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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- 1.0.1 Stisted Parish has a strongly undeveloped, rural character dominated by productive arable farmland contained into ancient field patterns by hedgerows and trees. Scattered woodland blocks of various sizes provide a contrast in the landscape. Areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland copse lie predominantly in the northern area of the Parish and provide a backdrop to expansive views. A high frequency of footpaths radiate outwards from Stisted Village Parcel, predominantly along field boundaries and woodland edges; bridleways and byways are located further from the village.
- 1.0.2 The Parish inhabits the Blackwater Valley floor slopes and surrounding plateaus. The landform plateaus to the North West of the Parish and falls with distance southwards, where the course of the River Blackwater runs, before rising again towards the A120. Stisted village lies on middle-lying land on the northern valley side. Views across the Blackwater valley provide attractive panoramic views across the countryside, which contrast with the enclosed views within the valley bottom.
- 1.0.3 The rural landscape of Braintree district provides the setting for the nucleated village of Stisted and its Conservation Area; with over 20 Listed Buildings including the Grade I listed Parish Church of All Saints and the Grade II\* Listed Stisted Hall. The historic settlement pattern, originally clustered around the Parish Church of All Saints and Village Green, has altered as the village has extended both northwards along Rectory Road and to the east of Back Lane. The historic settlement pattern survives fairly well with halls and farmsteads dispersed throughout the landscape. The landscape's agricultural use also contributes towards its special qualities.
- 1.0.4 Although locally-generated development pressure is relatively small compared to other parts of the District, the possibility of a Garden Village 2.5km east of Stisted Village, immediately adjacent Stisted Parish, poses a threat to its remote, tranquil character. An 865ha (2137 acres) area of arable farmland in Pattiswick, in the parish of Bradwell, has been promoted as a potential site for 'Monks Wood Garden Village'. The proposed development has the potential to deliver around 1500 homes in the initial phase, with associated community facilities. The scale of the development has the potential to have a major impact on the rural character of Stisted and adversely affect the setting of Stisted Conservation Area.
- 1.0.5 Braintree District Council & Essex County Council produced the North Essex Garden Communities Feasibility Study which states that the identified Site at Pattiswick, Call for Sites reference COGG 641, was submitted in Summer 2016 during the Draft Local Plan preparation. It is a 539ha Site owned by the Hill Family and promoted by Lightwood Strategic Ltd. The land has been proposed for at least 5000 homes in total, with an additional 150,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space.
- 1.0.6 Stisted Parish Council commissioned Liz Lake Associates to undertake a locally based Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, of the Parish, which forms the project area for the Neighbourhood Plan. This study will provide a clear and concise evaluation of various parcels of land to determine their overall landscape sensitivity. The results of this assessment are to form part of the evidence base that Stisted Parish Council will use when compiling its Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 1.0.7 A combination of desk top study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation was used to identify ancient field patterns and parcels of land with common characteristics, known as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCA) within the identified study area of Stisted Parish. A range of landscape character and visual amenity criteria were identified and assessed in order to evaluate the overall sensitivity of the landscape parcel by parcel. Each parcel was rated as having low, medium or high overall landscape sensitivity based on the criteria set out in Section 3 – Methodology for the Study.
- 1.0.8 This study has considered only criteria relating to landscape character and visual amenity. It takes into account the locations of ecological, heritage and recreational assets in the parishes but does not include detailed studies of these topics.
- 1.0.9 The Landscape Character Assessment found that there are 11 Local Parish Landscape Character Areas with common characteristics within Stisted Parish. The areas are broadly defined as being plateau or valley landscapes due to the topographical differences within the project area. For practical purposes, boundaries were aligned where possible on landscape features or elements that could be identified on the ground. Analysis was typically at the field level grain/scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.
- 1.0.10 A description of the key landscape and visual characteristics were provided for each LPLCA and key landscape planning and management issues were identified. For each area 'Suggested landscape planning guidelines' and 'Suggested land management guidelines' are provided. These are presented in Appendix A.
- 1.0.11 The evaluation of the landscape and visual factors which were analysed for each parcel revealed that LPLCAs 1-10 have a High overall landscape sensitivity; LPLCA 11 has a Medium to High overall landscape sensitivity and LPLCA 12 was identified as having a Medium overall landscape sensitivity. No LPLCAs in Stisted Parish have a Low overall landscape sensitivity. The proposed landscape strategy objective for areas of High sensitivity is to Conserve; Medium sensitivity is to Enhance; and Low sensitivity is to Restore.
- 1.0.12 In conclusion, the landscape and visual character of Stisted has been assessed to have a High overall landscape sensitivity in most areas where a policy of enhancing and reinforcing the rural and undeveloped character of the landscape is required.
- 1.0.13 With regard to the rural setting and approach to Stisted, areas 3, 6, 7 and 8 should be conserved as existing to protect the setting and views to Stisted Conservation Area and its heritage assets.
- 1.0.14 Key views of the Church of All Saints should be maintained.
- 1.0.15 In LPLCAs 11 and 12, every opportunity should be taken to restore and replace landscape features and field patterns lost to strengthen the contribution to local landscape character.

View from Footpath 111\_23 looking north west towards China Bridge.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background to the study

2.1.1 Stisted is a Civil Parish situated in the Braintree district of Essex. It lies to the east of Braintree and includes the village of Stisted. Stisted Parish Council is currently working on the production of a Neighbourhood plan.

2.1.2 Development in Stisted Parish is restricted by Braintree's Core Strategy policy framework with development limited to within the defined village envelope of Stisted, and a general policy against development in the hamlets and the countryside.

2.1.3 Stisted Parish Council commissioned Liz Lake Associates to undertake a locally based Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and landscape sensitivity assessment, of the landscape of Stisted Parish, which forms the project area for the Neighbourhood Plan. The boundary of the study area is contiguous with the parish boundary and is shown on Figure 1 - Study Area.

### 2.2 Objectives of the study

2.2.1 The assessment draws on the existing published landscape character assessment for Braintree District Council and on the Braintree Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (see sections below for further detail). Both documents are essential parts of the existing, adopted local planning policy and have therefore been important in the development of this parish based study which seeks, where relevant, to further sub-divide the area into a finer grain of characterisation.

2.2.2 This study will provide a clear and concise evaluation of various discrete geographical areas/parcels of land which have a recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the area. The landscape's biodiversity and agricultural values which contribute towards its special qualities will also be identified. These parish level landscape character areas will be analysed to determine their overall sensitivity.

2.2.3 The results of this assessment are to form part of the evidence base that Stisted Parish Council will use when compiling its Neighbourhood Development Plan. The study is intended to assist the Parish Council in making informed decisions as to whether any future development(s) can be appropriately absorbed into the landscape of Stisted Parish, and, if so, where, at what scale and with what associated mitigation measures, to ensure that no unacceptable effects on the landscape result and its special qualities are maintained and where possible, enhanced.

### 2.3 Approach and Methodology Overview

2.3.1 This study has been undertaken in line with the Natural England's best practice guidelines along with a focus on the experiences and perception of the local residents of their landscape and surroundings. A review of the elements that make up the character i.e. the physical

nature of the landscape and its land use, the experience of living or working within the area or driving or walking around it has been considered. Important views, valued walks, local landmarks etc have all been assessed and the findings have been used to develop the landscape character areas.

2.3.2 The study takes into account the locations of ecological, heritage and recreational assets in the Parish but does not include detailed studies of these topics. A review of the existing Landscape Character Assessments and historic settlement character was undertaken as well as an assessment of landscape change using historic maps. A combination of desktop study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation was used to identify parcels of land with common characteristics, hereafter referred to as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs), within the identified study area of Stisted Parish, as agreed with the Parish Council.

2.3.3 A range of landscape character and visual amenity criteria were identified and assessed, and key views into the villages from the surrounding countryside were identified, in order to evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape, parcel by parcel. Parcels were rated as having Low, Medium or High overall sensitivity, based on the criteria and assumptions set out in Section 3 - Methodology for the study below.

2.3.4 The site work was undertaken during April, when trees and hedges were starting to gain their leaves. Seasonal change will affect the appearance of much of the landscape, especially areas which are in arable production. The different annual and seasonal growing regimes result in an ever changing landscape ranging from ploughed fields, to colourful crops and the golden fields just prior to harvest.

2.3.5 This Assessment was carried out by Landscape Architects at Liz Lakes Associates between February and April 2020.

### 2.4 Scope of the study

2.4.1 This study considers only criteria relating to landscape character and visual amenity. Development in parcels may be unfeasible or undeliverable for other reasons beyond the scope of this study, for example, an inability to provide suitable access arrangements or due to the presence of ecologically important habitats. It is, therefore, recommended that this report is read in conjunction with reports by other disciplines, such as traffic management, hydrology, ecology and heritage.

2.4.2 General issues relating to the landscape setting of heritage assets within the Stisted Parish landscape, including the Conservation Area and key listed buildings are identified. However, issues relating to the potential consequences of development on the significance of heritage assets are not addressed.

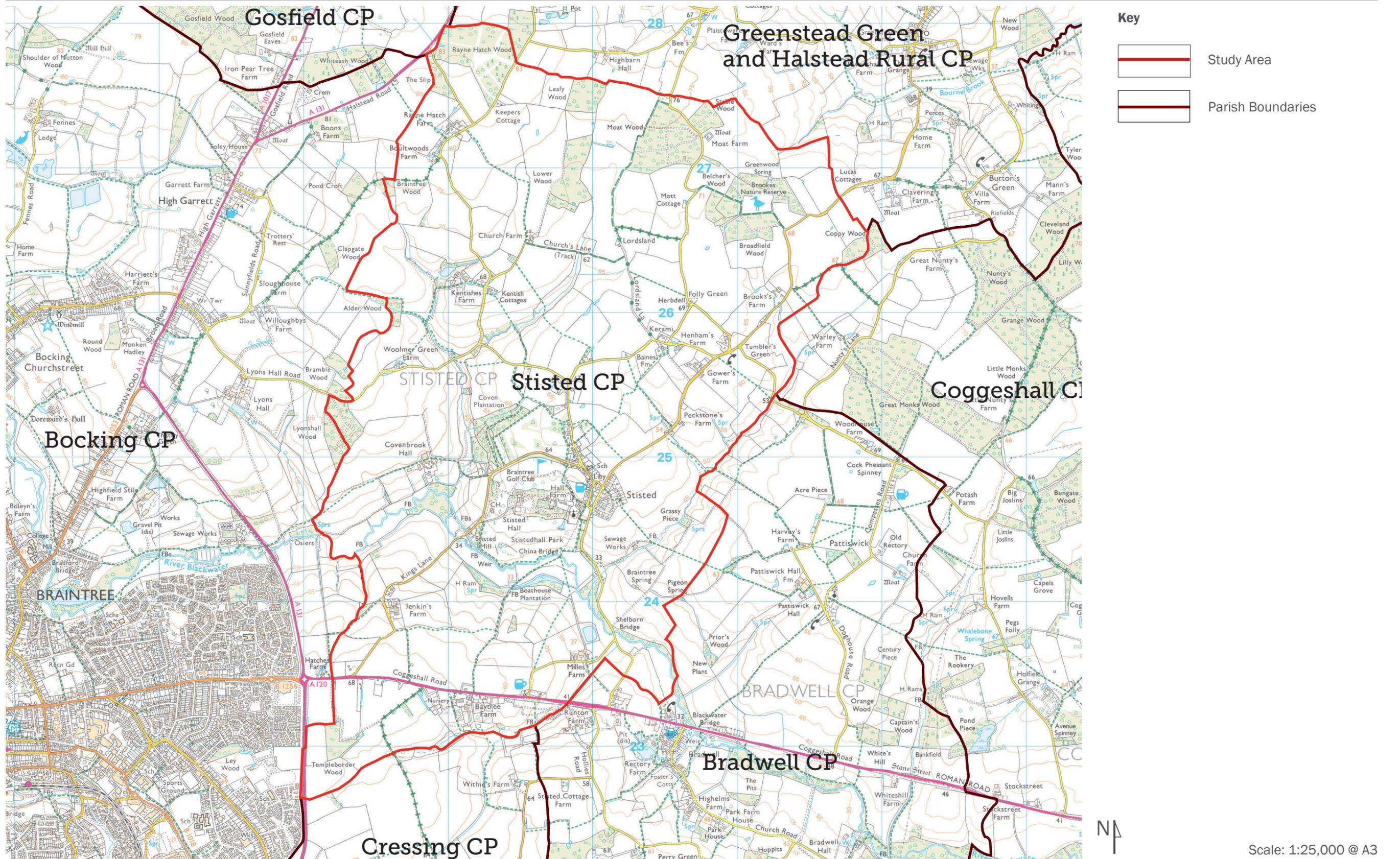
2.4.3 The assessment does not respect land ownership boundaries and so takes no account of whether or not a landowner might wish to promote land for future development.

### 2.5 Local Planning Context

2.5.1 Braintree District Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan, which will eventually supersede its current Local Plan Review in its entirety.

2.5.2 Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council and Essex

Figure 1  
Study Area



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- County Councils have been working together on strategic cross boundary issues for North Essex. This has resulted in a strategic spatial strategy which is shared by the three planning authorities within their Local Plans and includes proposals for three new Garden Communities.
- 2.5.3 Another potential garden community, known as ‘Monks Wood Garden Settlement’, has been proposed for land immediately east of Stisted Parish, posing a threat to the character of the Parish and its Conservation Area.
- Braintree District Core Strategy LDF (Adopted 2011)**
- 2.5.4 Current adopted planning policy in Braintree is made up of the Core Strategy Local Development Framework (LDF) which was adopted in September 2011 and a number of saved policies from the Adopted Local Plan Review (2005).
- 2.5.5 The Core Strategy is the principal document which sets out the overall spatial vision and objectives, spatial strategy, core policies and how the strategy will be implemented and monitored. The spatial strategy, sets out a settlement hierarchy which defines the places in the District in order of size, function and importance. Stisted is defined as an ‘other village’ that ‘currently has a development boundary, known as a village envelope’.
- 2.5.6 Proposed growth locations within the district are focused on Main Towns, Key Service Villages and Other Villages with open countryside between them being kept undeveloped. The Core Strategy references reasons from the ‘Assessment of Peripheral Growth Locations in the Draft Core Strategy Technical Supplement’ as to why the landscape surrounding Braintree and Witham is deemed unsuitable as Growth Locations, such as:
- *“They are isolated or distant from the main urban areas so they are not as sustainable in terms of access to service and facilities for new residents. This is particularly true for the land outside the Braintree by-pass and land to the north-west of Witham and to the south of the A12 at Witham;*
  - *There are large areas of sensitive landscape to the north and north-east of Braintree; and*
  - *Access to the Braintree by-pass to the north, south and north-east of Braintree would be unacceptable to Essex County Council and the Highways Agency.”*
- 2.5.7 The preferred overall Spatial Policy Statement for Braintree District for the period up to 2026 is to:
- *“Preserve and enhance the character of the rural heartland of the Braintree District, its countryside and villages, by supporting development that is needed to make settlements and the rural economy more sustainable and protect and enhance the natural environment.*
  - *Concentrate the majority of new development and services in the Main Towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead, at new Growth Locations at Braintree and Witham and in the Key Service Villages”.*
- 2.5.8 The strategy sets out key objectives for development and growth in ‘Other Villages’ as follows:
- *“Development within the Other Villages will be of a scale and type to cater for purely local needs of around 300 dwellings within development boundaries over the plan period to 2026.*
  - *Developments which deliver affordable housing, appropriate local employment and improvements to local services may be appropriate subject to their local impacts.”*
- 2.5.9 Key objectives for development in the Countryside are:
- *“Biodiversity and the special character and attractiveness of the countryside will be protected, preserved and enhanced.*
  - *Development will be severely restricted, unless it is necessary to support traditional land based activities such as agriculture or forestry, or leisure and recreation based uses, which require a countryside location and which contribute to rural economies and/or promote recreation in or enjoyment of the countryside. Development should be well related to existing patterns of development and of a scale, siting and design sympathetic to the rural landscape character.*
  - *Environmental enhancement initiatives, including broadening public access and protecting / improving biodiversity will be supported and encouraged.”*
- 2.5.10 Core Policies of particular relevance to this study include:
- Policy CS 5 - The Countryside
- “Development outside town development boundaries, village envelopes and industrial development limits will be strictly controlled to uses appropriate to the countryside, in order to protect and enhance the landscape character and biodiversity, geodiversity and amenity of the countryside.”*
- Policy CS8 - Natural Environment and Biodiversity
- “To protect, restore and enhance the natural habitats, biodiversity, landscape character, amenity and environmental quality of the countryside and the open spaces and green corridors within towns and villages and improve ecological connectivity across the District.”*
- Policy CS9 - Built and Historic Environment
- “To preserve and enhance the historic character and locally distinctive identity of the District, to ensure that new development provides high quality, environmentally friendly design and to improve the public realm.”*
- Local Plan Review (2005)**
- 2.5.11 Adopted policies, as described in the Local Plan Written Statement, of particular relevance to this landscape study are shown on Figure 2 - Braintree Local Plan Adopted Policies and include:
- 2.5.12 With regard to Housing:
- Policy RLP 2 Town Development Boundaries and Village Envelopes
  - Policy RLP 3 Development within Town Development Boundaries and Village Envelopes
  - Policy RLP 4 Prevention of Town Cramming
- 2.5.13 With regard to Countryside, Nature Conservation and Landscape, the following policies are of relevance to this study:
- Policy RLP 86 River Corridors
- 2.5.14 With regard to Design and Heritage, the following policies are of relevance to this study:
- Policy RLP 95 Preservation & Enhancement of Conservation Areas
  - Policy RLP 96 Demolition in Conservation Areas

- Policy RLP 97 Changes of Use in Conservation Areas
- Policy RLP 98 Environmental Improvements in Conservation Areas
- Policy RLP 108 Fascias and Signs in Conservation Areas
- Policy RLP 109 Illuminated Signs in Conservation Areas

2.5.15

With regard to Town Centres, Local Centres and Shopping:

- Policy RLP 117 Shopfronts in Conservation Areas

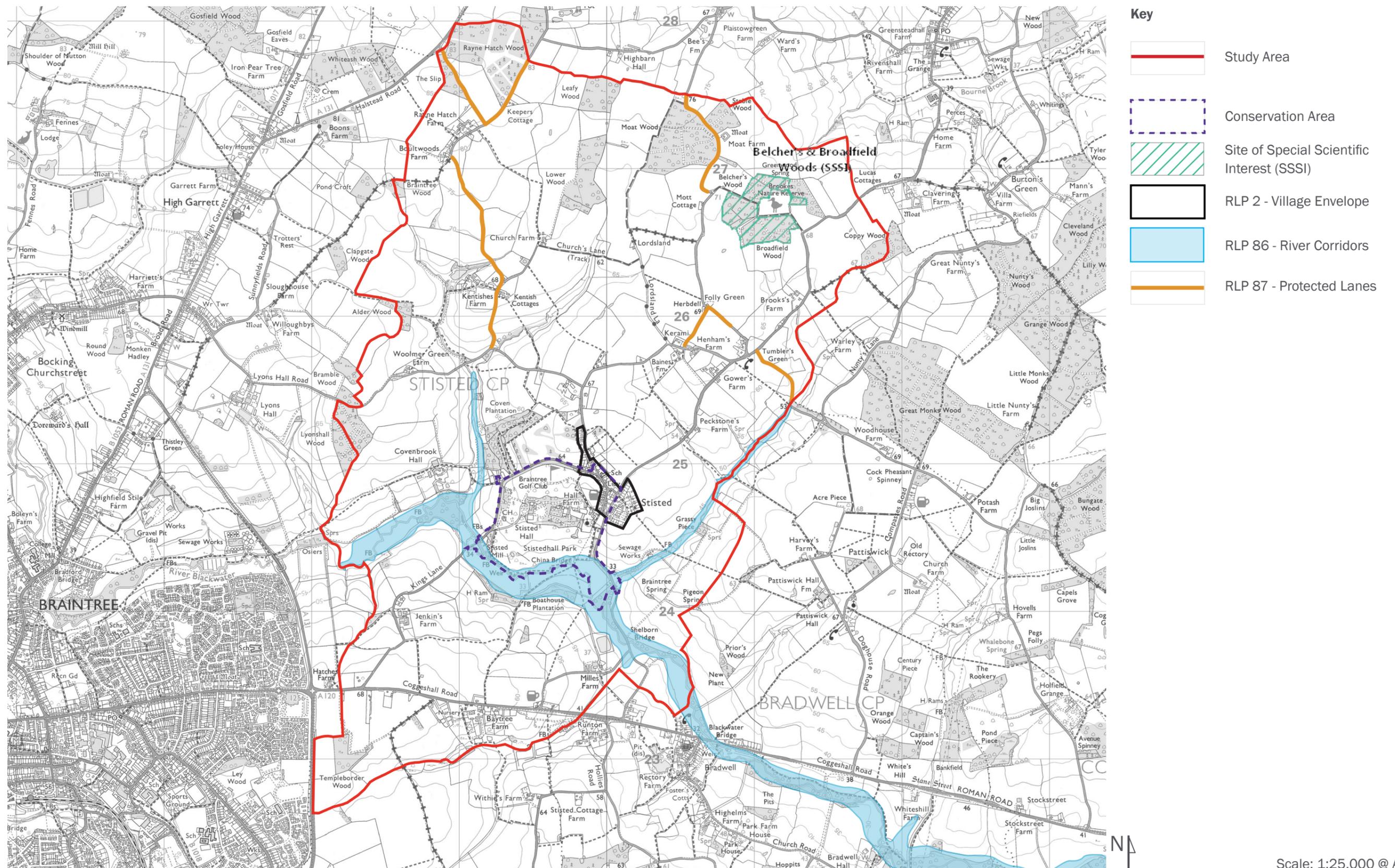


Brookes Nature Reserve within Belcher's and Broadfield Woods (SSSI).

