Landscape and Visual Assessment

Proposed Sand and Gravel Quarry at Holton Hall Farm, Holton St. Mary

On Behalf of:

H R Philpot & Sons

July 2018

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Landscape and Visual Assessment
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1.0 Introduction

Background

1.1 SES Strategic Ltd. has been instructed by Strutt and Parker on behalf of H R Philpot & Sons to complete a landscape and visual assessment of an area of land at Holton Hall Farm, Holton St. Mary, Suffolk to support representations to the Submission Draft Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan, June 2018.

1.2 The site, as part of a larger area of land at Holton Hall Farm was originally put forward at the Preferred Options Consultation\(^1\) as a sustainable location for the extraction of sand and gravel. Based on an assessment of the site selection criteria by Suffolk County Council\(^2\), the area was not recommended for inclusion in the draft Plan. In terms of landscape, although the area to the west was deemed unsuitable, it is identified that the eastern part of the site, which benefits from extensive screen planting would be suitable for development, subject to an acceptable working and restoration scheme.

1.3 The applicants have taken on board the comments from Suffolk County Council and the western area of land has been removed from the site promotion area. The purpose of this report is to provide a more detailed assessment of the eastern area of land, identifying the constraints and opportunities of the site, and the mitigation required to ensure that the effects on the landscape character of the area and visual amenity, including those on the adjoining nationally designated Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, can be satisfactorily addressed.

1.4 The assessment was undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect, Rachel Bodiam CMLI. It was prepared following a desk-based study of information including OS Maps, Aerial Images and published reports, alongside adopted and emerging planning policy. A full list of information is provided in Appendix 1. A site visit and visual survey was undertaken on 4th and 15th July 2018.

1.5 The report should be read in conjunction with the formal submissions made by Strutt and Parker to the Pre-submission consultation on the Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Site and Study Area

1.6 The locations of the site and study area are shown in Figure 1.

1.7 The small village of Holton St. Mary is located equidistant between the centre of the towns of Ipswich (approximately 8km to the north east) and Colchester (approximately 8km to the south west). The A12 dual carriageway that links the settlements and forms the boundary to the Parish lies approximately 0.5km to the east.

1.8 The village is broadly linear in form extending north west to south east along the route of the B1070 towards the A12 at Junction 31. Holton Hall Farm is located on the approach to the settlement from the north; the land under the ownership of H R Philpott and Sons extends to both the north and south of the village. The proposed development site lies to the south of the farm buildings separate from the village envelope.

\(^{1}\) Land at Holton Hall Farm, Holton St. Mary, Representations to the Replacement Minerals and Waster Local Plan, Strutt and Parker on behalf of APT Farming Ltd, December 2017

\(^{2}\) Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan Site Selection Report – Holton Hall Farm, Holton St. Mary, Suffolk County Council, April 2018
The study area is defined by Holton St. Mary to the north, Higham approximately 1km to the west and East Bergholt 1km to the east. To the south the area extends across the River Stour to the high ground on the opposite side of the valley between Dedham and Boxted (approximately 3-4km).

Site

The site comprises an area of agricultural land approximately 39.9ha (see Figure 2). The area is broadly triangular in shape, bordered by a farm track to the north west and the B1068 and an associated belt of trees to the south. Further established tree belts and agricultural land separate the site from Holton St. Mary to the north and north east with the single property of Squirrels Hall approximately 75m to the north east. The wider area comprises the open countryside of the clay plateau with scattered properties and farms. To the south the land falls away into the valley of the River Stour where the valley sides are fringed by large blocks of woodland.

On the edge of the plateau, the topography of the site is broadly flat, with minor undulations (45-50m AOD). The western corner forms the head of a tributary valley that extends to the south. The agricultural land quality is Grade 2 and 3a.

The area is currently in arable cultivation comprising two fields; one rectangular field to the north with a much larger irregular area to the south divided by a single predominantly elm hedgerow. Historic maps (1880-1950) show that this land was formerly divided into a number of regular fields.

Other vegetation is limited to the site boundaries. To the north west the track is enclosed along much of its length by native mixed hedgerows (with sections dominated by elm) to both sides. The hedgerow adjoining the site includes five regularly spaced mature to over mature hedgerow oaks and a holly. In contrast the southern section of the track is open on both sides allowing views across the adjoining fields.

