when reviewing and evaluating the character and analysis studies and compiling the report. The fieldwork also verified and assessed landmark landscape features and sensitive routes/corridors and their corresponding sensitivity to change. Information was also gathered around opportunities for landscape enhancements in keeping with local landscape character, and the potential for green infrastructure provision.

3.5.2 Following the fieldwork, the Parcels were reviewed, mapped and the field survey notes written up to provide a general commentary to describe and assess the key characteristics, distinctive features and landscape elements, as well as an indication of the 'Strength of Character' and 'Condition' of each Parcel.

3.6 Landscape Character

3.6.1 The landscape character of each of the sub-parcels was assessed and the key characteristics of each area were recorded in bullet point form. An analysis was also made of the 'strength of character' and 'condition' of the landscape. In order to assess the potential ability of a landscape to adapt to change without losing its intrinsic character, it was necessary to analyse the functional integrity or condition of the landscape, and compare this with the strength of character, as demonstrated by more permanent or robust elements of the landscape. Landscape condition was determined from an evaluation of the relative state (poor/moderate/good) of elements within the landscape that could be subject to change, such

as survival of hedgerows, extent and impact of built development. Strength of character was determined from an evaluation of the influence of relatively stable factors, such as landform, pattern of landcover, continuity of an historic pattern, degree of visibility and rarity.

- 3.6.2 The judgements on 'strength of character' and 'condition' were combined within a matrix to determine the most appropriate landscape strategy (conserve, strengthen, restore, enhance, etc.).

3.7 Landscape Sensitivity Analysis

- 3.7.1 The sub-parcels were assessed for their landscape sensitivity and capacity, based on a pre-defined set of criteria. These criteria reflect both the national guidance in Topic Paper 6 and the particular circumstances of the rural landscape in the vicinity of Coggeshall.

- 3.7.2 The criteria were grouped into primary factors (representing features that are more permanent in the landscape, such as landform, or those that would take a substantial period of time to vary) and secondary factors (representing features that are of a more temporary or transient nature or that could be subject to relatively rapid change or improvement e.g. through sensitive design).

- 3.7.3 The following criteria have been selected to reflect existing landscape features:

- slope analysis (primary)
- vegetation enclosure (primary)
- the complexity and scale of the landscape (secondary)
- the condition of the landscape (secondary)

- 3.7.4 The following criteria have been selected to reflect visual sensitivity:

- openness to public view (secondary)
- openness to private view (secondary)
- relationship with existing settlement (primary)
- safeguarding the separation of settlements and/or historic settlement patterns (primary)
- scope to mitigate the development (primary)

- 3.7.5 It is recognised that Topic Paper 6 refers to a wider range of factors within what is termed 'Landscape Character Sensitivity'. However, in the context of this study these are not considered to be relevant and would be picked up as part of other evidence base work, e.g. nature conservation or cultural heritage. It is considered that for the purpose of this evaluation, the main relevant existing landscape and visual factors are addressed in the above

categories. These have been incorporated into the field survey forms used for each Parcel (refer to Appendix A).

- 3.7.6 The Overall Landscape Sensitivity provides an evaluation of the sensitivity of a Parcel in broad strategic terms. In order to assess the Overall Landscape Capacity of a Parcel, 'landscape value' was added to the equation, as follows.

"Overall Landscape Sensitivity + Landscape Value = Overall Landscape Capacity"

- 3.7.7 Landscape value can be measured in a number of ways e.g. statutory landscape designations, local landscape designations, other ecological/cultural heritage designations, and local perceived value. No consensus studies informed by stakeholders were available. Consequently, the value of the landscape has been scored based on the presence of: landscape designations (of which there are few, if any, in the study area), Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, the extent of public rights of way, landscape features such as mature trees, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, or the presence/influence of other conservation interests within the Parcel or its setting. Landscape Value was determined on the basis of the same five-point scale as the other criteria, using a score of C as the default starting point for a Parcel with no positive or negative landscape-value attributes.