View along an unnamed Protected Lane to the north west of the Parish, looking north towards Rayne Hatch Wood.



Figure 2  
Braintree Local Plan Adopted Policies



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View looking across gently undulating arable farmland, looking southwards towards Coven Brook in the Blackwater Valley



**3. METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY**

**3.1 Relevant advisory publications**

3.1.1 In undertaking this study regard was had to the following advisory publications:

- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002);
- Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity, which forms part of 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' (the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002);
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013);
- Evaluating the Impact of Housing Development on the Historic Environment (LUC, March 2014); and
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, October 2014).

3.1.2 The methodology for this LCA was based on the approach promoted in Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (referenced above). This paper explores thinking and recent practice on judging sensitivity. The recommended methodology developed for this study adopted the following premise from Topic Paper 6: whereby:

<i>Existing Landscape Character Sensitivity</i>	+	<i>Visual Sensitivity</i>	=	<i>Overall Landscape Sensitivity</i>
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3.1.3 Overall landscape sensitivity is the term used to refer primarily to the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration. Landscape sensitivity is defined as embracing a combination of:

- the sensitivity of the landscape resource in terms of both its character as a whole, its quality and condition, the aesthetic aspects of its character, and also the sensitivity of individual elements contributing to the landscape; and
- the visual sensitivity of the landscape, assessed in terms of a combination of factors such as views, visibility, the number and nature of people perceiving the landscape and the scope to mitigate visual impact.

3.1.4 The methodology was further tailored to address the study area's specific issues and requirements as outlined in the study brief.

**3.2 Information sources**

3.2.1 The study was informed by a combination of landscape baseline desktop study (including the collection, review and analysis of previous relevant studies/reports and readily available data sources), fieldwork and stakeholder consultation.

3.2.2 Previous studies/reports were consulted are as follows:

- North Essex Garden Communities- West of Braintree, Concept Framework, Aecom. May 2017;
- Land West of Braintree, Landscape & Visual Appraisal, Chris Blandford Associates on behalf of Uttlesford District Council, June 2017.

3.2.3 Existing national, regional and district landscape character assessments which encompass the site, as well as historic characterisation studies, were consulted as follows:

- Natural England's National Character Area profiles (NCA86-South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland);
- Essex Landscape Character Assessment (Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council, July 2002) / Essex Landscape Character Assessment, Final Report (Chris Blandford Associates, 2003);
- Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments (Chris Blandford Associates, September 2006); and
- Braintree District Historic Environment Characterisation Project 2010.

3.2.4 In addition, the following data sources were consulted:

- Local Plan Review (Adopted 2005);
- Braintree District Core Strategy Local Development Document (Adopted 2011);
- Braintree New Local Plan (2033), Publication Draft, 2017;
- MAGIC website - for landscape and cultural heritage designations;
- Essex County Council website - for landscape and cultural heritage designations and PRoWs;
- 'Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea)' - Environment Agency online;
- Historic England;
- Old-maps.co.uk -Historical map archive
- CPRE - for tranquillity, intrusion and dark skies; and
- Google Earth.

3.2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken by Landscape Architects in April 2020.

**3.3 Identification of the study area**

3.3.1 **Figure 1 - Study Area** indicates the extent of the study area as defined by the Parish Boundary. This corresponds to the agreed joint neighbourhood plan area for Stisted.

**3.4 Landscape context**

3.4.1 Landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity designations for the study area were identified via MAGIC and Essex County Council’s website and mapped, as part of the appraisal of landscape context.

3.4.2 A review of existing National, Regional, County and District Landscape Character Assessments was undertaken to provide an overview and context to the project.

**3.5 Visual context**

3.5.1 Following fieldwork, a series of representative viewpoints were selected and photographed, from publicly accessible locations including roadways, bridleways and footpaths within the study area. The fieldwork confirmed:

- important views into and out of the parish;
- views to and from the main village of Stisted;
- any landmark landscape features; and
- sensitive routes/corridors and their corresponding sensitivity to change.

3.5.2 These views were chosen to capture landscape character and adequately illustrate visual amenity from a range of locations, for a range of receptor groups at long, medium and short distance. All photographs were taken with a digital camera, a Canon EOS 1100D with a 30mm fixed lens. The 30mm lens is the digital equivalent to a standard 50mm focal length lens with a single lens reflex camera. These views are included within the report, and provide comprehensive coverage across the study area.

3.5.3 The camera was set at heights of between 150cm and 170cm above the ground to represent eye-level. Photographs were stitched together using commercial software to form panoramic views. Bright, clear weather conditions were attained.

**3.6 Identification of Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs)**

3.6.1 According to An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, October 2014), “Landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing the 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”.

3.6.2 A combination of landscape baseline desktop study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation (Section 3.2 ‘Information sources’ above refers) was used to divide the landscape within Stisted into 13 No. parcels of land with common characteristics, hereafter referred to as

Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs). The areas were defined initially by desktop research, and then adjusted and refined subsequently in the light of findings in the field and through consultation, as necessary.

3.6.3 The drawing of boundary lines between parcels was a necessary part of the process, but did not always mean that parcels were dramatically different to each other either side of the line, as it is more typical for change to be of a gradual transitional nature. However, in some instances, the boundary lines for parcels do mark more of a watershed of character, where the balance of the defining elements has shifted from one landscape character to another. For practical purposes, boundaries were aligned where possible on landscape features or elements that could be identified on the ground. Analysis was typically at the field level grain/ scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.

3.6.4 The existing landscape and visual characteristics selected to inform the identification of the LPLCAs were those considered to be of most relevance to this study. The criteria reflected natural, cultural and aesthetic factors as well as judgments on landscape quality and condition, as follows:

**Existing landscape character criteria**

Natural Factors	Land-form and topography Hydrology and drainage Extent and pattern of semi-natural vegetation
Cultural Factors	Physical relationship of landscape with existing villages Settlement pattern/buildings within the landscape Land-use and vegetation cover Field boundaries and enclosure pattern Time-depth
Aesthetic Factors	Landscape scale Enclosure Landscape complexity Public access (physical) Tranquility
Landscape Quality/ Condition	Landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity designations Intactness Condition/ state of repair of individual elements Strength of landscape character Contribution of landscape to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place

**Existing visual amenity criteria**

General Visibility	Degree of openness of landscape to public views; e.g. screening/ enclosure/openness/inter-visibility
Specific visibility	Visual relationship of landscape with existing villages Visual influence of landscape on the wider landscape Presence of key view(s)/sight line(s) to the village or other landmark features Visual contribution of landscape to the setting of Stisted CA / Listed buildings /Registered Parks and Gardens.
Public Access (visual)	Views from Roadway, Bridleway, By-way, Footpath Type of views (e.g. channeled/ enclosed/ expansive/panoramic) Overall evaluation of significance/value of views

3.6.5 The field survey work was carried out by Landscape Architects who used a standard Proforma LPLCA Field Survey Sheet - Template (Appendix B: Proformas refers), which incorporated the above factors, to record data in a consistent manner. The Proforma included various options which could be circled – and subsequently highlighted in green– where they applied to the particular parcel under consideration. Representative photographs were taken to capture the existing landscape character.

3.6.6 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.

3.6.7 A Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs) map was then produced at a scale of 1:25,000 for Stisted, together with supporting information comprising a representative photograph and a description for each LPLCA of its:

- Key landscape characteristics;
- Key visual characteristics;
- Key landscape planning and land management issues;
- Landscape character sensitivity to change;
- Visual sensitivity to change;
- Overall landscape sensitivity to change (evaluation of the sensitivity of a parcel in broad strategic terms), where “Existing Landscape Character Sensitivity + Visual Sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity” (Topic Paper 6);
- Opportunities for mitigation;
- Proposed landscape strategy objectives;
- Suggested landscape planning guidelines;
- Suggested land management guidelines; and
- Known presence of allocated land/approved planning applications.

**Assessment of Overall Sensitivity**

3.6.8 As part of the field survey, the Character Areas were assessed for their landscape and visual sensitivity, based on the pre-defined set of criteria described above, combined with professional judgment. Their sensitivity is defined as High, Medium and Low.

Landscape Character Sensitivity	High	High	High	High
	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
	Low	Low	Medium	High
		Low	Medium	High
	Visual Sensitivity			

3.6.9 Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity are combined to provide an overall Sensitivity for each Local Character Area as illustrated in the table above.

**3.7 Mitigation and recommendations**

3.7.1 Information concerning opportunities for mitigation was gathered on site and ‘Proposed general landscape strategy objectives’, together with ‘Suggested landscape planning guidelines’ and ‘Suggested land management guidelines’ specific to each LPLCA were then produced to inform change. Recommendations were in keeping with, and intended to reinforce/enhance, local landscape character and visual amenity.

3.7.2 Where appropriate, recommendations are made regarding the type, nature and principles for any acceptable development within each parcel, to help provide guidance in identifying the most suitable locations and/or layouts for future development.



View northwards across the Blackwater River Valley towards Grade II\* Listed Stisted Hall. April 2020

Stisted Hall Park



## 4. HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT CHARACTER

### 4.1 Historic settlement character

- 4.1.1 The historic rural settlement pattern within and surrounding Stisted Parish was dispersed, with small hamlets, churches, farms, manors and halls spread along road junctions and triangular and linear greens within the undulating countryside. Within Stisted Parish, the roads are twisting and occasionally partially sunken.
- 4.1.2 Stisted Parish is drained by the upper reaches of the River Blackwater, with associated tributaries that have formed small valleys and gradual slopes. Former and present enclosed meadow pasture was contained within the valley bottoms.
- 4.1.3 Stisted Village has grown significantly since the 1870s. It assumes a mostly linear form, with development centered along Rectory Road, where it meets Kings Lane, Water Lane and Back Lane.
- 4.1.4 Stisted Parish contains 60 Historic England listed buildings in total, providing the area with a rich historical context. The core of Stisted Village is made up of 27 Listed buildings, including the Grade II\* Listed Stisted Hall and the Grade I Listed Parish Church of All Saints.
- 4.1.5 Stisted Conservation Area was designated in 1973 for its special architectural and historic interest, in order to preserve or enhance its character through strict control of new development, protection of trees, and the need for demolition of buildings or walls to be subject to Conservation Area Consent. A Conservation Area Appraisal has not been undertaken. The Conservation Area includes the Grade I Parish Church of All Saints, the Grade II\* Stisted Hall, the Grade II listed Stisted Mill, Stisted Hall Park, Stisted Farm, and Braintree Golf Club and four other Grade II listed buildings.
- 4.1.6 The estate of Stisted Hall was held from 1046 by the Monks of Canterbury Cathedral. A few years after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539, King Henry VIII included the property in the endowment of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. In 1549 the estate was purchased by Thomas Wiseman, who built the manor house. This was demolished in the early-mid 1820s by the Savill and Savill-Onley family who commissioned Henry Hakewill to build the current Stisted Hall around 1823-1825. It was situated around 180m away from the site of the original hall, located to the west of the park. Stisted Hall remained under private ownership until it was commandeered by the Army in 1939. Today it is a residential nursing home and most of the grounds have been occupied by Braintree Golf Club since 1963.
- 4.1.7 The grounds of Stisted Hall contain many Grade II Listed buildings including a wall of the Walled Garden, a wall of the Pond central to the Walled Garden, an Icehouse, a Lodge, a Stable Range and associated Gateposts, all of which are Grade II Listed.
- 4.1.8 The Grade I Listed Parish Church of All Saints was built over the late 12th/13th/14th Centuries. In the 19th Century it was restored and extended.
- 4.1.9 Many of the farmsteads include listed buildings which occur as clusters of buildings in the landscape and include barns, stables, cartlodes and/or outbuildings surrounding a main house. The majority of the Farmhouses are two storey and Grade II Listed, with the exceptions of Kentishes Farmhouse and Baytree Farmhouse, both of which are Grade II\* Listed. They vary from the Late 14th to early 17th Centuries, but mostly are timber-framed and plastered

with red tiled roofs.

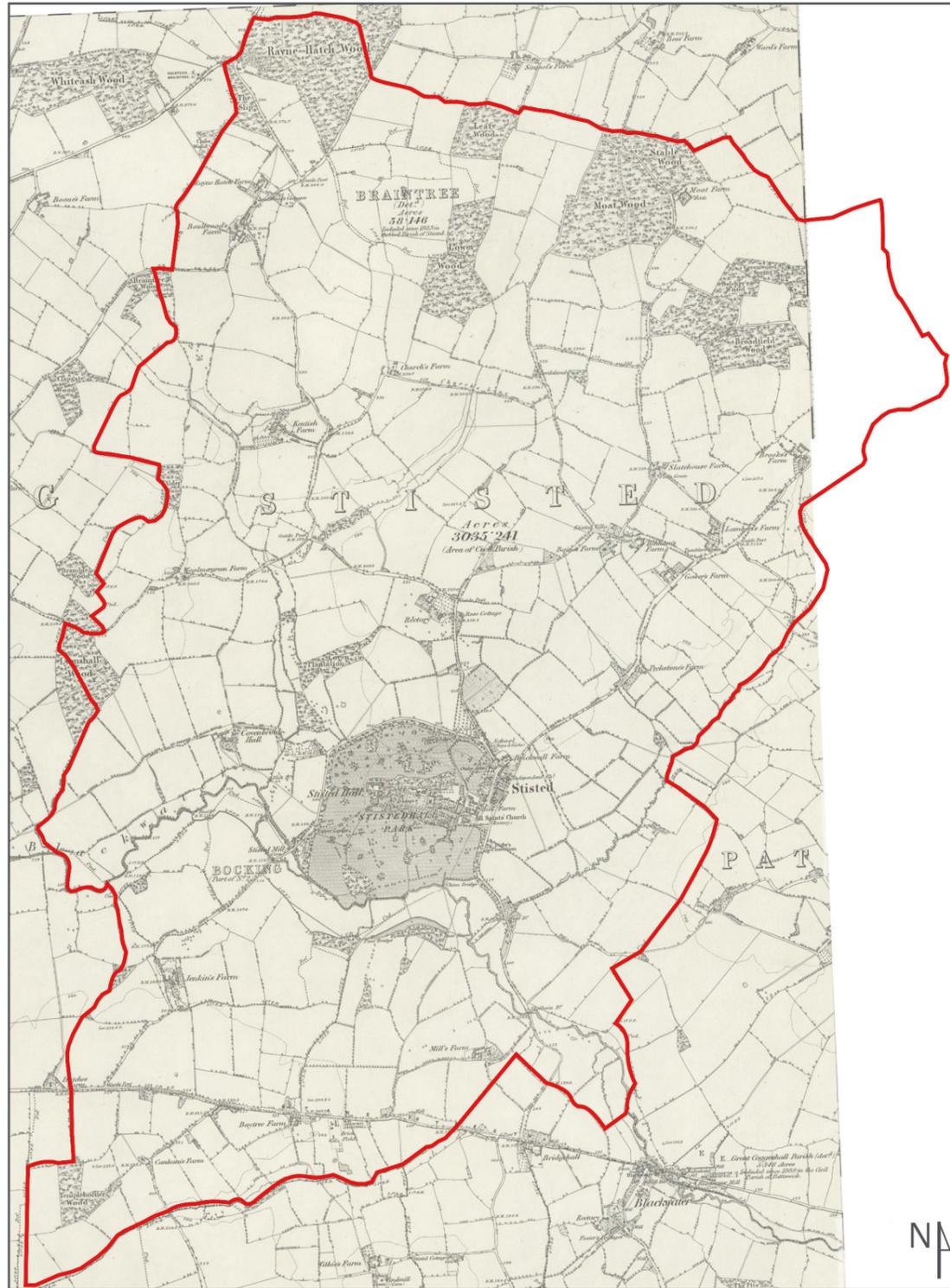
- 4.1.10 Many of the cottages are Grade II Listed buildings built between the late 15th and early 19th Centuries. The majority are one storey with attics. Most of the cottages are timber-framed and plastered with red tiled roofs, although some have thatched or slate roofs.
- 4.1.11 Many of the Listed houses within Stisted Village parcel date between the late 14th and mid-19th Centuries, often two storey. The majority are timber-framed and plastered with red tiled roofs, although some are roughcast rendered and/or roofed with slate. Many properties have C19 Tudor Revival ornamental detailing.
- 4.1.12 The field scape is largely comprised of pre-18th and 19th Century irregular sinuous field enclosure, likely to be of medieval origin, to the west and north-east of Stisted Parish. Post-1950s boundary loss is common within the Parish, with its impact varying from minor to major, particularly around urban areas. There are a number of green lanes that cross the area and medium-sized blocks of ancient woodland are prevalent.