The tree belts to the site boundaries comprise mixed plantation woodland planted in 1992 under an agri-environment scheme with a mix of species including cherry, hawthorn, oak, field maple, ash, mountain ash, whitebeam, alder and hornbeam planted on a grid of 2-3m centres and enclosed by rabbit fencing. All of the belts are semi-mature with an approximate height of 15-18m, contributing to the character of both the site and wider landscape.

The belt to the north (beyond the site boundary) is approximately 35m wide and is separated from the field by a native hedgerow and grass track. The belt to the south is similarly 35m wide forming a sinuous band of vegetation to the north of the B1068; along the road edge is evidence of the earlier field boundary, including a number of mature oaks and occasional holly which has been gapped up with later planting. At the end of the belt the boundary to the B1068 is open for distance of approximately 240m with occasional mature trees including oak, ash, sycamore and holly; a hedgerow and further trees (predominantly oak and holly) are located to the south of the road either side of the entrance to Stratford Hills Farm.

2.7 To the east, the site is enclosed by an irregular belt of trees which extends along the boundary of Squirrels Hall. The vegetation forms triangular ‘copses’ that are inset within the earlier stepped field boundary which is defined by mature trees to the east.

2.8 The site is currently accessed via the farm track that extends from the B1070 through Holton Hall Farm along the north western boundary to the B1068. The majority is concrete, while the section to the south is currently unmade.

2.9 The area is crossed by two Public Rights of Way (PRoW). The first, a bridleway (PRoW 323_19) follows the track from Holton Hall Farm along the north western boundary before cutting south to the B1068 across the field and through the tree belt. The route continues south as a public footpath (PRoW 323_20 and 503_7) along the track to Wheatlands and Corals Barn. The second public footpath (PRoW 503_9) extends from the A12 diagonally to the B1068 before crossing the eastern part of the site to Squirrels Hall and connecting with the network of routes extending north to Holton St. Mary.

3.0 Environmental Constraints

3.1 The following section summarises the designations, environmental constraints and policy considerations relevant to the site.

Designations

3.2 As set out in Figure 3, the study area incorporates a number of designations. These include areas and features of landscape, historical, ecological and recreational value of national to local importance.

3.3 The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) extends along the valleys of the River Stour to the south and its tributaries, the River Brett and River Box to the west. Although the land at Holton Hall Farm lies outside of the AONB, the southern boundary lies immediately adjacent following the B1068 to the south, with Sandpits Lane 400-550m to the north west. The high scenic quality of the area is valued as a nationally important landscape.

3.4 The primary purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Secondary considerations include meeting the needs of recreation; safeguarding agriculture, forestry and other rural industries; and the economic and social needs of local communities.

3.5 The Dedham Vale AONB, described as a ‘traditional English Lowland landscape,’ receives statutory protection. The NPPF and the Adopted Local Plan Policy CR02 both place great weight on safeguarding the natural beauty and special qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB and its setting. This is supported by the vision and management strategies set out in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan. Relevant management plan policies to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB and Stour Valley include:

2
6 Babergh Local Plan Alteration Number 2 Saved Policies, Babergh District Council, June 2006
7 Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership
• Supporting development that contributes to appropriate economic development;
• Protecting the area, including its setting, from developments that detract from its natural beauty and special qualities, including its relative tranquillity;
• Resisting the fragmentation of farmland and wildlife habitats and encouraging landscape scale co-ordination of initiatives, including Environmental Stewardship; and
• Maintaining local distinctiveness.

3.6 The special qualities and statement of significance providing criteria against which potential effects on the AONB can be assessed are considered in section 4.0.

3.7 The other primary environmental constraints receiving statutory protection (in conjunction with Adopted Local Plan Policy as relevant) are:

• The Scheduled Monument south of Kings Wood, approximately 420m to the south of the site.

• Other heritage assets including a significant number of Listed Buildings. Those in closest proximity to the site are:
  o Holton Place, Lark Hall, Pintins, Tiffins and Dewlands Farmhouse (all Grade II) along Sandpits Lane to the west and north west;
  o Mayfields, Holton Hall, Laburnam House and Lampitts (Grade II) and the Church of St. Mary (Grade II*) within Holton St. Mary to the north;
  o Four Sisters Farmhouse and Barn and Leatherjacket Farmhouse (Grade II) along the A12 corridor to the east.