- 3.7.8 To assess the landscape capacity of a Parcel to accommodate development, certain assumptions need to be applied. For the purposes of this study it is assumed that development will include mainly two to two and a half storey residential units and that any commercial units would be of a similar height. It is assumed that development would be of a low to moderate scale, that it would be of an architectural character that typically reflected vernacular qualities of existing properties in the settlement, that any proposed developments would be viewed holistically and that build out would be phased over an appropriate period of time.

- 3.7.9 Each Parcel was assessed against the criteria noted above, using a five-point scale from most suitable to least suitable (A to E), guided by a set of definitions/descriptions that have been developed for this study to reflect local characteristics (see Appendix B). An assessment has been made of each parcel in order to determine a score for: Landscape Sensitivity Profile and Overall Capacity Profile. To build in weighting for the primary and secondary factors, a 1.5 x weighting is applied to primary factors.

- 3.7.10 The results were recorded on a set pro forma to provide a consistent approach reflecting each of the criteria.

- 3.7.11 The Overall Capacity Profile score identifies the Parcel's capacity based on the following range:

27 – 33.5 Low Landscape Capacity

34 – 40.5 Medium-Low Landscape Capacity

- 41 – 47.5 Medium Landscape Capacity
- 48 – 54.5 Medium-High Landscape Capacity
- 55 – 61.5 High Landscape Capacity

3.7.12 The principle of applying a numerical scale to define landscape capacity has been used to help provide transparency through the field judgement process. However, it should be emphasized that scores should not be regarded as a precise and definitive judgement, but merely as a means to establish relative capacity and no absolute conclusion should be drawn from the numerical totals. The influence of individual criteria in a given Parcel and in the context of the wider landscape character should also be given due consideration. Those Parcels that are borderline in terms of suitability, are considered in more detail based on the overall spread and balance of the profiles and scope to mitigate in making a final judgement.

4 Landscape sensitivity and capacity analysis

4.1.1 The completed landscape capacity appraisal forms for each parcel of land can be found at Appendix C. The findings are considered at Section 5.

5 Findings of landscape sensitivity and capacity analysis

5.1 Identification and arrangement of parcels

5.1.1 As described in the methodology, a combination of desktop study and fieldwork was used to identify parcels of land with common characteristics. This involved a systematic survey of the natural elements of the landscape and overlying elements relating to land uses.

5.1.2 An overview of the scale and arrangement of the parcels reveals that they are generally smaller in scale and more intricate in form where they abut the existing village fringes, where the boundaries are responding to the varied landform and the historic grain of the settlement. Parcel size increases away from the village, with substantial compartments lying in the most distant parts of the Study Area, comprising elevated, large scale arable fields disconnected from the settlement by clearly defined intervening features such as the A120 and the River Blackwater.

5.1.3 The parcel boundaries are shown on Figure 03: Parcel arrangement.

5.2 Parcel analysis

5.2.1 For each of the parcels, six inherent landscape characteristics (comprising the impacts of landform and land cover, historic pattern, tranquillity, rarity and visual unity) were reviewed and scored with the criteria 'Weak,' 'Moderate' or 'Strong.' The landscape condition, partially reflecting the active management of the landscape for agriculture, amenity uses or nature conservation, together with the impact of existing development on the landscape, was similarly assessed and scored as 'Poor,' 'Moderate' or 'Good.'

5.2.2 A range of landscape and visual criteria were identified, assessed and scored in order to evaluate the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape, parcel by parcel, to accommodate development. The assumptions made with regard to the scale of any future development are considered at Section 1. The potential to alleviate the effects of built development on each parcel was considered, based on the ability of the landscape to provide effective mitigation across the short – medium – long term. The consideration around mitigation was undertaken as part of the fieldwork, and based on factors such as scale, enclosure, pattern, type and maturity of vegetation, movement and visibility of each parcel.

5.3 Description of results

5.3.1 See Figure 04 and 05: Landscape capacity evaluations

5.4 High Landscape Capacity

5.4.1 Evaluation of the landscape features, visual factors, potential landscape features and landscape value revealed that there are no parcels with a High capacity of accommodate residential or commercial development within the parish of Coggeshall.