### 4.2 Landscape Change within Stisted Parish

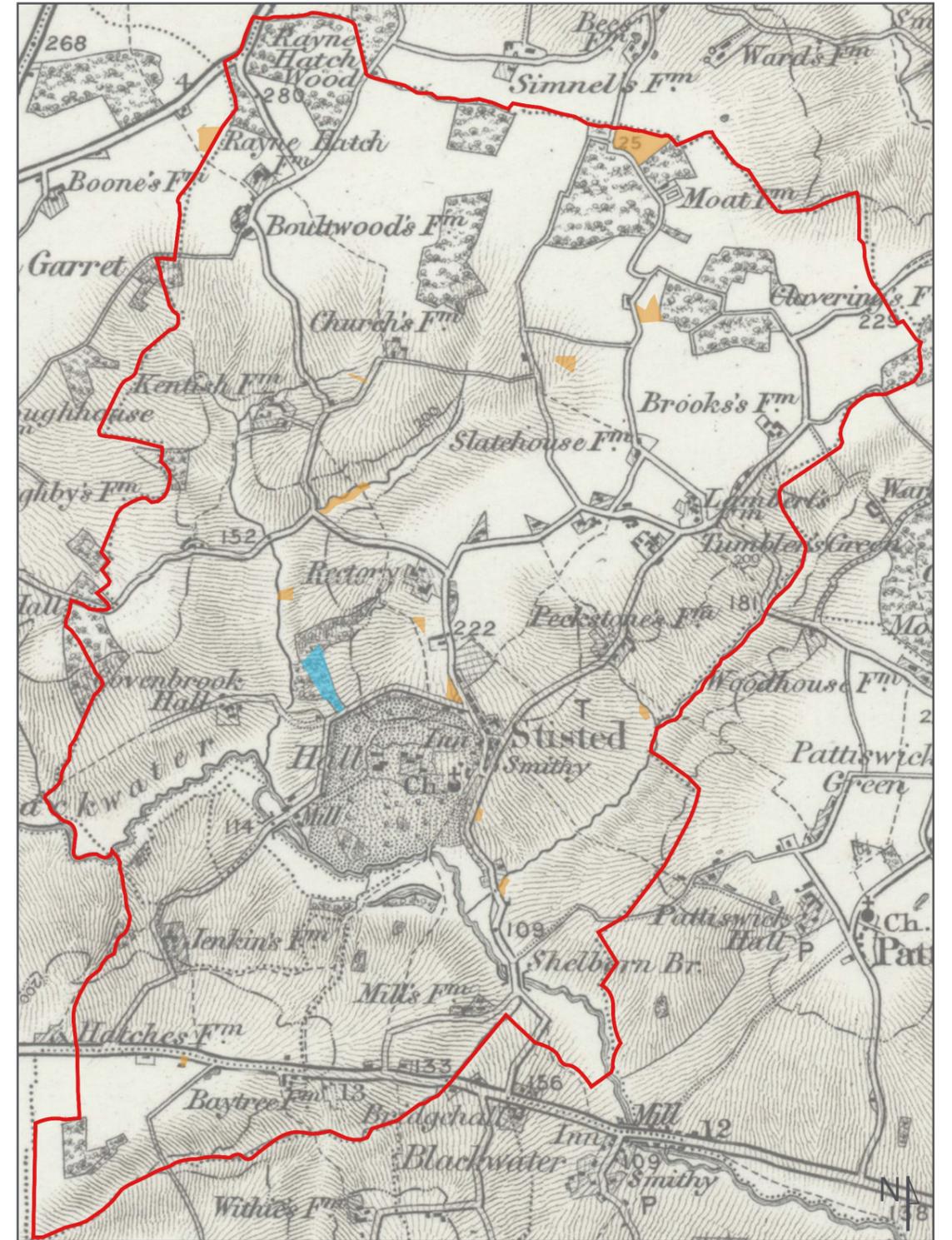
- 4.2.1 An analysis of historic maps (refer to Figure 3) was undertaken to show the extent of landscape change within the project area. The four maps show the progression of changes in terms of loss of features (highlighted in orange) and new features (highlighted in blue) as compared to the historic map of 1875.
- 4.2.2 Map 1 - 1875
- 4.2.3 The 1881 map shows the rural parish of Stisted with the dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and farmsteads surrounding the nucleated village of Stisted. It also shows the narrow twisting roads and lanes and the irregular pattern of fields, interspersed by the occasional common and blocks of deciduous woodland. The 1875 map forms the baseline condition for the analysis of change.
- 4.2.4 Map 2 - 1905
- 4.2.5 The 1905 map shows very few changes within the study area, predominantly associated with the removal of small areas of woodland to make the irregular ancient fields larger. There has been some considerable loss of field boundaries due to 20th Century enclosure. There a few new features.
- 4.2.6 Map 3 - 1960
- 4.2.7 The comparison of the 1960 map with the 1905 map shows minimal change to the landscape within the project area. There are some alterations to woodland clumps, and a road north of Folly Green which extended west to east has been removed.
- 4.2.8 There has been very little new development except for the addition of housing to the east of Back Lane.
- 4.2.9 Map 4 - Current OS Map
- 4.2.10 The comparison of the current map with the 1960 map shows the greatest level of change to the landscape, although this is still minimal. Additions to the landscape include residential development extending further east of Back Lane in Stisted Village, extensions to Baytree Farm including a nursery, and the addition of some small woodland clumps.

Figure 3  
Analysis of Landscape Change within the Study Area

- Key**
-  Study Area
  -  Loss of features
  -  New features



Map 1 - Historic map from 1875 Ordnance Survey Topographic Maps - Essex.



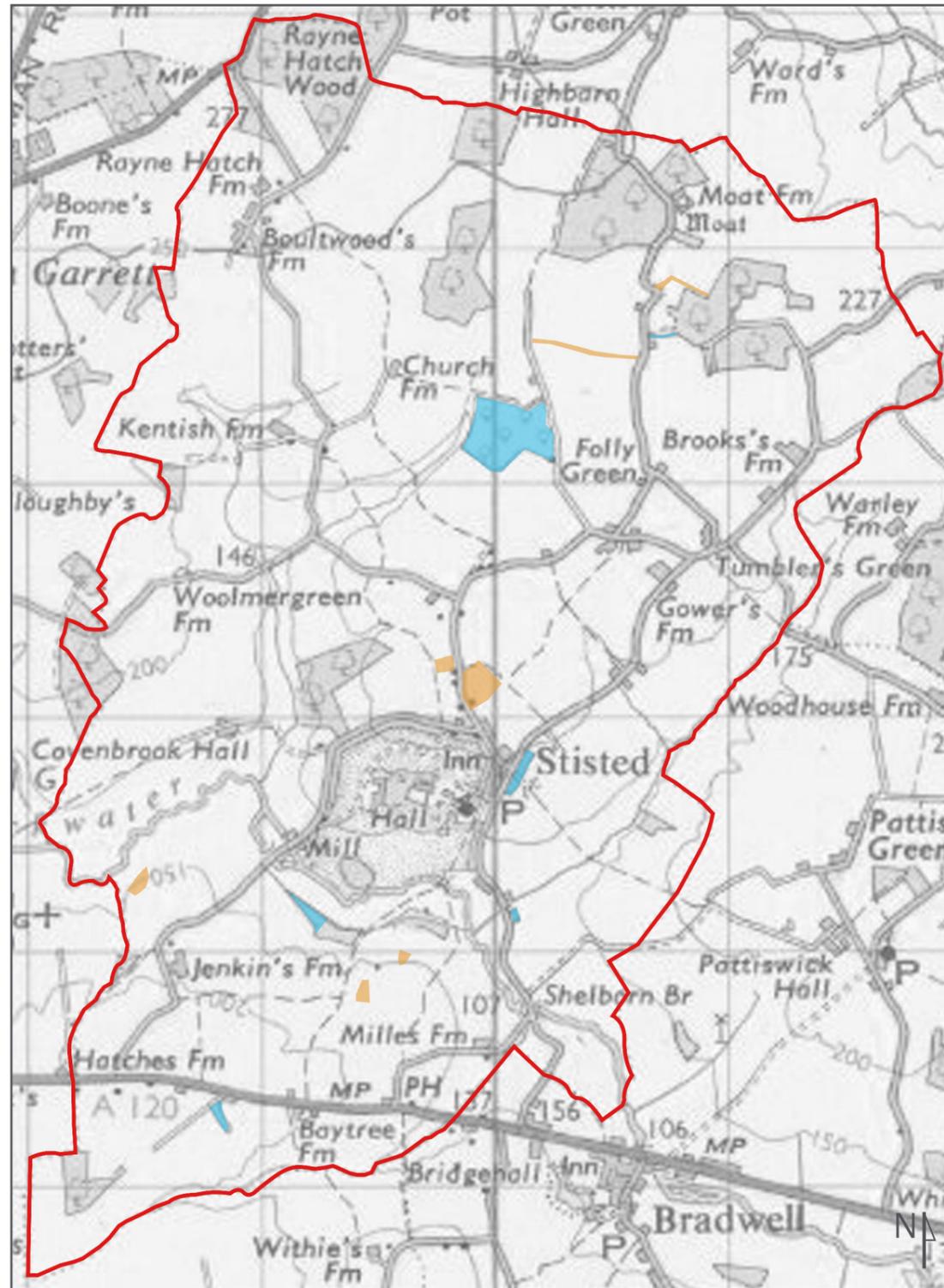
Map 2 - Historic map from 1905 from Ordnance Survey Topographic Maps - Braintree. Showing the extent of change as compared to the 1875 Historic Map.

Scale: 1:25,000

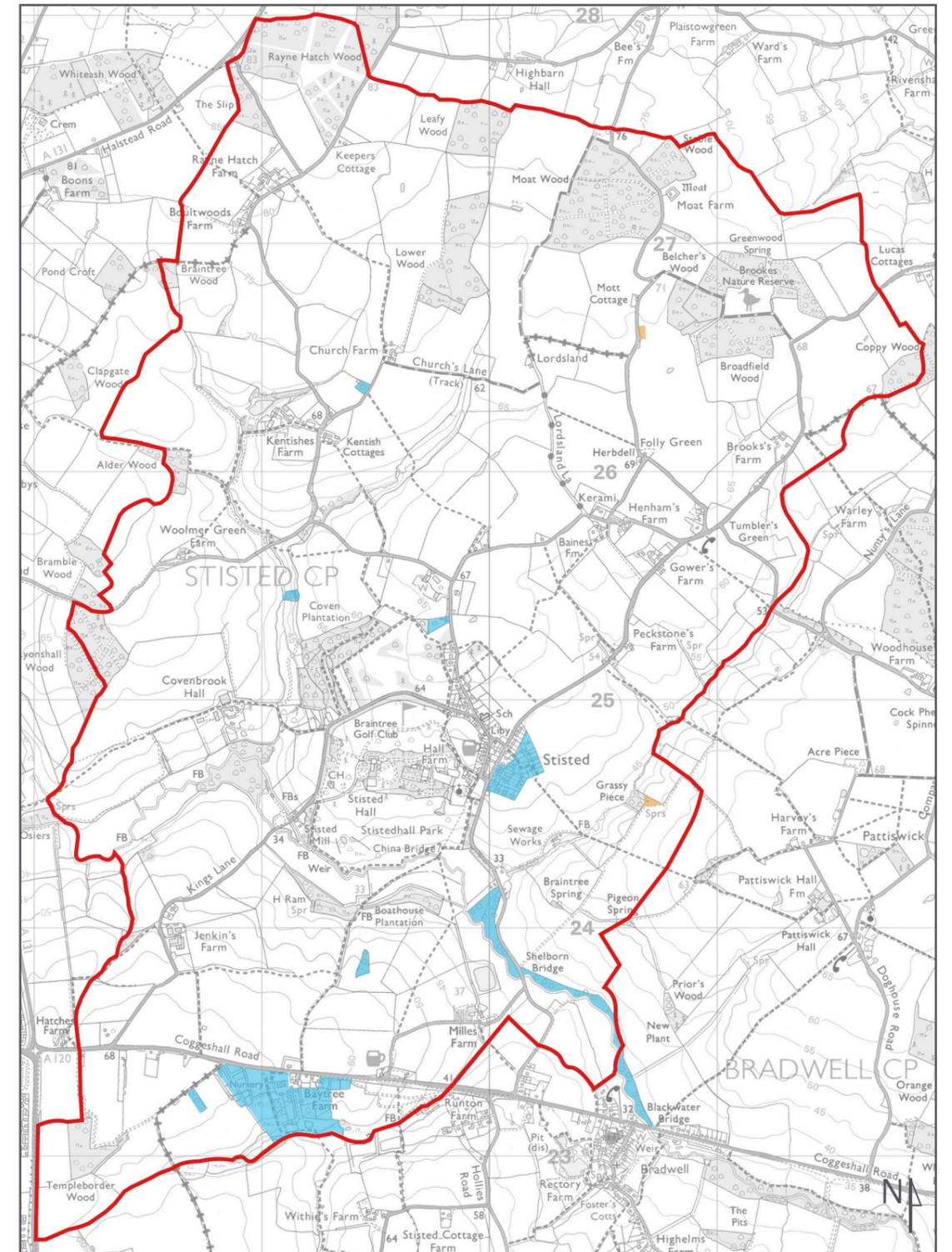
Figure 3  
Analysis of Landscape Change within the Study Area

**Key**

-  Study Area
-  Loss of features
-  New features



Map 3 - Historic map from 1960 from Ordnance Survey Topographic Maps - Colchester. Showing the extent of change as compared to the 1905 Historic Map.



Map 4 - Current map from 2020 from Ordnance Survey (Bing Maps). Showing the extent of change as compared to the 1960 Historic Map.

Scale: 1:25,000

- 4.2.11 The losses in the landscape relate to the removal of hedgerows and field amalgamation as a result of more intensive agricultural practices of production during the 20th century. This has predominantly occurred to the west, north and east of Stisted village. There are few areas where the ancient field pattern has remained intact; these mostly occur where farmland adjoins ancient woodland blocks.

---

### 4.3 Landscape Change within Stisted Historic Core

- 4.3.1 An analysis of historic maps (refer to Figure 4) was undertaken to show the extent of landscape change within the project area. The three maps show the progression of changes in terms of loss of features (highlighted in orange) and new features (highlighted in blue) as compared to the historic map of 1875.

- 4.3.2 Map 1 - 1875

- 4.3.3 The 1875 map shows the historical core of Stisted to be based around Stisted Hall and its associated parkland, with the development of Stisted village forming a linear pattern along Rectory Road.

- 4.3.4 Map 2 - 1919

- 4.3.5 The 1919 map shows an extension to the parkland south of Stisted Hall, as well as additional woodland clumps surrounding the village of Stisted. Some historical features of Stisted Hall Park to the east of the manor house appear to have been removed, whilst some residential development has occurred to the east of Back Lane.

- 4.3.6 Map 3 - 1960

- 4.3.7 The comparison of the 1960 map with the 1919 map shows some removal of historical elements within the grounds of Stisted Hall, and further development of the village parcel extending to the east of Back Lane.

- 4.3.8 Map 4 - Current OS Map

- 4.3.9 The comparison of the current map with the 1960 map shows the greatest level of change to the landscape, as the grounds of Stisted Hall have been converted into a golf course. There has been a lot more residential development northwards along Rectory Road and further east of Back Lane.

---

### 4.4 Settlement Expansion and Current Pattern

- 4.4.1 As can be seen from the analysis of landscape change, Stisted has not seen the level of development that has occurred in other settlements within Braintree District and retains much of its original medieval extent and appearance. The historic core of Stisted, contained within the designated Conservation Area, remains compact and relatively unaltered and the parish has retained its rural character.

- 4.4.2 In terms of development, there has been little expansion of Stisted contributing to a strong sense of historic integrity. There has been some occasional small-scale infill development of private detached houses within the villages and Braintree Golf Club has converted the majority of the grounds around Stisted Hall into a public golf course.



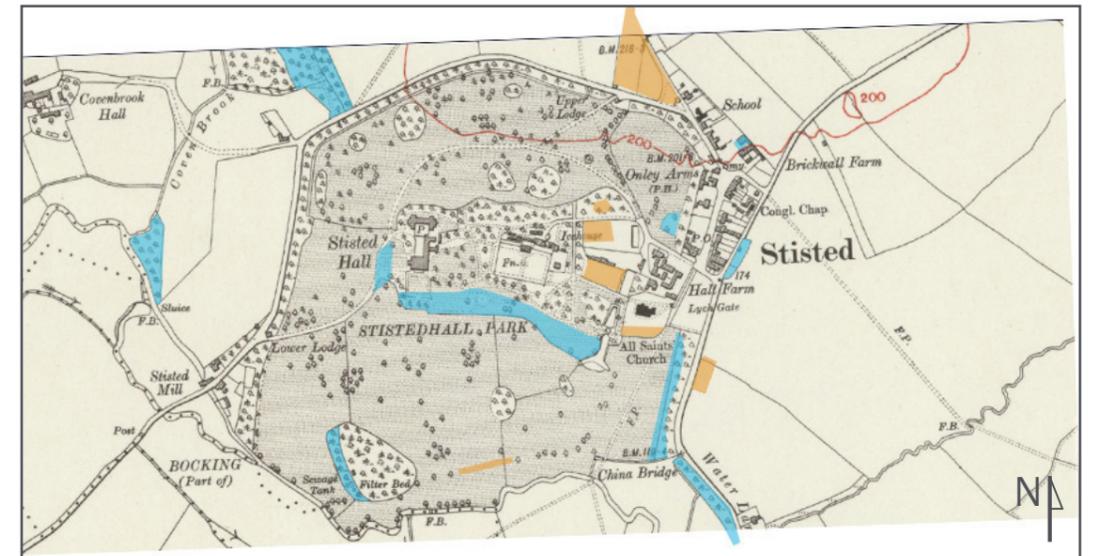
Figure 4  
Analysis of Landscape Change within Stisted Historic Core

Key

-  Study Area
-  Loss of features
-  New features



Map 1 - Historic map from 1875 Ordnance Survey Topographic Maps - Essex.



Map 2 - Historic map from 1919 Ordnance Survey Topographic Maps - Essex.  
Showing the extent of change to the historic core of Stisted, as compared to the 1875 Historic Map.



Map 3 - Historic map from 1960 from Ordnance Survey Topographic Maps - Colchester.  
Showing the extent of change to the historic core of Stisted, as compared to the 1919 Historic Map.



Map 4 - Current map from 2020 from Ordnance Survey (Bing Maps).  
Showing the extent of change to the historic core of Stisted, as compared to the 1960 Historic Map.

Scale: Not to scale.

Village green in opposite Stisted Church of England Primary School



**5. LANDSCAPE CONTEXT**

**5.1 General landscape character of Stisted Parish**

5.1.1 The rural landscape of Stisted Parish generally comprises a valley landscape with gently sloping sides. It is a predominantly agricultural landscape with large, irregular fields bound by hedgerow with hedgerow trees. Mature woodland blocks are scattered throughout the parish and provide a rural backdrop to expansive views across arable countryside and a tranquil setting for Stisted Village and surrounding hamlets. Key characteristics which contribute towards the landscape’s special qualities include its:

- Strongly undeveloped rural character, with some areas of considerable time-depth; historic field patterns, extensive network of lanes and pathways and mature trees and hedgerows which all provide a strong sense of historic continuity, integrity and cultural value;
- Visual amenity value, with attractive panoramic views across the countryside as well as more intimate, enclosed views within the valley and woodland blocks. Closer-range views of the edge of Stisted village, Stisted Conservation Area and listed buildings;
- Biodiversity value; and
- Agricultural value

**5.2 Land-Use Classification and Vegetation**

5.2.1 The landscape within Stisted Parish is predominantly in intensive arable use, with some areas of smaller pastoral fields and paddocks around farmsteads. Most of the land in Stisted Parish is classed as Grade 2 ‘Very Good’ and Grade 3 “Good to Moderate” Agricultural Land by Natural England. Refer to Figure 5 - Aerial Photograph on p20 and Figure 6 - Land cover and Vegetation on p21.

5.2.2 Areas of rough or wet meadow pasture occupy the narrow floodplain along the River Blackwater. A string of small wet woodlands occur along the River Blackwater, with dense riverside trees. The River course is often surrounded by arable farmland or amenity grass.



PRoW through wet meadow with views to heritage assets  
April 2020



PRoW along woodland boundary of arable farmland  
April 2020

5.2.3 Elsewhere, scattered woodlands and plantations of varying sizes occur, as do mature trees, generally located within hedgerows. Tree belts and woodland clumps define and shelter the edges of Stisted Village, with Stisted Hall and Braintree Golf Course located immediately west of the village and contained by Kings Lane to the north and the River Blackwater to the South. Key hedgerow tree species include elm, oak and ash.