• Many of the villages have designated Conservation Areas with concentrations of Listed Buildings, including Higham to the south west, East Bergholt to the east, Stratford St. Mary (including the Grade I Listed Church of St. Mary) to the south and Dedham to the south east. All are located at a distance of between 1-2km from the site. The site is not considered to form part of the setting of any of these areas.

3.8 Other constraints include:

• The extensive public rights of way network, including a section of the promoted Stour Valley Path and St. Edmund Way which follows the course of the River Stour, and the Essex Way which follows the southern edge of the valley between Dedham and Boxted.

• National Cycle route 48 extends north to south along Sandpits Lane and Green Lane, joining route 1 at Stratford St. Mary.

3.9 None of the woodland within or near the site comprises Ancient Woodland.
General Considerations

3.10 The Submission Draft Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan\(^8\) establishes a checklist for all planning proposals. Policy GP4 (General Environmental Criteria) confirms that “minerals and waste development will be acceptable as long as the proposals adequately access and address... potentially adverse impacts.” These include effects on [inter alia] landscape character, visual impact, and protected landscapes; biodiversity; the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting; public rights of way; neighbouring land-use; and light pollution.

3.11 In accordance with Policy MP6 (Progressive Working and Restoration) all proposals for new mineral workings “should be accompanied by a scheme for the progressive working and restoration of the site throughout its life. Preference will be given to restoration proposals that incorporate a net gain for biodiversity.” In this respect appropriate habitats, species and resources should be incorporated into the restoration proposals (whether this is agriculture, forestry, amenity and/or ecology) with links to surrounding habitats.

3.12 In accordance with Policy MP7 (Aftercare) all schemes should be subject to a scheme of aftercare for a minimum period of five years post restoration to ensure that the land is up to the required standard for the intended use.

3.13 At the District Level adopted Core Strategy\(^9\) policy CS14 (Green Infrastructure), along with saved policies\(^6\) CR07 (Landscape Schemes) and CR08 (Hedgerows) promote the retention of existing natural features such as hedgerows and a high standard of landscaping that reflects the characteristics of the locality. This includes new planting “that links with existing features to provide wildlife “corridors” and may involve creating woodland in appropriate circumstances.”

4.0 Landscape Character and Value

Landscape Character - National

4.1 At the national level\(^10\) the study area, including Holton St. Mary, lies on the eastern side of National Character Area (NCA) 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland\(^11\) that extends west to east from Bury St. Edmunds towards Ipswich and the outskirts of Colchester. To the south beyond the River Stour is NCA 111: The Northern Thames Basin.

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\(^8\) Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan, Suffolk County Council, Submission Draft, June 2018
\(^9\) Babergh Local Plan 2011-2031 Core Strategy and Policies, Babergh District Council, February 2014
4.2 The South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland comprises an ancient landscape of open wooded arable countryside. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, dissected by streams and gently meandering rivers forming numerous small-scale valleys that widen as they flow south-east towards the North Sea. The dominant land use is arable farmland with a pattern of irregular field boundaries with occasional pasture along the valley floor. The network of species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, and meadows provide a variety of important semi-natural habitats. Hedgerow trees are typically young elm (with hornbeam and field maple) in Essex, while in Suffolk, oaks and ash, with some cherry and holly, give a more treed and hedged character.

4.3 The area has a long history of settlement with a dispersed pattern of scattered farmsteads (including many medieval moated sites), parishes and small settlements arranged around common ‘tyes’ or greens and isolated hamlets linked by winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes. The areas notable medieval towns and villages retain a strong sense of character, their significant past wealth and importance demonstrated through the many vernacular timber-framed and colour-washed buildings and large churches. Much of the rural part of the NCA has a residual tranquillity; however, around the larger towns such as Chelmsford and Ipswich on the edges of the area and transport infrastructure (such as the A14 and A12), tranquillity is reduced.

4.4 Views across the plateau are often extensive, although copses and woods provide a large, distantly wooded character to the landscape, which is often missing at close quarters due to the loss of hedges and hedgerows trees. In contrast the winding river valleys are small in scale, with an intimate sense of enclosure, particularly in the upper reaches. A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area’s archetypal lowland English countryside.