5.5 Medium-High Landscape Capacity

5.5.1 Likewise, evaluation of the landscape features, visual factors, potential landscape features and landscape value revealed that there are no parcels with a Medium-High capacity to accommodate residential or commercial development within the parish of Coggeshall.

5.6 Medium Landscape Capacity

5.6.1 Two parcels have been identified within the 2017 Study as having a Medium capacity to accommodate development. These are located immediately adjacent to the existing settlement fringes, where they respond to the existing landscape features and visual characteristics:

Parcel B

5.6.2 Parcel B is located at the eastern edge of the settlement between the village and the A120. The parcel comprises four arable fields delineated by mature, dense hedgerows. Ribbon development on Colchester Road is also included within the parcel; however, the greater portion of the parcel is in agricultural use and is undeveloped. The parcel retains its agricultural use and historic hedgerow boundaries; however, the character of the parcel is influenced by its proximity to the settlement edge and the A120, which compromises the tranquillity of the area. A dense hedge filters views of the site from the A120.

5.6.3 Development here would form some close associations with the existing settlement. The A120 also forms a defensible boundary, preventing encroachment into open countryside beyond. The Essex Way crosses the parcel and any development proposals within the parcel will need to consider effects that might adversely affect the experience of those using the path. It is suggested that the route of the path might be accommodated within a corridor of public open

space. Opportunities exist for enhancing the setting of the existing brook by removing the culvert, thinning vegetation and reprofiling the banks. Bridges or culverts should be avoided if possible. Development proposals would also have to consider the effect on views from private properties which overlook the site. Potential mitigation measures include screen planting and long or rear gardens adjoining existing gardens. The existing dense hedgerows should be retained where possible but in a manner such that they can be managed. Mitigation measures will also be required to address noise from the A120, which should include a suitable buffer. Additional woodland planting would reinforce the existing hedgerow, preventing views from this direction and would enable the establishment of a robust and defensible green edge to the village. Any development of the site should also consider opportunities to upgrade the crossing of the A120 to create a safe and attractive crossing for pedestrians using the Essex Way. Consideration should also be given to creating a safe crossing of the A120 for wildlife, to mitigate the negative impact of any development, and to improve connectivity. This could be by means of an underpass or widened culvert for example.

Parcel C

5.6.4 Parcel C is located between the edge of the settlement and the A120 and comprises a series of fields, including playing fields associated with the school. It adjoins the settlement edge being bounded by residential development and the school on the south-eastern edge, and overlooked by residential properties on the south-western edge. The parcel also includes a discrete and distinctive area of residential development to the east of Tilkey Road which is generally well contained by a dense hedge. The A120 forms a defensible boundary preventing encroachment into the open countryside beyond. The parcel is somewhat open to views from the wider countryside to the west. However, a dense hedge on the highway boundary filters views from the road. The parcel is overlooked by a number of residential properties along its south-eastern and south-western boundaries.

5.6.5 The analysis identifies that built development should respond to the existing character and scale of development in the area, with two to two-and-a-half storey housing. Playing fields form an important amenity and it may well be the case that it is inappropriate for these to come forward for residential development. The existing framework of mature hedges should be retained wherever possible. The effects of development on views from residential properties will have to be considered, as will effects on the existing public right of way. It is suggested that the existing public right of way is retained within a corridor of open space. A suitable buffer would also have to be allowed to the A120, and woodland buffer planting is likely to be appropriate.

Parcel F

5.6.6 Parcel F, known as Cook Field, has been allocated for residential development within the Draft Local Plan produced by Braintree District Council (Site reference: Cogg 174: land on south

side of east Street, Coggeshall). The parcel abuts the settlement of Coggeshall and is adjoined on its eastern edge by large gardens containing mature trees. To the north, the parcel borders East Street (B1024) which forms one of the main routes into the village. It consists of a single large field with mature vegetation on the boundaries which contains views to some extent. The parcel forms part of a wider area of open, agricultural land on the fringes of the Blackwater Valley. The Essex Way follows a line through this area, passing along the western edge of the parcel.