5.2.4 Within Stisted Parish, fields are predominantly bounded by hedges and/or ditches of varying condition. Despite recent efforts by local farmers to reinstate hedgerows along field boundaries, they have been denuded in part by intensive agriculture and are in places fragmented or absent

**5.3 Topography and hydrology**

5.3.1 Stisted Parish occupies the northern side of Blackwater Valley which falls gently southwards towards the River Blackwater before gently rising again to the south. The River Blackwater runs in a south easterly direction through the southern half of Stisted Parish, framing the southern boundary of Stisted Conservation Area. The river lies within a well-defined valley and has a number of small tributaries which approach from the north east and south west, including a spring that lies within Boathouse Plantation to the south of Stisted Conservation Area (refer to Figure 7 - Topography on p\_22).

5.3.2 The lowest lying land lies to the south east of Stisted Parish and is associated with the River Blackwater as it runs through woodland copse in Bradwell Civil Parish. The highest ground of the plateau lies in the north western area of Stisted Parish and provides expansive views southwards across Stisted Village, isolated farmsteads and extensive arable agricultural land towards the low-lying River Blackwater. Three woodland copses lie along this ridge- Whiteash Wood, The Slip and Rayne Hatch Wood- provide an impressively rural wooded backdrop. These woodland belts sufficiently enclose the valley and northern edge of Stisted Parish alongside Leafy Wood, Moat Wood, Belcher’s Wood and Broadfield Wood which all run along the northern edge of Stisted Parish.

5.3.3 According to flood zone data taken from the online ‘Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea)’ by the Environment Agency, last updated in 2018, Stisted Parish is only at risk of flooding on the land adjacent to the River Blackwater and its tributaries which approach from north of the river. These areas lie within Flood Zone 3, an area with a high probability of flooding, but are predominantly occupied by mature woodland and wet woodland/grassland areas. Stisted Village itself, the scattered farmsteads and the vast majority of arable farmland lies within Flood Zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding. This is because they occupy the valley sides and surrounding plateaus.

**5.4 Landscape, cultural, heritage and biodiversity designations**

5.4.1 There are a number of landscape cultural heritage and biodiversity designations within Stisted Parish. Figures 8 - 11 refer.

**Stisted Conservation Area**

5.4.2 Stisted Conservation Area was designated in 1973 for its special architectural and historic interest, in order to preserve or enhance its character through strict control of new development, protection of trees, and the need for demolition of buildings or walls to be subject to Conservation Area Consent. A Conservation Area Appraisal has not been undertaken. The

Figure 5  
Aerial Photograph



Key



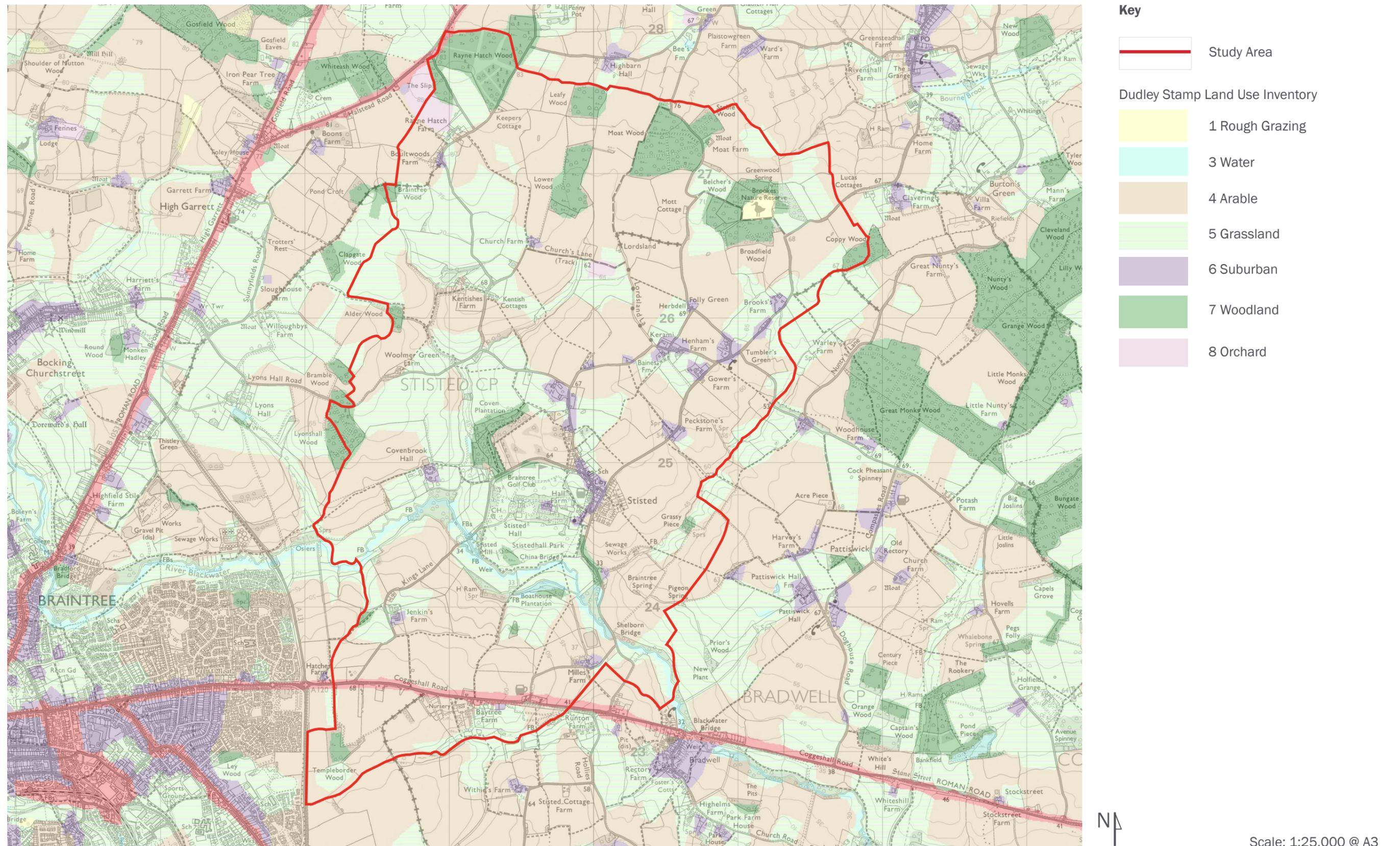
Study Area



Scale: 1:25,000 @ A3

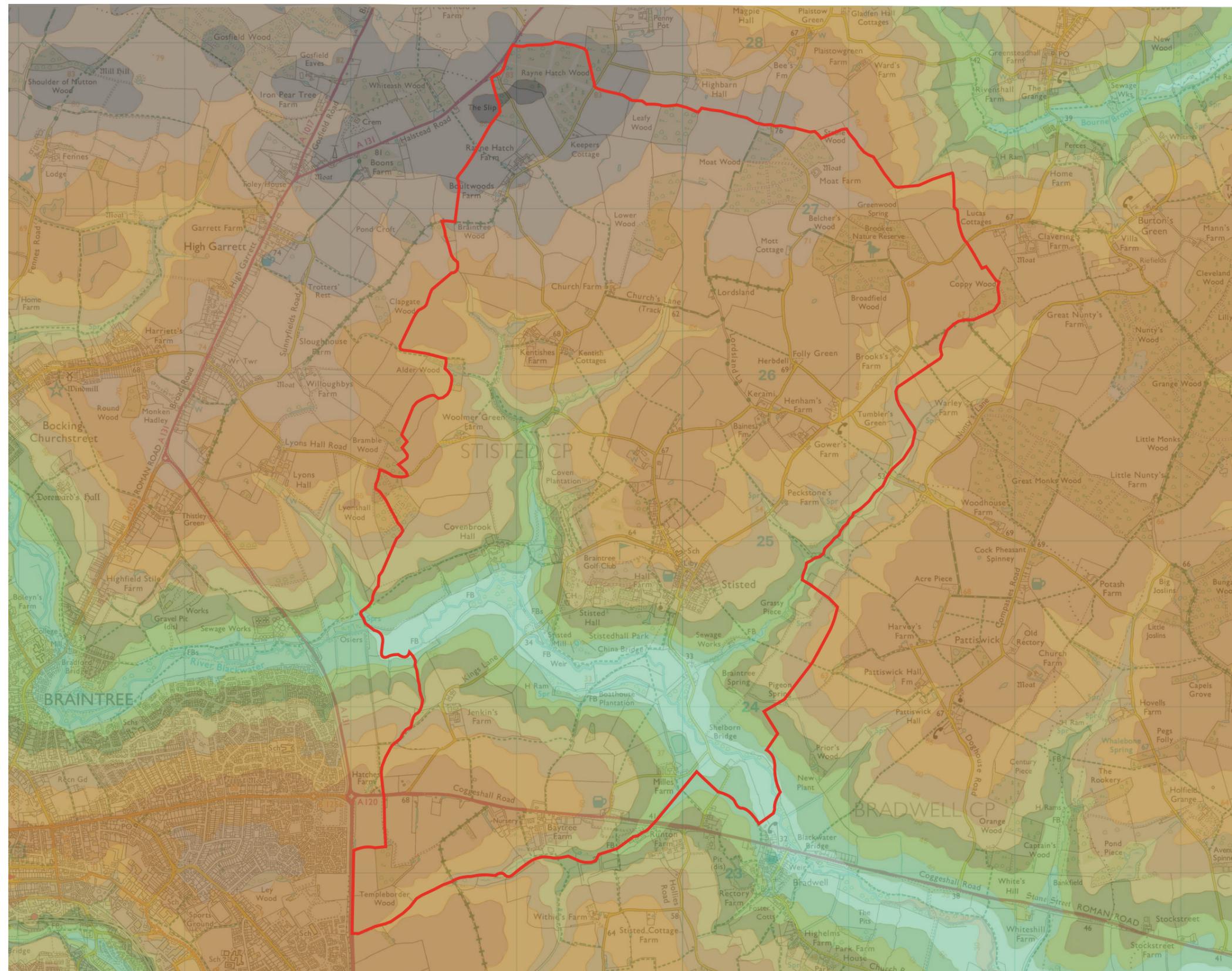
Image from Google Earth

Figure 6  
Landcover and Vegetation



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Figure 7  
Topography and Hydrology



Key

 Study Area

Height in meters AOD

-  85 - 90m
-  80 - 85m
-  75 - 80m
-  70 - 75m
-  65 - 70m
-  60 - 65m
-  55 - 60m
-  50 - 55m
-  45 - 50m
-  40 - 45m
-  35 - 40m
-  30 - 35m
-  25 - 30m
-  20 - 25m
-  15 - 20m



Scale: 1:25,000 @ A3

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View looking across north west across the River Blackwater towards the Grade II-Listed Stisted Mill



Conservation Area includes the Grade I Parish Church of All Saints, the Grade II\* Stisted Hall, the Grade II listed Stisted Mill, Stisted Hall Park, Stisted Farm, and Braintree Golf Club and four other Grade II listed buildings.

5.4.3 Policies in the Local Plan relating to the Conservation Area are RLP 95, to preserve, and encourage the enhancement of, the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas and their settings, including the buildings, open spaces and areas, landscape and historic features and views into and within the constituent parts of designated areas. Policies RLP 96, 97, 98, 108, 109, 117 are also of relevance.

**Registered Parks and Gardens**

5.4.4 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the study area.

**Listed Buildings**

5.4.5 There are approximately 60 individually listed buildings within Stisted Parish. Policies in the adopted Braintree Local Plan relating to Listed buildings are RLP 99, 100, 101 and 102 as well as Policy CS9 of the 2011 Core Strategy to “respect and respond to the local context, especially in the District’s historic villages, where development affects the setting of historic or important buildings, conservation areas and areas of highest archaeological and landscape sensitivity”.

5.4.6 As described in Chapter 4, the historic settlement pattern within Stisted Parish survives well with parkland, dispersed halls, and farms, many of which are listed. These regularly occur as clusters of buildings and include barns, stables, cartlodges and/or outbuildings surrounding a main house.

5.4.7 Of particular note is the Parish Church of All Saints which is Grade I listed. It has been restored and extended since the late 12th Century. The church lies within Stisted Conservation Area alongside around 20 other Listed Features. These include the Grade II\* Listed Stisted Hall, with its south west entrance gate, stable range, walls in the walled garden and an icehouse, all Grade II listed. Also of particular historical interest is the Grade II listed Stisted Mill, which lies along the River Blackwater along the western boundary of Stisted Conservation Area.

5.4.8 In addition to those mentioned above there are a number of isolated listed farmhouses and cottages throughout the parish. These include the Grade II\* Listed Kentishes Farmhouse and Baytree Farmhouse, and the Grade II Listed Church Farmhouse and Brookes Farmhouse. There are many Grade II listed scattered houses and cottages within Stisted Parish such as

Baines Farm Cottages, Glebe House and Clematis Cottage.

**Ancient Woodlands**

5.4.9 Ancient Woodland is formally defined by Natural England and comprises woodland that has existed continuously since 1600. Such woodland is likely to have developed naturally, since before that date, the planting of woodlands was not commonplace.

5.4.10 Policy RLP 80 of the adopted Braintree Local Plan is designed to protect and enhance individual landscape features and habitats and Policy RLP 81 on Trees, Woodlands, Grasslands and Hedgerows, encourages landowners to retain, maintain and plant, in appropriate locations, locally native trees, woodlands, grasslands and hedgerows.

5.4.11 Within Stisted Parish lies a number of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands, particular to the north of the Parish boundary.

- Templeborder Wood (3.04ha) lies close to the west of the Parish boundary, near the A131 road, with Lyonshall Wood (7.86ha) approximately 2km north of this.
- To the north of Stisted Parish, lying on higher ground, are the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands of Braintree Wood (1.61ha), Rayne Hatch Wood (7.88ha), Leafy Wood (5.14ha), Lower Wood (9.11ha), Moat Wood (19.34ha), Belcher’s and Broadfield Wood (17.18ha) and Copsy Wood (4.12ha) (W-E).

**Protected Lanes**

5.4.12 Protected Lanes are designated in the adopted Braintree Local Plan at Policy RLP 87. The District Council will seek to conserve the traditional landscape and nature conservation character of roads designated on the Proposals Map as Protected Lanes, including their associated verges, banks and ditches.

5.4.13 There are six Protected Lanes within the study area:

- An unnamed lane runs from the A131 main road in a south westerly direction along the eastern edge of The Slip, an ancient woodland towards Rayne Hatch Farm.
- An unnamed lane runs from Rayne Hatch Farm in a north easterly direction along the eastern boundary of Rayne Hatch Wood.
- An unnamed lane runs southwards from Plaistow Green and along the eastern edge of Moats Wood, ending north of Mott Cottage.



Ancient woodland to the north of Stisted Parish.  
April 2020



Stisted Hall Park.  
April 2020

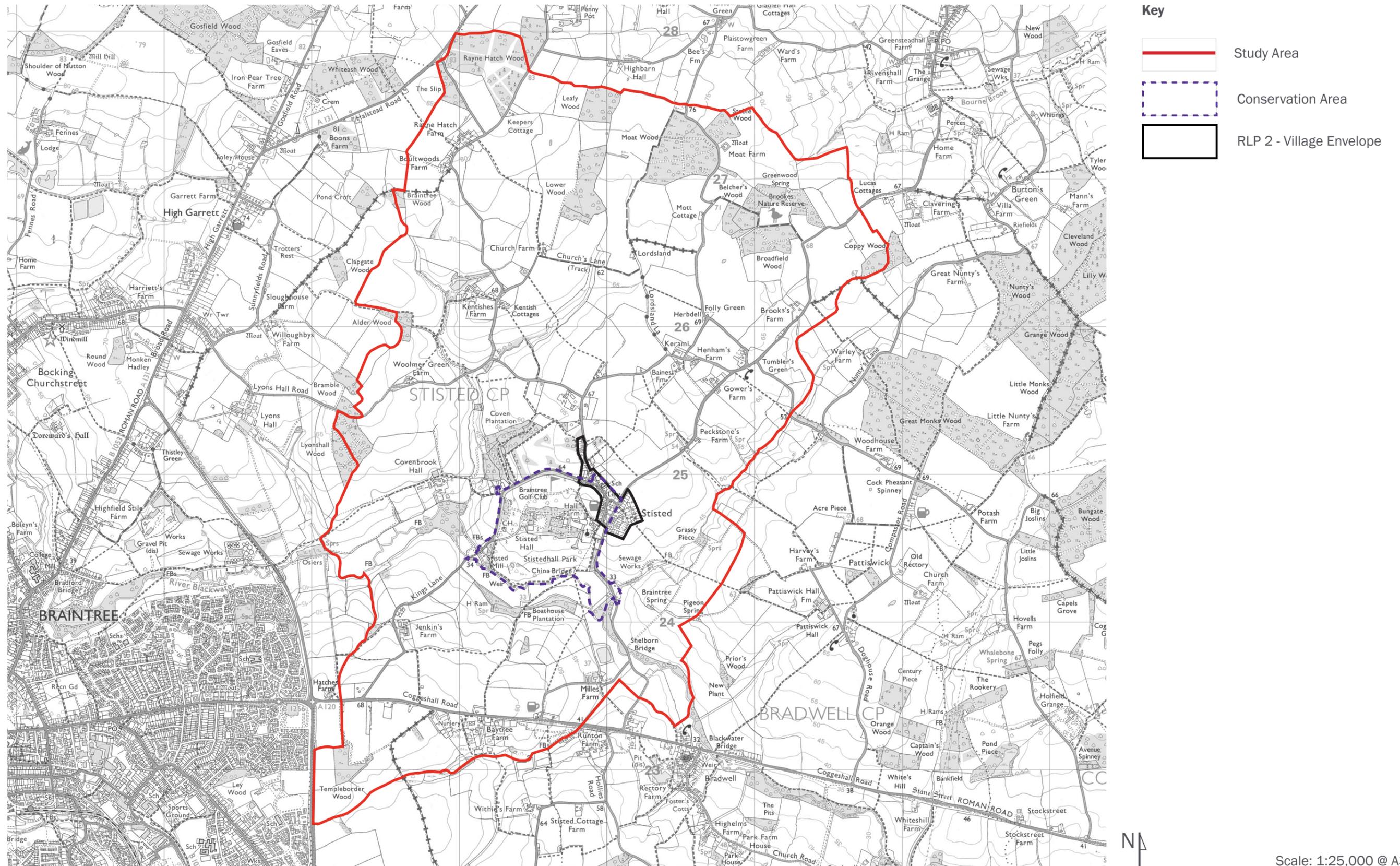


The historic core  
April 2020



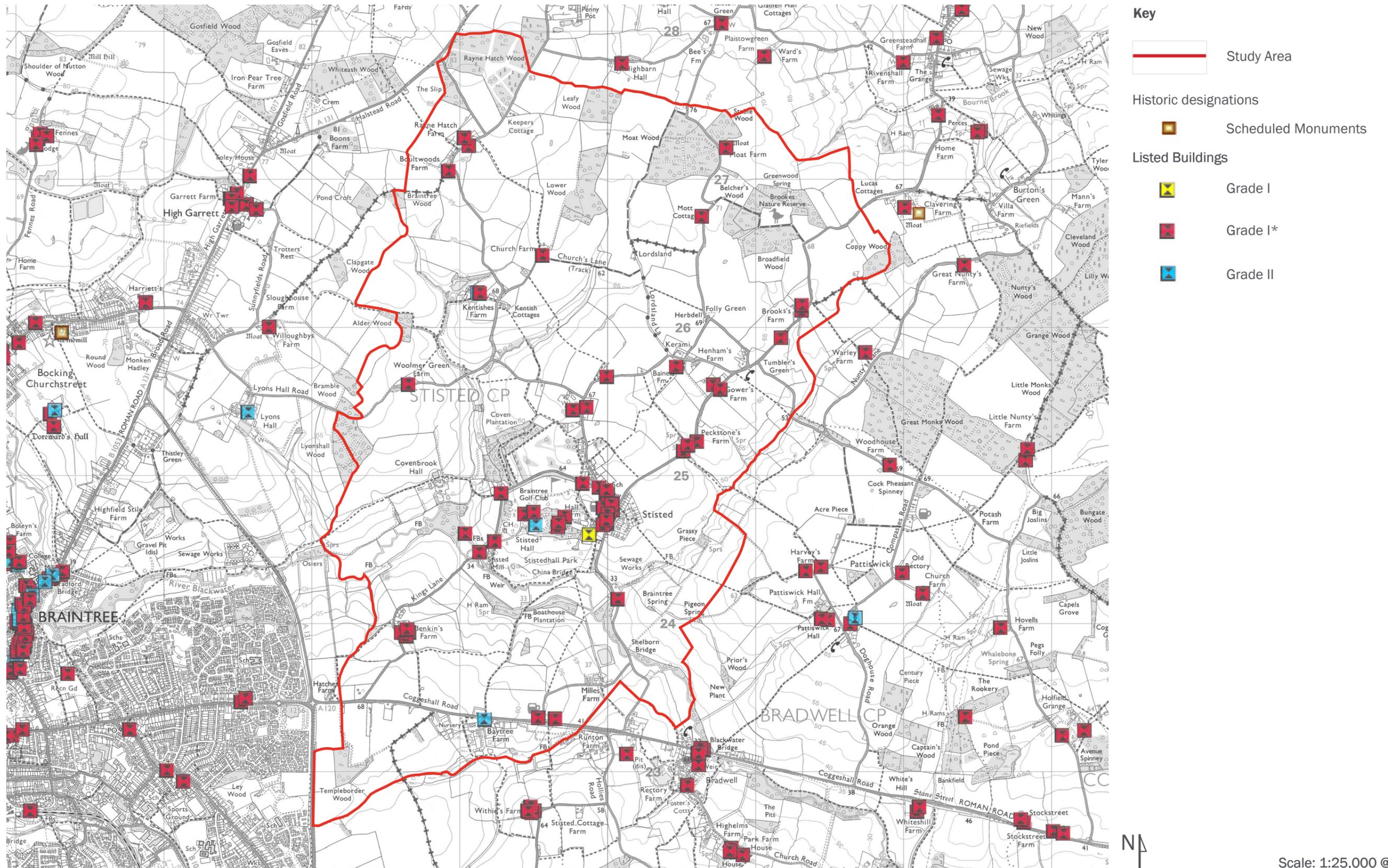
Grade I-Listed All Saints Parish Church.  
April 2020

Figure 8  
Conservation Area & Village Envelope of Stisted



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Figure 9  
Heritage Designations



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- An unnamed lane runs southwards from Boultwoods Farm, past Kentishes Farm and ending at Lyons Hall Road.
- An unnamed lane runs in a north easterly direction from north of Baines Farm to Folly Green, from which the route takes a south easterly direction towards Tumbler's Green.
- An unnamed lane runs in a south easterly direction from Back Lane in Tumbler's Green towards Woodhouse Farm.