4.5 The lower half of the Stour Valley, the Dedham Vale is noted as a distinct area within the NCA. The variable topography of rolling hills and gentle valleys and the combination of features – trees, river bank willows, flood plain meadow, ancient lanes, traditional villages and farm buildings and the meandering river – produce a classic English lowland character. The lower half of the valley (2% of the NCA) is designated as the Dedham Vale AONB, which is celebrated through the paintings of the landscape artist John Constable. The area, known as ‘Constable Country,’ focussed around the villages of East Bergholt, Flatford and Dedham on the Suffolk and Essex border is a popular tourist destination. Many of the scenes that brought John Constable inspiration can still be seen today, especially at Flatford and along the banks of the River Stour.

4.6 Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for the NCA include:

- **SEO1:** Maintaining and enhancing the character of this gently undulating, rural landscape by maintaining agricultural productivity and encouraging sustainable land management practices that protect and enhance the landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity assets and benefit carbon storage and water quality, as well as the over-riding sense of place.

- **SEO2:** Protecting and enhancing the area’s ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows, through the management of existing woods and the planting of new woods, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including timber provision, the regulation of soil erosion and the strengthening of the sense of place and history.
• **SEO3**: Enhancing the slow-flowing, winding rivers and their pastoral valley flood plains that provide linkages through the landscape, including redundant sand and gravel extraction sites, for their ecological, historical and recreational importance. This will support the operation of natural processes and their contribution to biodiversity, geodiversity, soil quality, water availability, regulating water flow and the character of the area.

• **SEO4**: Conserving and enhancing the distinctive character of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with its much-visited ‘Constable Country’ and improve opportunities for people to enjoy and understand the distinctive assemblage of historic landscapes outside the AONB. Ensure that access and recreational resources are managed to be compatible with the tranquillity of the area and the special qualities of protected landscapes, while providing a valuable health, education and access resource.

4.7 It is noted in the NCA profile and supporting information that sand and gravel deposits can be found on the sides of the river valleys, particularly on the sides of river valleys (including the upper reaches of the Stour and its tributaries), as well as flanking the valley flood plains in the form of river terraces. The material, along with chalk and clay have historically and continue to be an important source of aggregate for building materials. It is noted that the extraction of sand and gravel deposits should be carefully managed “so that damage to archaeology, geodiversity and existing habitats is minimised and that geodiversity and biodiversity enhancements are maximised, through the creation of new wetland habitats and site restoration.” Extractions sites should be restored to contribute to local landscape character. This includes opportunities for the creation of woodland and new wetland habitats to enhance biodiversity and the appreciation of geodiversity, and the provision of improved access and recreation where possible.

**Landscape Character – County**

4.8 The Suffolk Character Assessment\(^\text{12}\) provides a description of the essential defining characteristics of the landscape and establishes broad guidelines to manage landscape change and development across the county. This is supported at the District level by the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk Landscape Guidance\(^\text{13}\) which include actions and design objectives for each landscape type.

4.9 The study area incorporates three landscape character types (LCTs) – Plateau Farmlands, Rolling Valley Farmlands and Valley Meadowlands. The site lies within the Plateau Farmlands with the Rolling Valley Farmlands and Valley Meadowlands extending along the valley sides and floor of the River Stour to the south.

4.10 The Plateau Farmlands LCT extends from the edge of Lower Raydon in the north west, through Holton St. Mary to East Bergholt and Brantham to the south east and is defined by the valleys of the Stour to the south, the Brett to the west and the Stutton Brook to the north.

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\(^{12}\) Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment, Suffolk County Council [http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/](http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/)

\(^{13}\) Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance, Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council, 2015
The area is described as generally flat or very gently rolling with medium and occasionally light soils that are predominantly cultivated for arable crops. The landscape is comprehensively settled with villages, hamlets and farmsteads in a manner that is “typical of Rackham’s ‘ancient countryside.’” The enclosure pattern is reminiscent of the claylands in places with areas characterised by sinuous hedge lines, but there are also substantial areas of regular rectilinear hedgerows created by the enclosure of heath which makes the area locally distinct.

Woodland cover is a consistent feature, the majority being plantation woodland often associated with landscape parks. Much of the area has a strong sense of isolation and tranquillity; however, in other parts, the experience is compromised by major roads including the A12 and A14.