- 5.6.7 Whilst the parcel has been allocated for development consideration needs to be given to the effect of any development proposals on existing landscape features including the mature vegetation on the northern site boundary adjacent to East Street. This vegetation should be retained wherever possible for its contribution to the character of East Street. Development should be set back from East street in order to safeguard the character of the streetscape, and to limit effects on the setting of the Conservation Area, which lies immediately to the north. Views from the Essex way are currently open, so that the site is perceived as a single field bounded by mature trees. The mitigation measures for any new development should include an open buffer zone adjacent to the Essex Way to protect existing views north and south from the Essex Way, and the landscape setting and character of this section of the path. Landscape buffer planting, using native trees and shrubs, should be established at the southern edge of the developed area to reduce the impact of new buildings in views from the Essex Way, and to help assimilate new built form into a well-vegetated settlement edge.

5.7 Medium-Low Landscape Capacity

- 5.7.1 The analysis found that the landscape of much of the study area has Medium-Low capacity to accommodate development. The reasons for this will be discussed in the following paragraphs; however, over-arching reasons include the separation of the various parcels from the existing settlement edge, and the rural character of the landscape towards the edges of the parish. It is difficult to see how development in these parcels could be consistent with the existing low-density settlement pattern, which is characterised by occasional, isolated farmsteads and dwellings.
- 5.7.2 Parcels E2, E3 and D lie to the east of Coggeshall and are separated from the settlement by the A120. They have a rural agricultural character which reduces their ability to accommodate development. Whilst the A120 causes a local reduction in tranquillity, the parcels form an intrinsic part of a wider agricultural landscape, meaning that it would be difficult to effectively assimilate development in this location. Parcel D is crossed by the Essex Way which increases its sensitivity to development. The path follows a line through an agricultural landscape where development is all but absent and it is likely that the introduction of built development in close proximity to the path would have a significant effect on uses of the path.

- 5.7.3 Parcels G1, G3 and G4 lie at the south-western edge of the parish. The parcels here are very distant from the existing settlement and are separated from it by intervening features such as the Blackwater Valley. The areas are characterised by their absence of development save for the occasional scattered farmstead or dwelling. The rural character of the parcels also makes them unsuitable for development.
- 5.7.4 The analysis has also shown that parcels H2, H3, H4 and H7 have medium-low capacity to accommodate development. Parcels H2 and H7 consist of plateau farmland, while Parcel H3 is defined as an area of park and garden associated with a large country house. Parcel H4 consists of large arable fields at the edge of the plateau, where gentle, south-facing slopes offer views across the Blackwater Valley to the wider countryside beyond. Any development within this parcel would also be potentially exposed to views from the A120. All of these parcels have very limited connection with the existing settlement and are separated from it by an expanse of open countryside and by the A120 and all have a strong rural agricultural character. Development here would be inconsistent with the existing rural character of these parcels, with their existing agricultural land use, and the existing settlement pattern. Whilst there may be potential for screen planting to be effective in the medium to long term, the open nature of the landscape makes it sensitive to any new development.

5.8 Low Landscape Capacity

- 5.8.1 Four parcels are identified by the analysis as having Low capacity to accommodate development. Parcels H1 and H5 are valley landscapes. The intricate and complex landform is highly sensitive to development, which would negatively impact this particular quality of the landscape. Parcel H1 slopes to the east and as such is exposed to views from the wider landscape, meaning any potential built development would be visually prominent. Parcel H5 includes a small brook and springs which are valuable landscape features which should be protected from development.
- 5.8.2 Parcel E1 is also part of a valley system and its wooded character further precludes development. Any development here would be incongruent with the existing character of the parcel, compromising the complex topography and negatively impacting the woodland cover.
- 5.8.3 A substantial portion of parcel H6 is taken up by Ancient Woodland which receives a level of protection through the planning system, in recognition of its inherent value and irreplaceability. This parcel is characterised by an absence of development. The analysis found that this parcel has a strong character and is in good condition. As such, development would not be appropriate.