#### Flood zones

5.4.14 Flood Zones are identified in the adopted Braintree Local Plan n at policies RLP 66, 67, 68, 86. There are three main flood zones within Stisted Parish, all classified as Flood Zone 3, which follow the River Blackwater and its two tributaries. The majority of the land which lies within these flood zones is wet woodland along the river banks, the edges of productive arable agricultural land, and footpath 111\_45 which runs along the southern boundary of Stisted Hall Park.

#### Biodiversity designations

Stisted Parish contains Belcher's and Broadfield Woods SSSI (17.18ha), which lies close to the north east of the study area. There are no other international, European or national designated wildlife sites, such as Local Nature Reserves, County Wildlife Sites or Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites within Stisted Parish.

However, there are a number of Local Wildlife Sites within Stisted Parish. These include:

- Bra110 Templeborder Wood - a mature native woodland dominated by *Quercus robur*, *Corylus avellana* and *Carpinus betulus*.
- Bra 115 Lyonshall Wood – a mature native woodland dominated by *Quercus robur*, *Castanea sativa*, *Betula sp.* and *Carpinus betulus*.
- Bra121 Alder Wood - a mature native woodland dominated by *Fraxinus excelsior* coppice.
- Bra125 The Slip - a narrow stretch of mature native woodland dominated by *Quercus robur*, *Betula sp.* and *Corylus avellana*.
- Bra130 Coven Plantation - a mature native woodland with a deep valley and stream to the north which has resulted in a damp area on the south slope.
- Bra131 Rayne Hatch Wood – a large ancient woodland dominated by *Populus sp.*, *Pinus Sylvestris*, *Larix sp.* and *Castanea sativa*.
- Bra138 Lower Wood - a mature native woodland dominated by *Quercus robur* and *Fraxinus excelsior* coppices and standards.
- Bra139 Leafy Wood - a mature native woodland dominated by *Quercus robur* standards and *Betula pendula* coppice.
- Bra153 Moat Wood - a large ancient woodland dominated by a variety of native species.
- Bra161 Greenwood Spring - a mature native woodland adjoining Broadfield and Belchers Wood SSSI.
- Bra170 Coppy Wood – an ancient woodland dominated by *Quercus robur*, *Fraxinus excelsior* and *Acer campestre*.

#### Essex Wildlife Trust nature Reserves

5.4.15 Nature Reserves. The SSSI at Belcher and Broadfield woods is managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust under the name of Brookes Nature Reserve, the name by which most villagers would know the reserve

5.4.16 There is also a further nature reserve managed by the EWT that is located to the east of the allotments in the village. It is known as Rolfe's Land and was donated by a previous resident about 20 years ago. The grid ref is 798 252. The entrance is via a track/public footpath off Rectory Road. It is a bit of a secret as the reserve does not appear on the website of EWT but there is a name board near the entrance to it."

#### Landscape designations

5.4.17 There are no international, national or locally designated landscapes within the study area apart from Belcher's and Broadfield Woods SSI.

### 5.5 Time depth

5.5.1 In general terms the landscape within the study area is relatively undeveloped with ancient countryside remnants and considerable time-depth. Despite post-1950s field boundary loss, the landscape still reflects 18th -19th Century agricultural practices with some irregular sinuous field patterns still intact near to the ancient woodlands. Ancient woodlands are common to the north of the Parish, as well as occasional scattered small wooded areas. Protected lanes, winding roads and scattered Listed farmhouses and cottages all provide a strong sense of historic continuity, integrity and cultural value.

5.5.2 The only area of the Parish which has seen considerable change is the Conservation Area. Stisted Hall has been converted to a residential nursing home, the parkland now a golf course. The village parcel has grown further east of Back Lane, and north along Rectory Road.

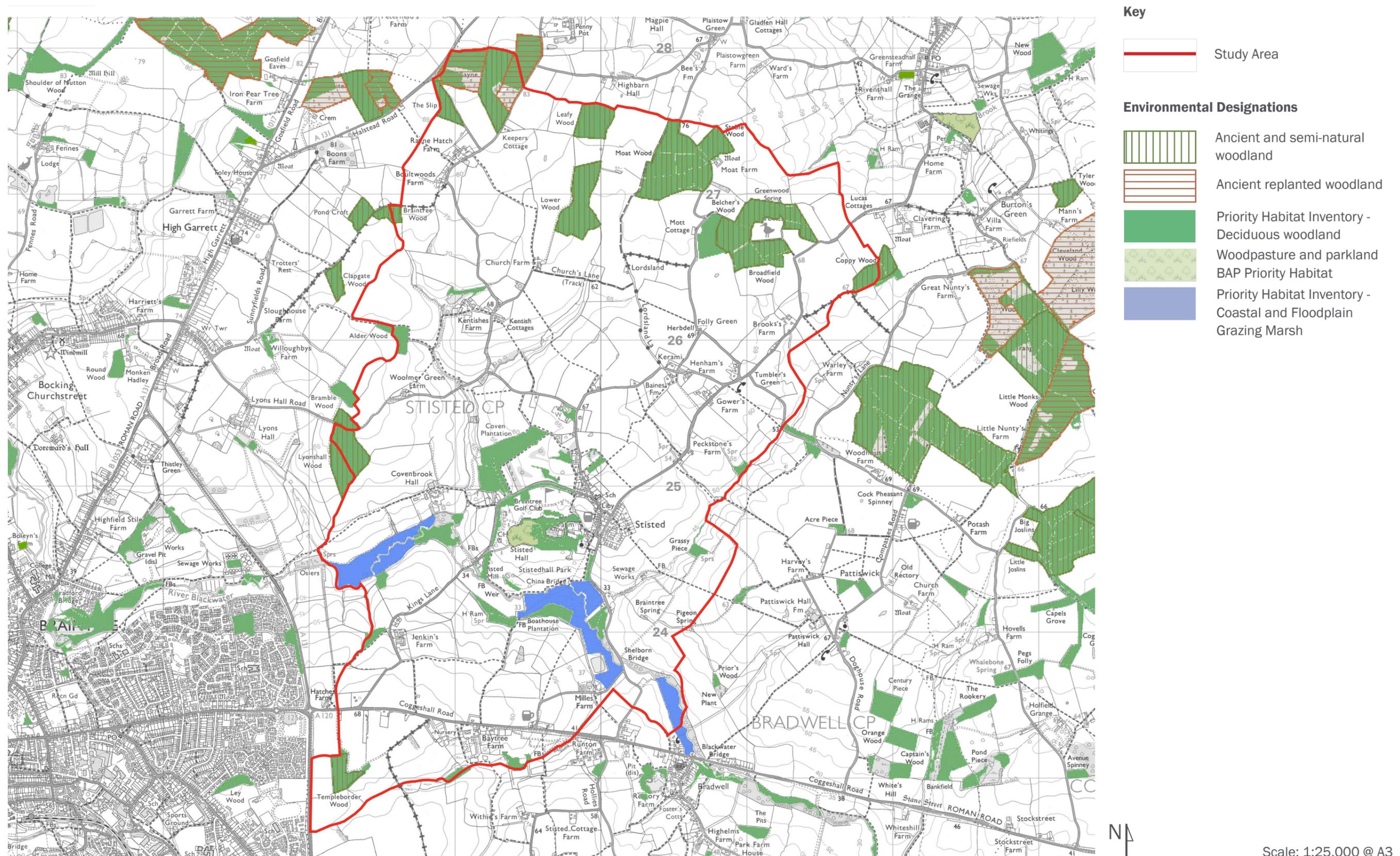
### 5.6 PRowS and Access

5.6.1 There is a comprehensive network of Byways, Bridleways, Footpaths and tracks which provide access to the countryside within Stisted Parish. A number of footpaths have been regularised to field boundaries, connecting Stisted village to the surrounding countryside and nearby settlements such as Braintree, Bradwell and Pattiswick.

5.6.2 The most notable Public Rights of Way in Stisted Parish include:

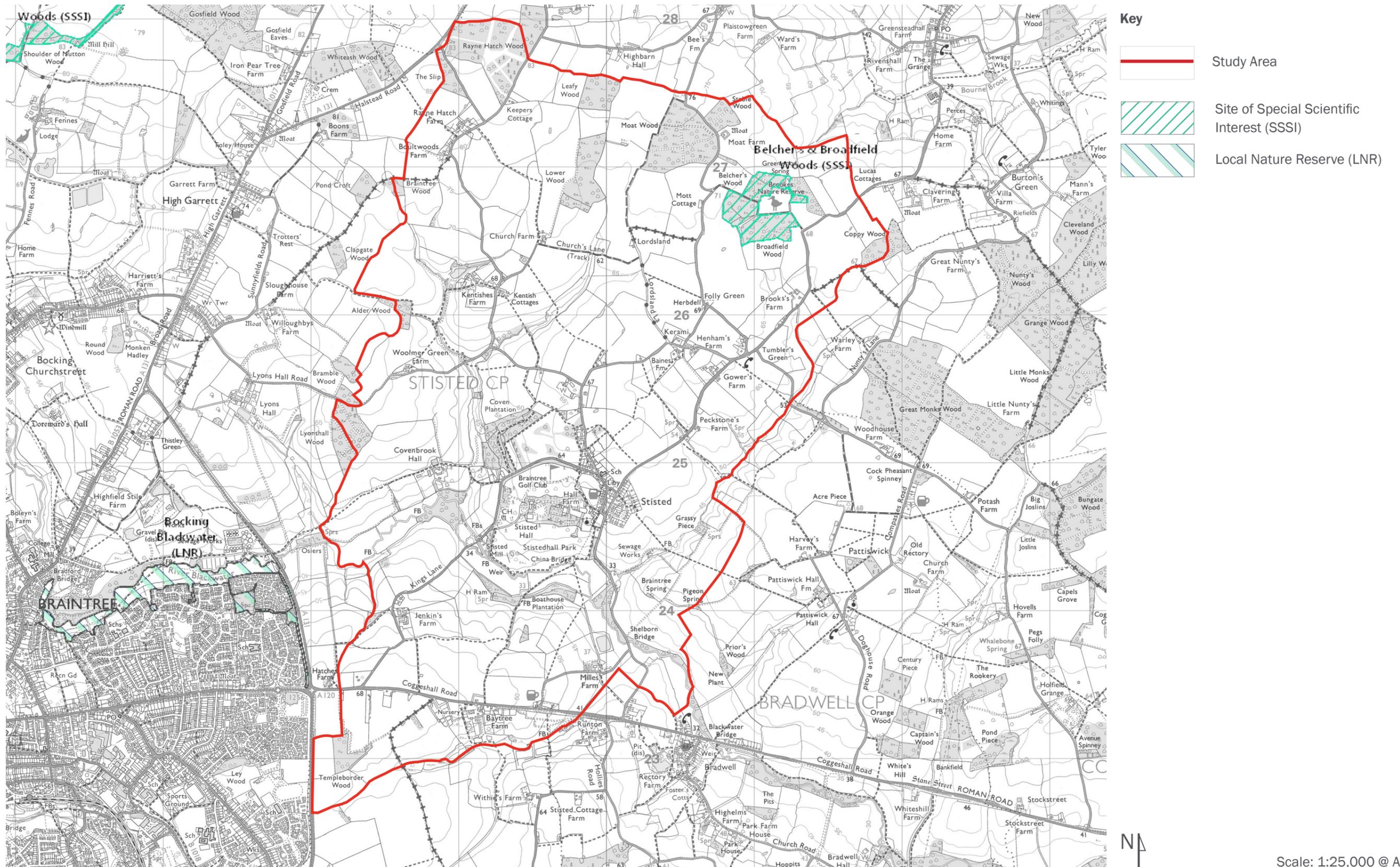
- Footpath 111\_45: Follows River Blackwater along southern edge of Stisted Hall Park.
- Footpath 111\_22: The main footpath through Stisted Village, passing the Grade I Listed Parish Church of All Saints.
- Footpath 111\_18: travels westwards from Braintree Golf Club, meeting the River Blackwater near the A131 road.
- Footpath 111\_19: travels eastwards from the south eastern area of Stisted Village, towards Pattiswick, where it turns into Footpath 67\_8.

Figure 10  
Environmental Designations



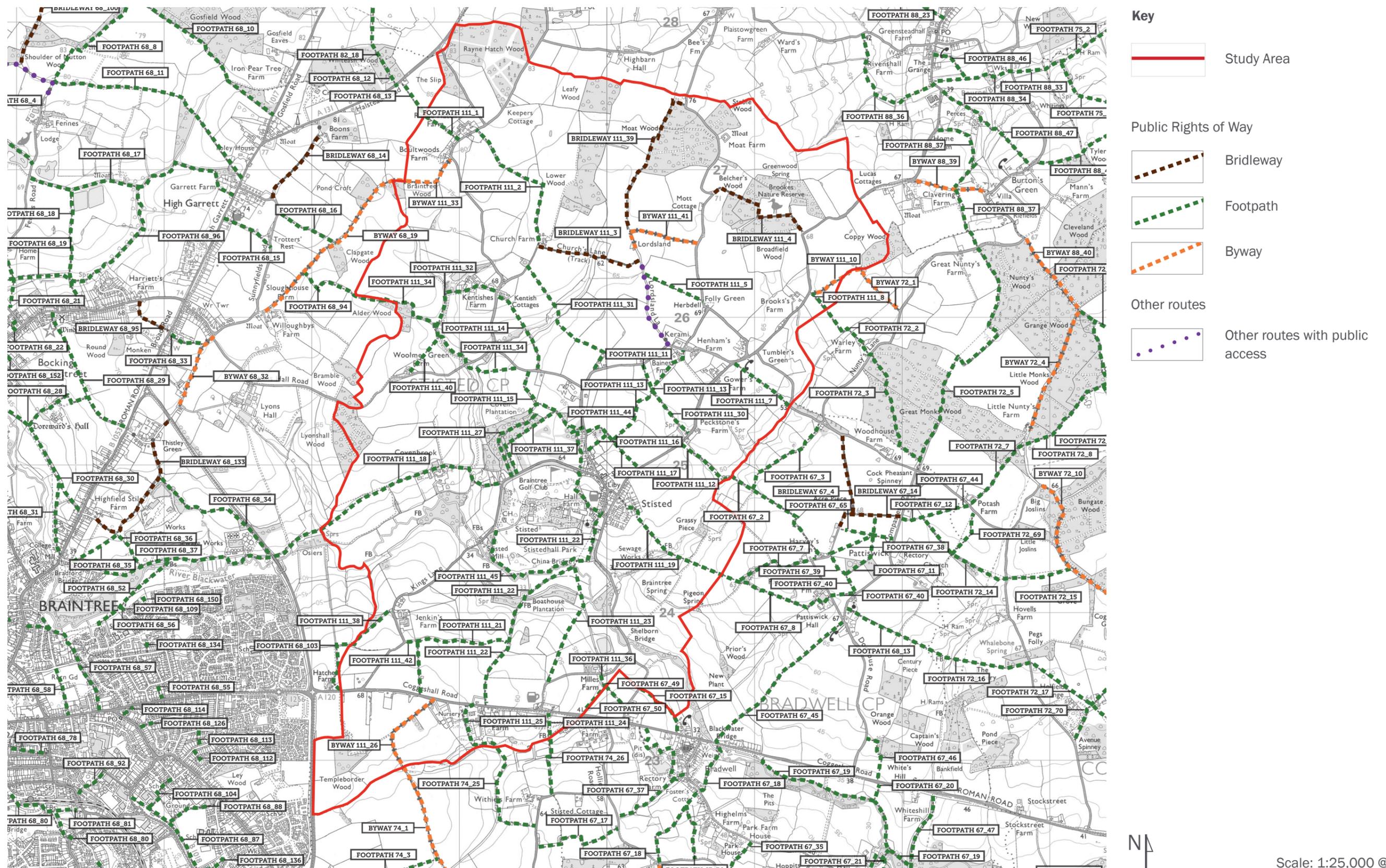
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Figure 11  
Statutory Designations



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Figure 12  
Public Rights of Way



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**5.7 Tranquility**

5.7.1 Despite having the A120 major road along its western boundary and passing through the southern part of the Parish, Stisted Parish is still considered to be tranquil location due to the areas of ancient woodland and irregular arable fields that are prevalent throughout the Parish. Stisted, the largest settlement of the Parish, has 600 residents and is surrounded by nucleated hamlets and isolated farmsteads.

5.7.2 The dark skies map produced by the Campaign to Protect Rural England shows the majority of the project area has little light pollution. The southern part of the parish is influenced by the A120 road corridor and the western part is influenced by the town of Braintree.

**5.8 Strength of landscape character**

5.8.1 The landscape character is of archetypal lowland English countryside character with a rural settlement pattern. The strength of character generally increases with distance from Braintree.

**5.9 Existing landscape character assessments**

5.9.1 Landscape character assessment ( LCA ) is the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. LCA documents identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas.

5.9.2 There are four existing published landscape character assessments, undertaken at different scales which encompass the project area. These are summarised in Table 1 and are shown in Figures 13, 14 & 15 - Existing Landscape Character Areas.