The key characteristics of the LCT are:

- Plateau of land between river valleys;
- Loamy soils amenable to arable farming;
- Irrigated crops;
- Sinuous lanes and hedge lines;
- Substantial elements of planned landscape;
- Plantation woodland;
- Parkland and planting of exotic trees;
- Feeling of isolation and tranquillity; and
- Dissected by major roads.

The condition of the landscape is described as ‘mixed’ with some degraded as well as strongly rural areas, some of which lie within the AONB.

The site and surrounding area is typical of the LCT, with the land use dominated by arable crops and substantial areas of plantation woodland which provides an ‘estate’ character. Although there is some evidence of ancient countryside including narrow winding lanes, field boundaries are predominantly rectilinear. Hedgerows are in a mixed condition, with some boundary loss and amalgamation to form larger arable fields and areas of horsiculture including fenced paddocks on the edge of the valley to the south. The village of Holton St. Mary comprises a mix of old and new development which is integrated into the landscape by mature hedges and trees. The area is influenced by the A12 to the south, but more rural and tranquil to the north and west away from this major route.

At the County level, the identified development management guidelines for the LCT are not applicable for this proposal. It is however noted that the location of development in relation to existing trees (as screening or as a backdrop) should be carefully considered, in conjunction with new planting which can be successful in mitigating both landscape and visual impact. Relevant Land Management Guidelines include:

- Reinforcing the historic pattern of regular boundaries;
- Restoring the quality of elm hedges with coppice management; and
- Restoring, maintaining and enhancing the network of tree belts and patterns of small plantations found across much this landscape type.
At the District level the principle management aims are “to retain, enhance and where appropriate restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character and in particular safeguard the visual impact on the AONB.” Particular key design principles include:

- As the area is located either within or abuts the AONB any development or change of use must conserve the character of the nationally designated landscape;
- The plateau landscape retains a scenic quality providing panoramic views and distinctive character with historical features. All forms of development will need to ensure visual impact is characteristic for the area; and
- Plantation woodlands and old existing hedge lines are to be protected and maintained.

The Rolling Valley Farmlands LCT comprise the sloping valley sides of the main rivers such as the Stour and their tributaries which are generally gently sloping but with some complex and occasionally steep slopes. The land use is characterised by small to medium sized fields with a network of sunken lanes, an organic pattern of sinuous hedgerows and areas of ancient woodland mainly confined to the upper slopes framing the valleys. The area is comprehensively settled with substantial villages and occasional towns with a rich built heritage of distinctive and often dense medieval cores and a large number of medieval buildings and ornate churches which are important landmarks. The elevated location from within the area afford substantial views.

The Valley Meadowlands LCT occurs along the valley floors of south and south east Suffolk. The flat topography and seasonally wet soils are largely dominated by meadows with occasional wetland and reedbeds. A variety of improved, semi-improved and unimproved grassland primarily used for grazing livestock is divided by wet ditches and lined by trees or scrubby hedges punctuated by small carr woodland and willow plantations. The landscape is generally unsettled, with occasional mills along the river with farmsteads on the edge of higher ground.

Both the Rolling Valley Farmlands and Valley Meadowlands LCTs are locally distinctive. This value is recognised by designation of the lower Stour Valley as an AONB, but even beyond this the assessment confirms that the valleys are of County value contributing significantly to the character of Suffolk.

The valley landscape (Rolling Valley Farmlands and Valley Meadowlands LCTs) are therefore highly sensitive to changes in land use and development, which could have an impact on both character and visual amenity. All development must take into account the cultural, historic and ecological importance of the area.

**Landscape Value**

The Dedham Vale AONB is recognised as an area of national landscape importance. The statement of significance in the Dedham Vale AONB Management Plan is included in Appendix 2. This describes the Dedham Vale AONB as a subtle lowland river valley and associated agricultural landscape which is recognised because of its strong sense of identity and sense of place, unspoilt rural character, sense of tranquillity, and the close association with the landscape artist John Constable.