With regard to informing the study, the District Assessment is considered to be the most relevant as it provides the most detailed level of information.

**National level: National Character Area profiles**

5.9.3 In the 1990’s, English Nature and the Countryside Commission jointly produced The Character Map of England – a single map that identified and described 159 Joint Character Areas (JCAs) covering the whole of England. Each distinct area was defined following consideration of its landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, and cultural and economic activities. The boundaries of the areas followed natural rather than administrative boundaries. The various volumes of the Map were published between 1998 and 2000.

5.9.4 More recently, Natural England has undertaken a review of the JCAs in order to fulfill, in part, responsibilities set out in the Natural Environment White Paper 2011, Biodiversity 2020, and the European Landscape Convention 2007, creating National Character Area (NCA) profiles which are based on the original JCA profiles. These are guidance documents that can assist communities in decision-making by informing them about the places that they live in.

5.9.5

**Table 1 - Hierarchy of Landscape Character Types and Character Areas**

National: National Character Area Profiles, Natural England, 2012		
NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland		
Regional: East of England Landscape Typology, Landscape East, 2010		
LCT Wooded Plateau Farmlands	LCT Valley Settled Farmlands	
County: Essex Landscape Character Assessment		
Type B Glacial Till Plateau Landscape	Type C River Valley Landscape	
Character Area B1 Central Essex Farmlands	Character Area C6 Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys	
Character Area B1 Central Essex Farmlands	Character Area C6 Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys	
District: Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments		
Type A River Valley	Type B Farmland Plateau	Type F Wooded Farmland Landscapes
Character Area A4a Bourne Brook River Valley	Character Area B16 Felstead Farmland Plateau	Character Area F2 High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland
Character Area A5 Pant River Valley	Character Area B18 Silver End Farmland Plateau	
Character Area A9 Blackwater River Valley		
Character Area A9a Blackwater River Valley Floor		
Character Area A10 Brain River Valley		

**NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands**

- 5.9.6 Stisted Parish falls within NCA 86: The South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands. NCA 86 is a broadly flat, chalky boulder clay plateau, dissected by an undulating river valley topography that is particularly marked in upper valley reaches, which are much smaller in scale. Land use is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture in the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular, despite rationalization, due to remnants of Ancient Countryside.
- 5.9.7 Settlement consists of scattered farmsteads, divided by deep ditches and moats. Parishes are dispersed with small settlements focused around tyes (commons) or strip greens in isolated hamlets. Buildings tend to be timber-framed and colour washed houses, which are sometimes faced with Georgian red brick. There are also several large villages and frequent towns, most with medieval street plans and elaborate timber-frame houses, as well as a rich heritage of barns and impressive churches.
- 5.9.8 This well preserved, archetypal, lowland pastoral English countryside is coupled with attractive vernacular buildings dating from a period of industrial wealth. There are a few large woods (20 acres plus), including some ancient coppice wood, as well as a typical pattern of copses connected by hedgerows. Trees and woods appear to join together to give a wooded skyline, with occasional bare ridgelines. The road pattern away from major routes, is winding with wide verges and strong hedgerows. Sunken hollow lanes, lined with hedgerows, are a common feature, with the impact of Dutch Elm disease quite apparent. The main hedgerow trees in this area are elm, oak and ash.
- “Key drivers” for change within NCA 86 include:**
- *“Locally determined planning and development control may in some cases have the potential to impact on the landscape. Ensuring that local development frameworks recognise the importance of conserving and enhancing the landscape will help reduce any potentially negative impacts.”*
  - *Potential growth may lead to increases in the importance of the recreational and environmental value of landscapes within the urban surround; the potential for green infrastructure funding; opportunities for improved access and climate change adaptation.”*
- 5.9.9 With regard to accommodating new development, NCA profile 86 includes the following landscape opportunities:
- *“Protect the pastoral river valley landscape from further fragmentation by resisting inappropriate use and development, promoting traditional management practices, protecting existing pasture from conversion to arable use (especially those containing archaeological features), and seeking opportunities to create more permanent grassland*
  - *Conserve the rural settlement pattern by ensuring that new development is complementary to intrinsic local character.*
  - *Conserve rural settlement character by using traditional materials in new developments especially the use of colour-washed render and pegtiles.*
  - *Conserve the strongly nucleated character of settlements by encouraging new development to take place within the existing curtilage of settlements.*
  - *Raise the design quality of new and existing development. Incorporate green infrastructure that provides opportunities for wildlife and public access within urban areas and screens intrusive urban influence (especially on the periphery*

*of settlements), with the use of substantial and appropriate landscaping, such as woodland planting, earthworks and green roofs.”*

**Regional Level: Landscape East Character Typologies**

- 5.9.10 Landscape East is a Landscape Information System developed by Countryside in 2009 to assist with the landscape planning and management of both rural and urban areas in the East of England.
- 5.9.11 The East of England Landscape Character Typology was established in 2010 to supplement historical and environmental databases with local landscape character assessments and specialist local knowledge.
- 5.9.12 The East of England Landscape Framework allows for cooperation between various administrative authorities and a more general understanding of landscape character, which can then be concentrated into smaller-scale character areas at a more local level.
- LCT Wooded Plateau Farmlands**
- 5.9.13 Most of Stisted Parish falls within the Landscape Character Type: Wooded Plateau Farmlands. This area contains the northern, linear segment of Stisted Village Parcel as well as scattered farmsteads and ancient woodlands.
- 5.9.14 Key characteristics of LCT Wooded Plateau Farmlands include:
- *“A settled, early enclosed landscape with frequent ancient woods;*
  - *a rolling, in places undulating glacial plateau, dissected by numerous shallow valleys”*
- 5.9.15 The dominant land use is arable production set within medium to large, irregular fields which have seen many alterations to boundaries within the last century. Farmsteads and hamlets are dispersed throughout the area, with an intermittent scattering of larger, nucleated villages.
- 5.9.16 Perceptions of the landscape are that of a tranquil, rural, rolling countryside with woodland blocks that provide some intimacy and remoteness.
- LCT Valley Settled Farmlands**
- 5.9.17 The remainder of Stisted Parish falls within Landscape Character Type Valley Settled Farmlands. This area is occupied by the River Blackwater and its tributaries which travel down the lower regions of the valley slopes. The majority of Stisted Village Parcel, as well as heritage assets such as Stisted Hall and Park and Covenbrook Hall occupy this area.
- 5.9.18 Key characteristics of LCT Wooded Plateau Farmlands include:
- *“Settled, often busy landscapes which occur along the sides of the sinuous valley corridors that cut through the East Anglian clay plateau;*
  - *Although it has a long farming history, this is a landscape with substantial and ancient hedges surrounding its predominantly arable fields, along with wet meadows in valley bottoms and patches of ancient woodland on upper valley slopes.”*
- 5.9.19 The primary land use is dominated by arable farmland, with mixed-use contained within peri-urban areas. Complex field enclosures contain sinuous fields of a small to medium size. Hedgerow trees associated with landscaped parks have a visual influence over the

landscape. Distinguishing medieval cores are common among the settlements in this area and moated farmsteads are a frequent feature. Settlements vary between clustered hamlets and farmsteads, and larger market towns, many of which have seen significant growth in the late 20th Century. Valley bottoms are often occupied by main roads, with valley sides dissected by sunken lanes.

5.9.20 Despite local settlements appearing “busy”, the linear valleys and distinctive hedgerow patterns create a contrast between contained, intimate views and more expansive views, maintaining a sense of remoteness and tranquility.

#### County level: Essex Landscape Character Assessment

5.9.21 The Essex Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was produced in 2003 by Chris Blandford Associates on behalf of Essex County Council and Southend on Sea Borough Council. The study sought to identify distinctive character areas across the Essex landscape, defined at the 1:50,000 scale, which can then be evaluated for their sensitivity to change, “*guiding necessary development to landscapes where the type and degree of change can be best accommodated.*”

5.9.22 The LCA identified seven Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which were refined to classify thirty-five Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), four of which fall within the study area: B1 Central Essex Farmland, B4 Gosfield Wooded Farmland, C6: Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys and C7 Colne Valley. B4 and C6 cover the majority of the study area, with the southern segment of the Parish falling within Character Area B1 and a northern section of the Parish falling within Character Area C7.

#### CA B1 Central Essex Farmlands

5.9.23 Key characteristics of LCA B1 include:

- *“Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches.*
- *Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.*
- *Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, with greens and ponds.*
- *A concentration of isolated moated farmsteads.*
- *Network of narrow, winding lanes.*
- *Mostly tranquil character away from major roads and Stansted Airport.”*

5.9.24 The CA is an extensive area of gently undulating arable farmland bisected by the Chelmer Valley to the north of Chelmsford and the Brain Valley to the south and west of Braintree. In relation to visual experience it notes “*in long views scattered small woods and copses, and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon*”.

5.9.25 The sensitivity evaluation gives a range of Landscape Sensitivity Levels based on various types or scales of development. Generally the LCA is assessed to have Moderate sensitivity to most forms of development including major urban extensions over 5ha and incremental small scale developments. Common issues include moderate inter-visibility of the LCA, integrity of hedgerow and woodland patterns, the tranquil character and distinctive settlement patterns. As for small urban extensions under 5ha, the landscape is assessed to be of Low sensitivity, with the identified “*possible opportunity to improve some existing visually poor urban edges*”

#### CA B4 Gosfield Wooded Farmlands

5.9.26 Key characteristics of LCA B4 include:

- *“Flat to gently undulating landform.*
- *Strong pattern of large and small woods, including distinctive ancient limewoods.*
- *Irregular medium size arable fields, bounded by thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees.*
- *Enclosed character.*
- *Many small farmsteads, occasional hamlets and villages.”*

The CA is dominated by irregular, medium-sized fields that are contained by broad hedgerows with hedgerow trees and woodland blocks. These enclose the majority of views across the farmland and between nucleated farmsteads. With distance from the A12/A120 roads and Braintree town, the area is rural and tranquil.

The sensitivity evaluation gives a range of Landscape Sensitivity Levels based on various types or scales of development. Generally the LCA is assessed to have Moderate sensitivity to most forms of development. For major urban extensions over 5ha and commercial/warehouse estate/port development, the landscape is assessed to be of High Sensitivity. Common issues include the predominantly rural, tranquil character of countryside, lanes and small settlements and cohesion of hedgerows and woodlands. As for small urban extensions under 5ha, the landscape is assessed to be of Low sensitivity.

#### CA C6 Blackwater/Brain/Lower Chelmer Valleys

5.9.27 Key characteristics of CA C6 include:

- *“Shallow valleys.*
- *Predominantly arable farmland with well hedged medium to large fields.*
- *The Brain and the Upper Blackwater Valleys are narrow with undulating valley sides.*
- *Extensive linear poplar and willow plantations are a distinctive feature.”*

5.9.28 The supporting text notes:

*“The Brain and the Upper Blackwater valleys are relatively narrow with moderate slopes. Medium scale, arable farmland dominates throughout their length, with a predominantly strong pattern of hedgerow boundaries with frequent hedgerow trees. Tree cover is high along the banks of the rivers with willow and poplar plantations common as well as pockets of wet alder/willow woodland. There are dense riverside trees along the Brain and the middle part of the Blackwater Valley and semi-natural vegetation includes ancient mixed woodland on valley sides, Alder carr and unimproved grazing meadows. Small settlements are dispersed along valley sides or cluster around a few key bridging points. There is a sparse settlement pattern in the upper valleys above Braintree with small scattered farmsteads, hamlets and small villages. Roads and lanes run along the top of the valleys”.*

5.9.29 The Landscape Sensitivity Level ranges from High, Moderate and Low across the range of development types and scales. Of relevance is the High level given to major urban extensions over 5ha and new settlements while incremental small scale developments are considered Low. The key landscape sensitivities relate to the “*visual exposure of some valley sides/open valley floors*”, the “*intrinsic small scale character of the valleys*” and the tranquil character in parts of the area.

**CA C7 Colne Valley**

- 5.9.30 Key characteristics of CA C6 include:
- “Shallow valley of variable width with numerous small tributary valleys.
  - Gently to moderately undulating valleysides.
  - Narrow valley bottom, mainly pasture.
  - Arable valleyside farmland with frequent small woodlands.
  - A series of small towns and villages at bridging points
  - Historic mill buildings are distinctive features.”
- 5.9.31 The supporting text notes:
- “The Colne Valley is a narrow valley with strongly rolling valleysides in the north, tending to widen out and become somewhat more gentle south of Halstead. The valley bottom is narrow comprising small linear meadows/pastures and wet woodlands. On the valleysides medium scale arable farmland dominates, but enclosure is provided by a strong pattern of hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees and small woods. Typically small settlements occupy the lower valley sides located at bridging points, with few major roads crossing the area.”
- 5.9.32 The Landscape Sensitivity Level ranges from Moderate to High across the range of development types and scales. Of relevance is the High level given to major urban extensions over 5ha and major transportation developments/improvements. The key landscape sensitivities relate to the “integrity of the valley bottom”, the “intrinsic small scale character of the valley”, “field/woodland pattern”, and “visual exposure/experience of some valleysides”.
- District level: Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments**
- 5.9.33 These Landscape Character Assessments (September 2006) were carried out jointly by the respective districts and borough councils, all located within the County of Essex. The aim of the LCA was “to provide a comprehensive Borough/District-wide assessment of landscape character within the Study Area to inform land use planning and land management decisions.” The approach to the LCA was based on Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).
- 5.9.34 The identified CAs were based on those within the Essex LCA, sub-dividing the CAs into smaller areas. A degree of sensitivity of each CA is given, however, due to the “relatively broad-brush analysis undertaken” these sensitivities are not absolute. Therefore, sensitives should be read in conjunction with those previously mentioned within the Essex LCA, which affords a more strategic evaluation.
- 5.9.35 The study area encompasses parts of four Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within three landscape character types (LCTs). Landscape Character Type A: River Valley Landscapes runs through the centre and NE of Stisted Parish. It contains the LCA-A4a Bourne Brook River Valley, a sub-unit of LCA-A4 Colne River Valley, which occupies a small area on the north eastern corner of Stisted Parish. LCA-A9 Blackwater River Valley occupies a central strip through Stisted Parish, accounting for approximately half of the study area. Approximately a third of this landscape character type comes under the sub-unit LCA-A9a Blackwater River Valley Floor, which occupies the lowest-lying land along the River Blackwater. The southern segment of Stisted Parish lies within Landscape Character Type B: Farmland Plateau Landscapes, as LCA-B18 Silver Farmland Plateau. Almost half of Stisted Parish, lying to the north of the study

area, falls within Landscape Character Type F: Wooded Farmland Landscapes, as LCA F2 High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland.

**LCA A4a – Bourne Brook River Valley (part of LCA A4 – Colne River Valley)**

- 5.9.36 Bourne Brook River Valley is located to the north east of the study area. It is part of LCA A4 the Colne River Valley which covers the land north of Stisted Parish and east of Halstead town. Key characteristics of LCA A4a are identified as:
- “Narrow river valley.
  - Bourne Brook is small and meandering.
  - Land use in the valley and up the valley sides comprises large arable fields with low hedgerows and hedgerow trees.”
- 5.9.37 The supporting text notes:
- “This character area encompasses a moderately enclosed, medium scale, shallow river valley with relatively steep valley sides surrounding the narrow meandering River Colne in the centre. Alluvial deposits originating from the river dominate the geology of the area. The fertile composition of the soils and geology has led to a mixed land use of pasture adjacent to the river, arable fields on the gentle well drained slopes of the valley sides and sprawling settlements such as Great Yeldham and Castle Hedingham dominating the valley floor in close proximity to the A1017. Castle Hedingham is a Conservation Area.
  - The fields in this character area are small to medium bound by hedges in mixed condition varying from thick to gappy and fragmented, ditches and fences. Surrounding the settlements are warehouses and barns used for light industry and agriculture. The Colne Valley Steam Railway and Hedingham Castle form key tourist destinations in the area with the railway running parallel to the river. There is also a network of pylons dissecting the landscape. Stimulus from the views is provided by the mixed land use and a number of local vernacular buildings with timber frames, colour wash walls and thatched roofs. There is a dense network of roads dissecting the river valley and bridging the river itself providing access and creating interesting views along the river corridor. The tranquillity of the area varies from moderate to tranquil depending on the proximity of the settlements and the roads.”
- 5.9.38 A key visual characteristic includes hedgerow trees and woodland blocks that frame expansive views across fields.
- 5.9.39 Evidence of Historic Land Use within the area is visible through the irregular pre-18th century fields which greatly vary in size and the enclosure of arable farmland that followed. The settlement pattern follows the stretch of river, with scattered farmsteads and smaller villages spread out. Predominantly on the valley sides lies Ancient Woodland.
- 5.9.40 Key planning and land management issues that may be relevant include:
- Potential expansion of development onto valley sides, which would impact the rural skyline.
  - Further intensification of agricultural practices could lead to further decline in the quality of field boundaries.
  - Visual intrusions into the landscape including large individual buildings and utilities development.

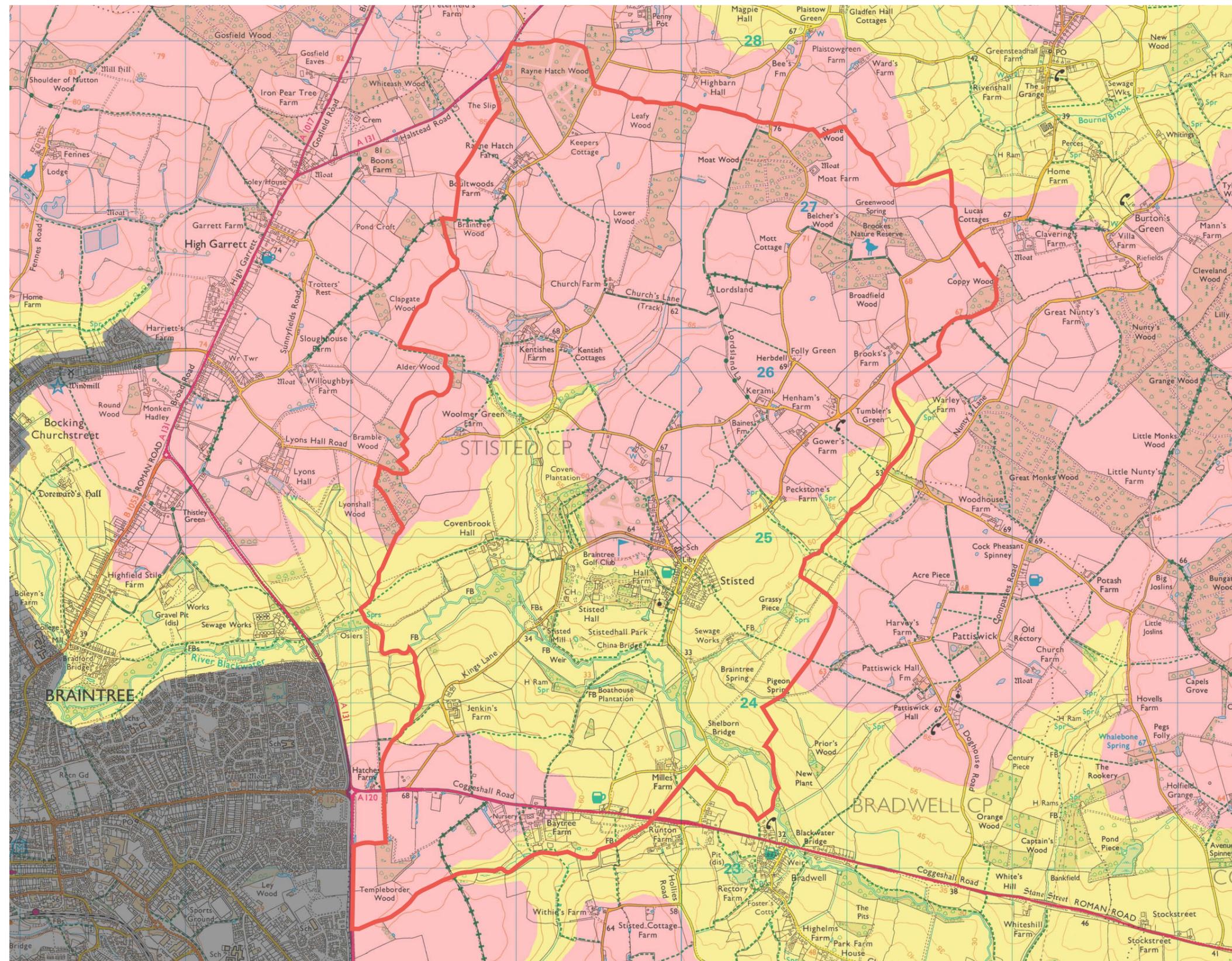
- 5.9.41 Sensitivities to change within this LCA relate to the “sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements”, such as dense hedgerows, native vernacular buildings and pastureland on the riverside. The “skyline of the valley slopes” would also be affected by development which, due to the nature of expansive views across the valley, could be visible from neighbouring Landscape Character Areas. These landscape elements, along with the presence of several valuable wildlife habitats, results in this Landscape Character Area having a “relatively high sensitivity to change”.
- 5.9.42 The following Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines are also relevant:
- “Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings on the open arable landscape;
  - Ensure that any new development is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles;
  - Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.”
- 5.9.43 The land management guidelines suggested include:
- “Develop strategies to reduce potential for pollution in ditches and streams bounding the fields;
  - Conserve and enhance the existing field boundary pattern, and strengthen where appropriate to local landscape character through planting native species such as hawthorn and new hedgerow trees;
  - Conserve and enhance areas of seminatural woodland as important landscape and nature conservation features;
  - Conserve and enhance the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character;
  - Conserve and promote the use of building materials in keeping with local vernacular landscape character area.”
- A9 Blackwater River Valley & A9a Blackwater River Valley Floor**
- 5.9.44 The Blackwater River Valley occupies the central part of Stisted Parish through which the River Blackwater runs. It follows the linear curved route of the River Blackwater, extending eastwards from Braintree towards Coggeshall, before reaching southwards to Wickham Bishops. Running centrally through this is Sub-Unit A9a Blackwater River Valley Floor.
- 5.9.45 Key Characteristics of LCA A9 Blackwater River Valley include:
- “Shallow valley;
  - The valley sides slope gently up from the valley floor;
  - Predominantly arable farmland on the valley slopes.
  - Overall strong sense of place and tranquillity away from the settlements of Braintree, Witham and Maldon and the A120, A12 and the railway line.”
- 5.9.46 Key Characteristics of Sub-Unit A9a Blackwater River Valley Floor include:
- “Mixture of arable and pastoral on the valley floor.
  - The River Blackwater Valley floor north of the A120 is narrow.
- 5.9.47 The supporting text notes:
- “The Upper Blackwater near Braintree is located in a relatively narrow valley with slopes that start gently at the top and get steeper the further into the valley to form a typical V-shape river valley centred on the river. There are areas of woodland located on valley slopes of the upper valley. As the river meanders down the valley, the valley floor becomes more wooded especially south of Coggeshall...
  - Throughout the valley the hedgerows delineating field boundaries are in mixed condition with some well trimmed hedges and others that are more scrubby and fragmented with scattered hedgerow trees...
  - On the valley slopes surrounding the river there are isolated farmsteads that are occasionally moated and small villages. The villages tend to be linear centered on the roads. All the settlements are well screened by deciduous trees. Interest is added to the landscape through the presence of a number of halls and large dwellings made from brick with a timber frame. The river valley has a strong sense of character and place with tranquil areas located along the narrow rural lanes away from the key settlements and busy roads.”
- 5.9.48 Evidence of Historic Land Use is shown by irregular and co-axial pre-18th Century fields, with moderate boundary loss from since the 1950s. Former enclosed meadow can be found at the valley bottom. Villages, farmsteads, hall/church grounds, moats and manors are scattered throughout.
- 5.9.49 Key Planning and Land Management Issues include:
- “Potential for pollution of the ditches and the River Blackwater from fertiliser and pesticide runoff from the surrounding agricultural fields.
  - Potential for rubbish being thrown from car windows along the busy roads especially the A12.
  - Potential for erection of new farm buildings and houses within the open landscape, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.
  - Increasing traffic on minor roads including large lorries and HGVs.
  - Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.”
- 5.9.50 Sensitivities to Change within the LCA includes the valley skyline, as development on the sloping land may be visible across the valley from neighbouring character areas. The range of important wildlife habitats, which include “distinctive linear poplar and willow plantations” along rivers, unimproved grassland, semi-natural woodland and wetland are all sensitive to changes in landscape management. Overall this LCA has a “relatively high sensitivity to change”.

5.9.51	<p>Suggested Landscape Planning Guidelines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Manage the traffic flows along the minor roads especially those not suitable for HGVs and lorries due to narrow bridges.</i></li> <li>• <i>Ensure that new built development is in keeping landscape character.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.”</i></li> </ul>	5.9.56	<p>In terms of historic land use, it is noted that LCA B18 is dominated by “Pre-18th century irregular fields probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, and pre-18th century coaxial fields also of probable medieval origin.” The scattered historic settlement pattern includes villages, hall/church sites, moats, farmsteads and manors.</p>
5.9.52	<p>Suggested Land Management Guidelines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges and ditches within the character area.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which area in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.</i></li> <li>• <i>Manage the roadside flytipping and rubbish thrown from cars that lands in the road verges.”</i></li> </ul> <p><b>B18 Silver End Farmland Plateau</b></p>	5.9.57	<p>Relevant planning and land management issues are noted as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Potential for pollution of the ditches and streams from fertiliser and pesticide runoff from agricultural fields.</i></li> <li>• <i>Potential for erection of new farm buildings and residential dwellings on the edge of the settlements in the open farmland, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.</i></li> <li>• <i>Potential further decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.”</i></li> </ul>
5.9.53	<p>The Silver End Farmland Plateau overs the southern portion of the Stisted Parish. Key characteristics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Gently undulating farmland.</i></li> <li>• <i>Irregular predominantly large arable fields marked by sinuous hedgerows.</i></li> <li>• <i>Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape.</i></li> <li>• <i>Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small villages.</i></li> <li>• <i>Network of narrow winding lanes.</i></li> <li>• <i>Mostly tranquil character away from the major roads.”</i></li> </ul>	5.9.58	<p>Sensitivities to Change within the LCA are moderate to high and relate to its sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Many small woods and copses that provide structure and plantations of small woodlands, sensitive to changes in land management.</i></li> <li>• <i>The comprehensive network of quiet rural lanes and byways, which cross the landscape, sensitive to potential increased traffic flow, associated with new development.</i></li> <li>• <i>“The open nature of the skyline of several areas of the plateau is visually sensitive, with new development potentially visible within expansive views across the plateau.</i></li> <li>• <i>There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a dispersed historic settlement pattern of small villages.</i></li> <li>• <i>There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 15 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, hedgerow and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management.”</i></li> </ul>
5.9.54	<p>The supporting text mentions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The irregular medium to large fields are predominantly arable with hedges and hedgerow trees forming field boundaries. The area is generally open allowing long distance views. However, there are a number of plantations of small woodlands within the landscape, which also define the edges to fields in open farmland areas. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small isolated farmsteads and villages along the narrow winding roads that form a comprehensive network across the area. The buildings in the area are predominantly agricultural or residential. Some of the buildings are in the local vernacular style with colour wash walls and thatched roofs...</i></li> <li>• <i>Away from the main roads that lie adjacent to the character area and the sand and gravel pit most of the area is tranquil.”</i></li> </ul>	5.9.59	<p>Landscape planning guidelines are suggested for LCA B18. Relevant to new built development are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Ensure that new build is in keeping with landscape character.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of settlements.</i></li> <li>• <i>Maintain characteristic open views across the farmland.</i></li> <li>• <i>Ensure any new development within the farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.”</i></li> </ul>
5.9.55	<p>Visual Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The views are generally open or panoramic depending on the density and location of trees within the view.”</i></li> </ul>	5.9.60	<p>Land management guidelines for LCA B18 are suggested as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern, and strengthen through planting where appropriate to local landscape character.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve and manage areas of semi-natural woodland as important historic, landscape and nature conservation features.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve and manage the ecological structure of hedges within the character area.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular/landscape character.”</i></li> </ul>

**F2 High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland**

- 5.9.61 The High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland covers the northern portion of Stisted Parish. Key characteristics include:
- *“Flat to gently undulating landform.*
  - *Strong pattern of large and small woods, including distinctive ancient lime woods.*
  - *Regular medium to large arable fields, bounded by low well trimmed thick hedgerows and some mature hedgerow trees.*
  - *Open to enclosed character depending on density of woodlands.*
  - *Many small farmsteads and occasional villages.*
  - *Several Halls and estates.”*
- 5.9.62 The supporting text includes:
- *“High Garrett/Markshall Wooded Farmland is a gentle and well wooded landscape between the valleys of the River Colne and River Blackwater, north of Braintree. Medium to large arable and pastoral fields are set within a mostly strong structure of woodland blocks and low well trimmed hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees giving in places a strong sense of enclosure. However, occasional open views across farmland are possible where hedgerows and woodland permit.*
  - *The settlement pattern is particularly characterised by scattered farmstead and large Halls with their associated estates. Variety and interest is provided by the presence of a number of cottages with flint clad walls and large red brick halls such as Highbarn Hall and Markshall. In the east of the area the land use becomes more varied with a private airstrip, golf course, large industrial estate and arboretum. Away from the edge of Braintree there is an overall sense of tranquillity throughout the wooded farmland, with an intricate network of quiet, rural lanes and public rights of way winding through the landscape.”*
- 5.9.63 Visual Characteristics include:
- *“The views tend to be framed by the hedges and woodland creating a mixture of enclosed and open views.”*
  - *In terms of historic land use, it is noted that LCA F2 is “dominated by a belt of ancient woods running along the top the ridge, these include Markshall Woods, Gosfield Wood and Parkhall Wood. The field pattern is predominately pre-18th century irregular fields, probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older, with some enclosed meadow along the rivers”.*
  - The historic settlement pattern also includes landscaped parks.
- 5.9.64 Relevant planning and land management issues are noted as:
- *“Potential for pollution of the streams and ditches from fertiliser and pesticide runoff from agricultural fields.*
  - *Potential for new buildings within the farmland, which would be conspicuous on the skyline.*
  - *Increasing traffic on minor roads, especially during busy tourist periods.*
  - *Potential decline in condition of field boundaries through further agricultural intensification.”*
- 5.9.65 Sensitivities to Change within the LCA are relatively high and relate to its sensitive key characteristics and landscape elements which include:
- *“The strong structure of woodland blocks and low, well-trimmed hedgerows.*
  - *“The overall sense of tranquility within the character area is also sensitive to change and potential new development, or increases in traffic flow associated with such development.”*
  - *“Open views to wooded horizons (where gained) are sensitive to potential new development, which may interrupt or block such views.”*
  - *“There is a strong sense of historic integrity, resulting from a series of large landscaped parks (including Marks Hall Park, with possible medieval origins), a belt of ancient woodlands (including Markshall Woods, Gosfield Wood and Parkhall Wood) situated along the top of the ridge and patches of enclosed meadow within the valley floors.”*
  - *There are also several important wildlife habitats within the area (including 22 sites of importance for nature conservation, comprising ancient woodland, unimproved grassland, species-rich hedgerows and wetland habitats) which are sensitive to changes in land management.”*
- 5.9.66 Relevant landscape planning guidelines suggested for LCA F2 include:
- *“Consider the visual impact of new residential development and farm buildings upon the wooded farmland.*
  - *Ensure any new development within the wooded farmland is small-scale, responding to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles.*
  - *Develop strategies to manage increase in traffic during peak tourist periods.”*
  - Land management guidelines for LCA F2 are suggested as:
  - *“Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate.*
  - *Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.*
  - *Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.*
  - *Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular landscape character.”*
  - *Develop strategies to manage increase in traffic during peak tourist periods.”*
- 5.9.67 Land management guidelines for LCA F2 are suggested as:
- *“Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern and strengthen through planting where appropriate.*
  - *Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important historical, landscape and nature conservation features.*
  - *Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedges within the character area.*
  - *Conserve and promote the use of building materials, which are in keeping with local vernacular landscape character.”*

Figure 13  
Existing National and Regional Landscape Character Areas



Key

 Study Area

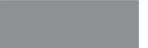
National Level

National Character Areas as defined by Natural England (2014)

The whole Site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland.

Regional Level

Landscape Character Typology for the East of England (2010)

 Urban

 Wooded Plateau Farmlands

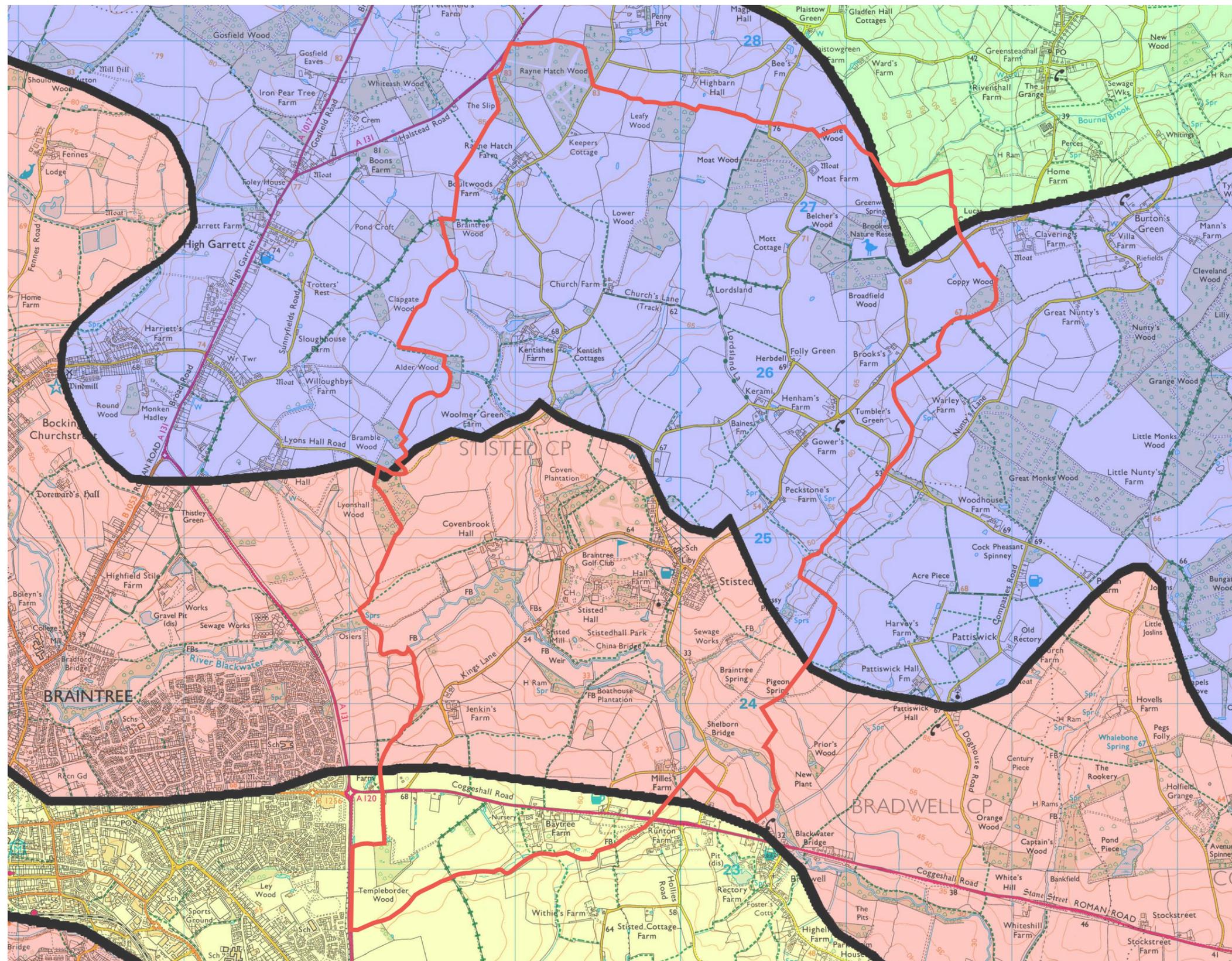
 Valley Settled Farmlands



Scale: 1:25,000 @ A3

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Figure 14  
Existing County Landscape Character Areas



Key

 Study Area

County Level

Landscape Character Areas as identified in the Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2002)

Type B - Glacial Till Plateau

-  B1 - Central Essex Farmland
-  B4 - Gosfield Wooded Farmland

Type C - River Valley Landscapes

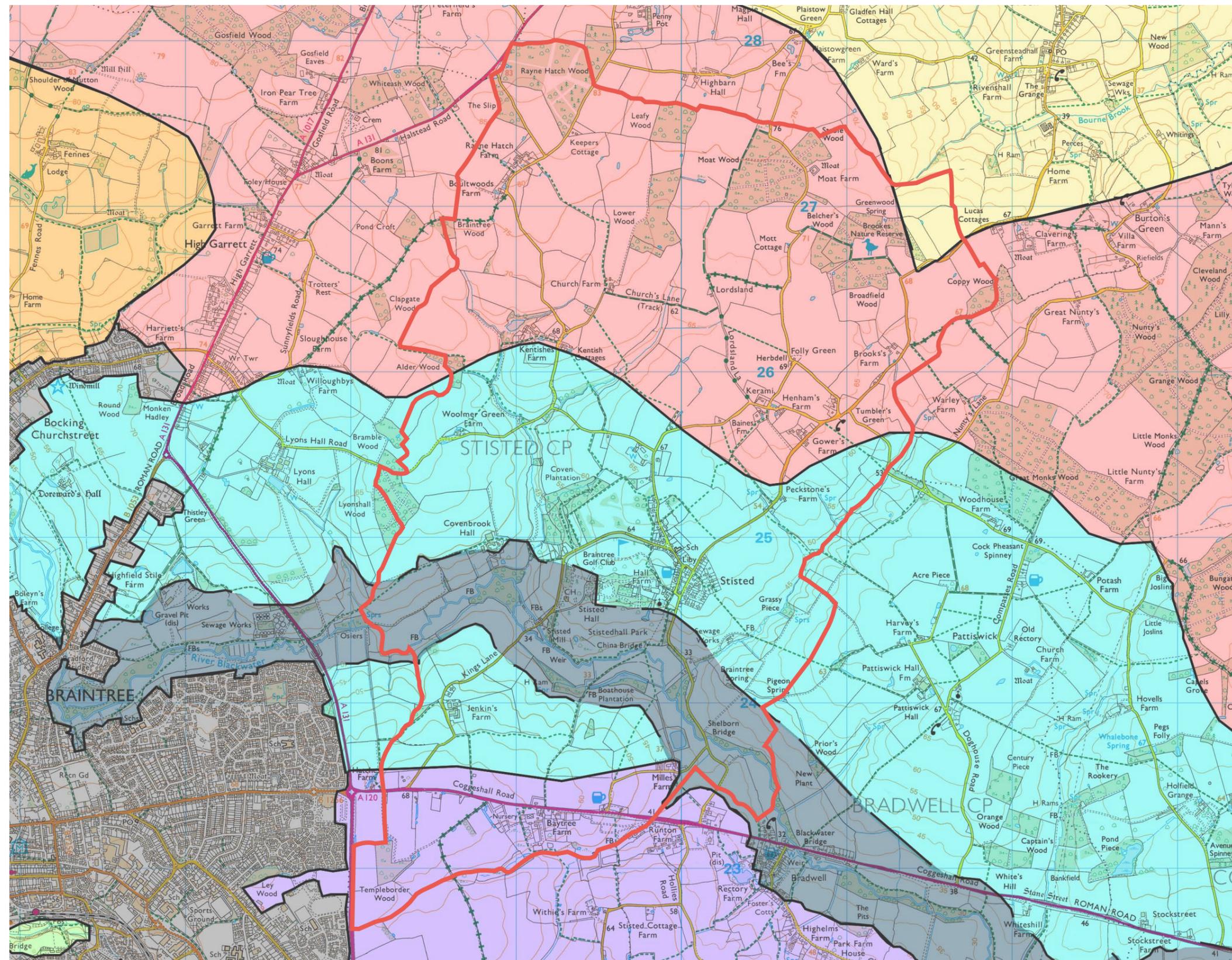
-  C6 - Blackwater and Brain Valley
-  C7 - Colne Valley