The special qualities of the AONB are defined as:

- Iconic lowland river valley associated with the artist John Constable RA, the views he painted are still recognisable today;
- Historic villages with timber framed housing and prominent churches;
• Valley bottom grazing marshes with associated drainage ditches and wildlife;
• Naturally functioning River Stour with associated tributaries, meres and historic river management features;
• Semi-natural ancient woodlands on valley sides and associated wildlife;
• Traditional field boundaries intact and well managed;
• Apparent and buried archaeology indicating millennia of human occupation;
• A sense of relative tranquillity; and
• Surprisingly long distance views from higher ground along the valley in an area associated with large skies.

4.24 The site is situated on the plateau immediately above the Dedham Vale, and while immediately adjacent to the boundary does not share any of the identified special qualities of the AONB, which is primarily a valley landscape. The area, however, potentially lies within its setting.

4.25 The setting of the Dedham Vale AONB does not have a geographical border; the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership confirm this to be “the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Dedham Vale AONB.”

4.26 Examples of adverse impacts listed in the Position Statement include:

- Blocking or interference of views into or out of the AONB from public vantage points;
- Loss of tranquillity through the introduction of lighting, noise, or traffic movement;
- Introduction of an abrupt change in landscape character;
- Loss of biodiversity, particularly species of importance;
- Loss of features of historic interest, particularly if these are contiguous with the features within the AONB; and
- Reduction in public access to or within the AONB.

4.27 Where it abuts the AONB, the tree belt along the B1068 provides clear visual separation and a buffer to the Dedham Vale. This also restricts views from the plateau edge across the Stour Valley to the south and south west with localised views restricted to a small area which includes a short section of the A12 to the south east. It is therefore important that this vegetation is retained and if necessary enhanced. Careful consideration is required to the west, where the landscape between the site and the AONB boundary at Sandpits Lane is more open to ensure that adverse effects during the operation of the site are either avoided, or where necessary minimised.

4.28 There is potential following the restoration of the site to enhance landscape character in accordance with County and District guidelines and the overarching principles of the AONB Management Plan.

**View 15** - Public Footpath PRoW 503_9 within grounds of Squirrels Hall looking south west

**View 16** - Public Footpath PRoW 503_10 within grounds of Squirrels Hall looking south west

**View 17** - Public Footpath PRoW 503_9 on stile adjacent to A12 looking north west to gap in vegetation along southern boundary
View 18a - B1068 on entrance to Wheatlands and Coral Barn looking west

View 18b - B1068 on entrance to Wheatlands and Coral Barn looking west

View 19 - Junction of Public footpath PRoW 503_7 & 8 west of Kings Wood looking north east
View 20 - Public footpath PRoW 503_8 north of Stratford Hills Farm looking north east

View 21 - Viewing point on Stratford Road west of Dedham looking north

View 22 - Essex Way north of Church Farm, Langham looking north east
View 23 - Essex Way east of the Lodge, Langham looking north east

View 24 - Public footpath east of Sky Hall Hill looking north east
Appendix 1: Sources of Information

Mapping and Other Data

- Ordnance Survey maps (1:25 000 Explorer Series)
- Historic Ordnance Survey Maps
- Aerial Images
- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) [http://magic.defra.gov.uk](http://magic.defra.gov.uk)
- Historic England Listed Building Map [https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search)

Adopted Planning Policy and Supporting Documents

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012
- Babergh District Council ‘Live’ Local Policies, Babergh District Council, June 2016
- Babergh Local Plan 2011-2031 Core Strategy and Policies, Babergh District Council, February 2014
- Babergh Local Plan Alteration Number 2 Saved Policies and Proposals Map, Babergh District Council, June 2006
- Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership

Emerging Policy and Supporting Evidence / Technical Studies

- Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan, Suffolk County Council, Submission Draft, June 2018
- Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan Site Selection Report – Holton Hall Farm, Holton St. Mary, Suffolk County Council, April 2018
- Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance, Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council, 2015
Other Published Documents / Supporting Information

- National Character Area Profiles:
  - NCA Profile 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (NE515), Natural England, January 2014
    http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5095677797335040?category=587130
  - NCA Profile 111: Northern Thames Basin (NE466), Natural England, July 2013

- Stour Valley Historic Landscape Character Study - Managing a Masterpiece, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Partnership


- East of England Landscape Framework, Landscape East
  http://landscape-east.org.uk/

- Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment, Suffolk County Council
  http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/


- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England, October 2014


- Advice Note 01/11: Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute, 2011

Appendix 2: Dedham Vale AONB Statement of Significance

A statement of the significance of the Dedham Vale AONB is set out in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Management Plan 2016-2021 published by the AONB & Stour Valley Partnership as follows:

“The Dedham Vale AONB is a subtle lowland river valley with an assemblage of features associated with this landscape still in place and intact. These features include a gently winding river and tributaries; gentle valley sides with scattered woodlands; sunken rural lanes; picturesque villages with imposing churches and historic timber framed buildings; scattered farmsteads and agricultural buildings; small fields enclosed by ancient hedgerows; riverside grazing meadows with associated drainage ditches and visible and hidden archaeology providing evidence of human habitation over previous millennia.

The area remains an overwhelmingly agricultural landscape, free of incongruous development and large scale industrial developments. Despite some intrusions of human activity in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, the area retains a rural charm and tranquillity and is largely free of infrastructure associated with modern life.

The essential character of the Dedham Vale AONB was established in the middle of the previous millennium and has remained intact despite social, technological events. The fundamental beauty of the area and the scenes of a working landscape were captured by England’s finest landscape artist, John Constable RA. The sites of those outdoor paintings are still recognisable in the heart of what is now the AONB.”

The key components of the AONB are defined as:

- “A gentle and subtle lowland river valley with the River Stour gently meandering through it. The valley is cut down through boulder clays that overlay sands and gravels into clay deposits and Thanet and Reading beds. As the River Stour winds its way to the estuary the floodplain becomes dominated by grazing marshes that are made up of alluvium deposits and gravel terraces.

- The settlements of the area are largely historic and dominated by timber framed buildings around the village centres. Churches with impressive towers dominate the surrounding countryside. The rural character is further defined by scattered agricultural farmsteads and the visible and buried archaeology of the area.

- The routeways around the AONB broadly follow the valley contours as they characteristically wind their way around the landscape. Other routes link the flood plains to the higher land and are often steep, sunken and bounded by banks with ancient hedgerows and wildflower rich verges. The navigation on the River Stour provides an alternative way to explore the area beyond the footpaths and bridleways of the area.

- A pattern of semi natural ancient woodlands on the valley sides, often irregular in shape with natural springs and minor brooks. The woodlands create an impression of an intimate landscape.

- The patterns of fields are defined by ancient hedgerows and tree lines in much of the area although the grazing marshes associated with the valley floor are often subdivided by a series of drainage ditches and dykes.
The key Natural Beauty characteristics are summarised as:

"Landscape quality:

A distinctive valley floor, with the River Stour gently running through it, flanked by water meadows with characteristic drainage ditches. The valley sides demonstrate a pattern of woodlands consistent with the local topography, soil type and agricultural viability. Fields on the valley sides tend to be small and irregular bounded by hedgerows that can be traced back over many generations. The mosaic of features combines to contribute towards important ecological networks.

The boundary features are in good condition, despite the ravages of elm disease in the 1970s and changes to farming practices although there has been much restoration in the last 30 years due to changes in attitudes and the implementation of agri-environment schemes.

Landscape quality is enhanced by a sense of tranquillity experienced in the area. Some forms of development and recreational pursuits can lead to a loss of relative tranquillity which the Campaign to Protect Rural England includes:

- Perceived links to nature
- Positive features in the landscape
- The importance of wildlife
- Peace, quiet and calm

The Campaign to Protect Rural England notes that factors included in the loss of tranquillity include:

- Disruptive behaviour of other people
- Noise, especially from cars
- Overt signs of human development
- Negative features in the landscape

The River Stour retains a natural appearance despite its function as a navigation and current role as a conduit for the water supply system. Some modification to land use has taken place on the banks in the form of willow plantations.

Scenic quality:

A distinctive sense of place is achieved due to the landform, woodland cover, and land-use and settlement pattern. Villages play a key part in contributing to the scenic quality, being historic in nature with many timber framed building and often dominated by churches situated in prominent locations. The sense of place is further enhanced by the areas close association England’s finest landscape artist, John Constable.

As the area is sparsely populated the landscape suggests a timeless quality providing views, which are often surprisingly long from higher ground, without the clutter of present day infrastructure. This contributes to an intimate feel of the landscape and if further enhanced by an attractive pattern of arable, pasture and woodland."