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Figure 15  
Existing District Landscape Character Areas



**Key**

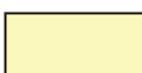
 Study Area

**District Level**

Braintree District Landscape Character Assessment (2006)

 Urban area

**Type A - River Valley Landscapes**

 A4a - Bourne Brook River Valley

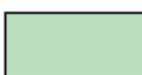
 A5 - Pant River Valley

 A9 - Blackwater River Valley

 A9a - Blackwater River Valley Floor

 A10 - Brain River Valley

**Type B - Farmland Plateau Landscapes**

 B16 - Felsted Farmland Plateau

 B18 - Silver End Farmland Plateau

**Type F - Wooded Farmland Landscapes**

 F2 - High Garrett / Marshall Wooded Farmland



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## 6. VISUAL CONTEXT

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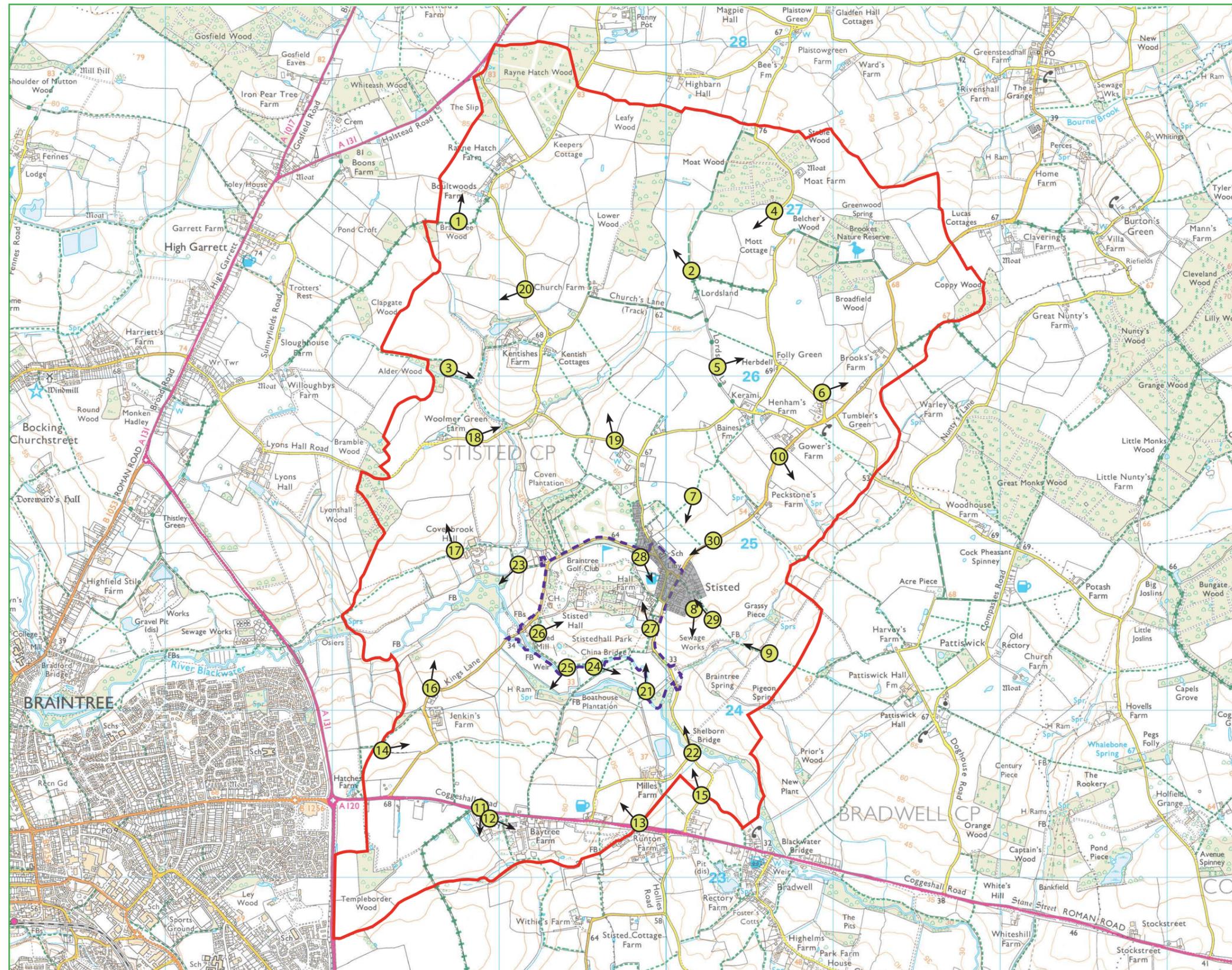
### 6.1 General visual amenity

- 6.1.1 Views of the landscape within Stisted Parish are from a mixture of rural country roads and from footpaths along the boundaries of arable fields and woodland blocks, providing contrasting open and framed views. Views are generally a mixture of expansive arable farmland contained by boundary vegetation and/or woodland blocks; panoramic views across the valley of the River Blackwater towards the neighboring parishes of Cressing and Bradwell; and more enclosed, channeled views within the valley of the River Blackwater where topography and vegetation restrict views. Wooded horizons are a common feature of this landscape.
- 6.1.2 The landscape contributes to the distinctive character and sense of place of Stisted, providing a valuable rural setting to the Stisted village and to Stisted Conservation Area (CA). The woodland blocks, in particular the ancient woodlands to the north of the parish, and scattered farmsteads are a feature of many views providing a varied skyline.
- 6.1.3 There is an extensive network of footpaths and ancient lanes often lined with hedgerow trees restricting views to the landscape while footpaths often cross arable fields where fairly open views are contained by woodland blocks on the skyline.
- 6.1.4 The parish church is set amongst trees on the edge of the village parcel and is not a prominent feature of the landscape. Views to the church are limited to Water Lane, The Street and Stisted FP111\_19 on the south-eastern edge of the village. There are also views from the higher land along the A120. The visual contribution of the surrounding landscape to the church in Stisted is notably greater in views from the east in which it has a wooded backdrop.
- 6.1.5 To the south of the parish alongside the A120, the landscape is less rural and largely influenced by the urban fringe. Views from the A120 and A131 main roads are restricted by a combination of travel speed and roadside vegetation, as well as some residential buildings along the A120.
- 6.1.6 To the south the topography falls gently towards the River Blackwater. Views across the valley are afforded from higher ground along the A120 and from footpaths north of Stisted Village. A staggered row of ancient woodlands on the ridge line to the north of the Parish are visible in many views from the southern part of the study area. The valley slopes are predominantly arable allowing open views across the valley while areas of semi natural woodland along the brook provide channeled and filtered views from within the valley to the surrounding landscape.
- 6.1.7 Two tributaries of the River Blackwater which run through Stisted Parish form attractive shallow valleys that drain southwards. The combination of topography and vegetation provides an intimate character. Approximately 1km north and south of Stisted Village, the lack of woodland blocks due to the enlarging of fields for more intensive 20th Century agriculture has resulted in expansive panoramic views across the vale. A number of footpaths exploit the opportunity for views.
- 6.1.8 To the north west, the land rises to the relatively flat plateau where gaps in ancient woodland blocks may be visible from Halstead Road and nearby footpaths. The linear settlement of Stisted contrasts with the surrounding nucleated hamlets and clusters of farm buildings.

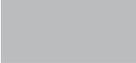
## 6.2 Visual analysis

- 6.2.1 The visual context of the landscape within Stisted has been analysed and a number of key views are noted on Figure 16 on p43. These views have been chosen to represent the visual character of the landscape. Views are all from roads and Public Rights of Way.
- 6.2.2 Views are divided into the following groups and described below:
- Views within and from the Wooded Farmland Playeau to the North
  - Views within and across Plateau and Sloping Farmland to the East
  - View within and across Baytree Farmland and Southern Valley Slope
  - Views within and across Sloping Farmland to the West
  - Views within the River Blackwater Valley Floor
  - Views towards and within the Urban area of Stisted

Figure 16  
Views and Photograph Locations



**Legend**

-  Stisted Parish Boundary
-  Village parcel
-  Stisted Conservation Area
-  Viewpoint location



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**6.3 Views within and from the Wooded Farmland Plateau to the North**

- 6.3.1 Within the northern part of the project area of Stisted Parish, glimpsed views of the surrounding countryside are possible from Rayne Hatch (road), Folly Green (road) and Stisted Road, where a combination of travel speed and roadside vegetation restrict the general appreciation of the landscape. Views southwards across the valley are greater appreciated from the range of Public Rights of Way that link various farmsteads amongst the scattered ancient woodland blocks, as well as from Lordsland Lane, a protected lane.
- 6.3.2 The roads are lined by mature hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees restricting views into the countryside. Gaps in the hedgerows and field entrances allow fleeting views to large arable fields.
- 6.3.3 Outside of the village of Stisted, settlement is limited. Farm holdings at Rayne Hatch Farm, Church Farm and Moat Farm are surrounded by vegetation contributing to the rural character.
- 6.3.4 The landscape gradually slopes downwards towards the south where the River Blackwater stretches across the centre of the Parish. To the north east of the Parish, the land plateaus,

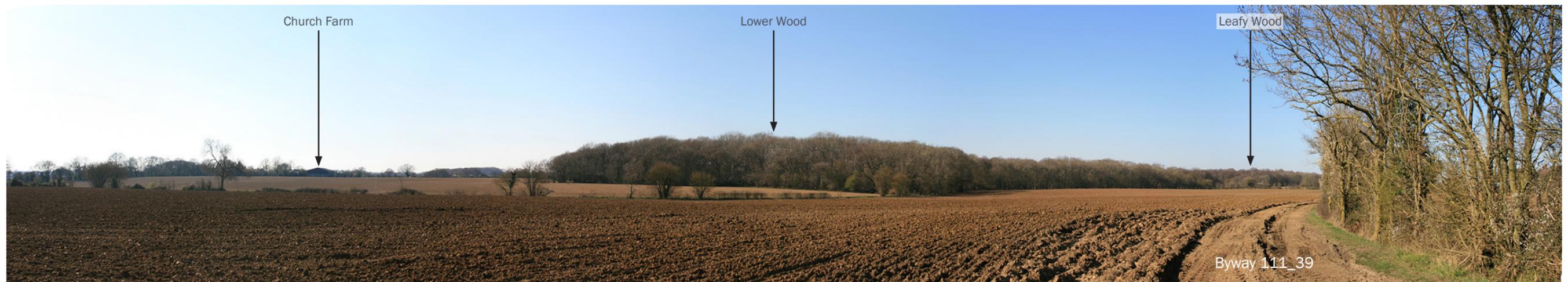
with The Slip and Rayne Hatch Wood on the northern edge of the parish boundary prominent features on high ground, often enclosing views to the north.

- 6.3.5 Views southwards across the gradually sloping arable fields are sometimes framed by mature woodland blocks which break the skyline and provide containment to views. The broadleaved woodlands of The Slip, Rayne Hatch Wood, Leafy Wood, Lower Wood, Moat Wood, Stable Wood, Belcher’s Wood and Broadfield Wood are scattered across the northern part of Stisted Parish, containing transport routes, arable fields and farmsteads.

View 1 - From Footpath 111\_2 looking north.



View 2 - From Bridleway 111\_39 looking north west.



View 3 - From Footpath 111\_34 looking south east.



View 4 - From unnamed road, south of Moat Farm, looking south west.



View 5 - From Lordsland Lane, looking north east.

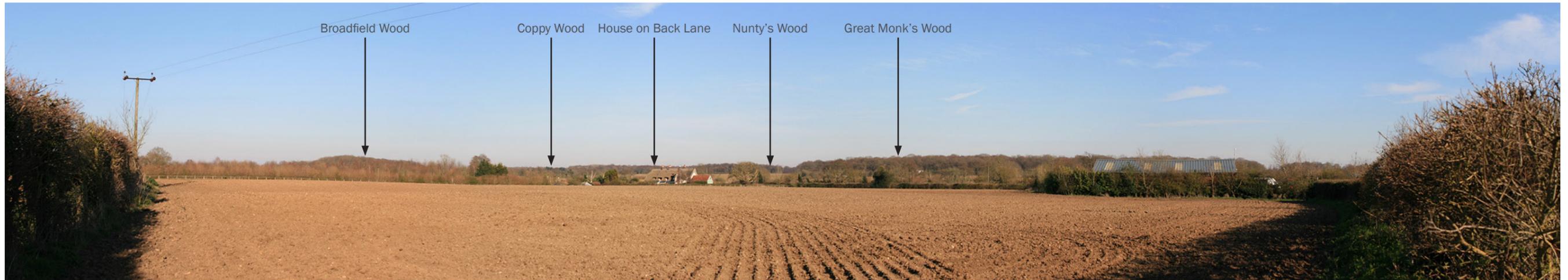


**6.4 Views within and across Plateau and Sloping Farmland to the East**

- 6.4.1 The landform gently falls away from the northern part of the Parish, towards the River Blackwater. To the south of Peckstone’s Farm, on the eastern boundary of the parish, a small tributary of the River Blackwater leads towards the valley floor. Due to the lack of woodland cover on the slopes, expansive views are afforded from higher parts of the valley slopes to the north. The skyline is only occasionally interrupted by the odd mature tree along a hedgerow field boundary or the sinuous strip riparian woodland that follows the tributary.
- 6.4.2 A network of footpaths guide walkers into Stisted Village from surrounding farmsteads as well as the village of Pattiswick. Springs associated with the River Blackwater including Braintree Spring and Pigeon Spring have dissected the valley slopes to create an undulating landscape.
- 6.4.3 Footpaths follow the boundaries of irregular fields of varying sizes. They are usually a worn track alongside mature field hedgerow, with few or no trees to block the view. It is distant woodland blocks to the north that provide a rural backdrop and contain these long-distance views. Views across the Blackwater Valley to the south are more expansive and open.

- 6.4.4 In views towards Stisted Village from Footpaths 111\_16 and 111\_19 there are fairly close-up views towards the settlement edge. The village occupies lower-lying land just north of the River Blackwater. Due to its elevation, the built form is visible from the higher ground to the north east, against the backdrop of Stisted Hall Park’s mature broadleaf and coniferous woodland.
- 6.4.5 Despite mature back garden vegetation, the rears of some properties along The Street and Sarcel remain prominent. Along with painted white fences along Back Lane, these urban features ensure that the village has a presence on approach.

View 6 - From Tumbler’s Green looking north east towards Brooks’s Farm.



View 7 - From Footpath 111\_13 looking south towards Stisted Village.



View 8 - From Footpath 111\_19 looking south towards the River Blackwater.



View 9 from Footpath 111\_19 looking north west towards Stisted Village.



View 10 from Back Lane south of Gower's Farm, looking south east towards Peckstone's Farm.



**6.5 Views within and across Baytree Farmland and Southern Valley Slope**

6.5.1 Views within the south of Stisted Parish are from Public Rights of Way and rural lanes across open arable farmland. In these views Stisted Village is visible nestled amongst trees associated with Stisted Hall and Coven Plantation, which form a prominent skyline feature. By contrast, the two main roads which lead into Stisted from the south, Kings Lane and Water Lane, are both strongly enclosed by mature roadside vegetation which severely restricts views on approach to the village until you are on the outskirts of the urban area.

6.5.2 Closer to the village, the agricultural landscape provides the setting for the Conservation Area and is largely unspoilt by modern development. The area of Stisted Parish immediately north and south of the A120 main road is significantly less tranquil. This area is influenced by the commercial and residential uses along Coggeshall Road, which contain views to within the immediate vicinity.

6.5.3 The Twin Oaks travellers site along the A120 is just visible from its entrance north west of the Site, and from the north east corner of the Site, as well as from Footpath 111\_25 where views of it are partially covered by mature coniferous trees. Rough grassland surrounds the Twin Oaks travellers' site, with evidence of fly-tipping visible. Cherry Lane Garden Centre to the east is also surrounded by rough grassland, with neglected fences and vegetation that gives it a slightly dishevelled appearance.

6.5.4 Footpaths along the boundaries of arable fields on the southern Blackwater Valley Slopes allow views across the valley bottom towards Stisted Village, which lies on the northern Blackwater Valley Slope. In the south western area of the Parish, many of the field boundaries comprise of mature tree belts as well as native hedgerow, which frame the glimpse views across the valley.

View 11 - From Coggeshall Road (A120) looking south.



View 12 - From track along eastern boundary of Twin Oaks travellers site, looking east towards Cherry Lane Garden Centre.



View 13 - From Footpath 67\_50, looking north west.



View 14 - From Footpath 111\_38, looking north east towards Jenkins Farm.



View 15 - From Footpath 67\_15, looking north west towards Stisted Village.



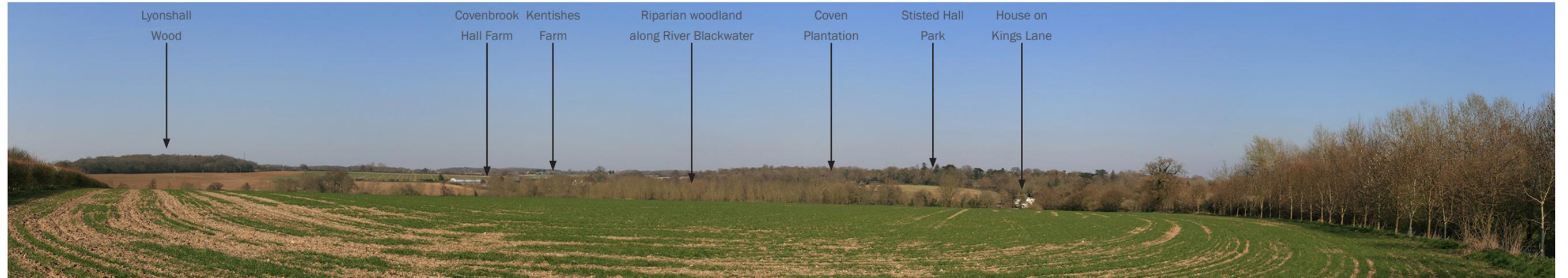
**6.6 Views within and across sloping farmland to the west**

- 6.6.1 In the west of Stisted Parish, Coven Brook runs from north of Kentishes Farm, southwards to join the River Blackwater which runs along the south of Stisted Village. Footpaths 111\_32 and 111\_34 follow this tributary. Riparian vegetation along these routes contains views.
- 6.6.2 Tree cover in this part of the parish is limited to small to medium woodland blocks, and occasional hedgerow tree field boundaries. Footpath 111\_18 in particular affords expansive views across the open countryside and valley to the south and east.
- 6.6.3 Views of Stisted Village are shielded by Stisted Hall Park to the west of the urban area, a designed parkland with tall, mature conifer and broadleaf trees, as well as Coven Plantation which curves around the north western edge of the urban area. The scattered farmsteads are often surrounded by mature woodland belts, sometimes coniferous, which reduce the impact of development and retains the rural character of the valley slopes.
- 6.6.4 The westernmost areas lie within or close to the Braintree Fringe Study Area. The majority of

the A131 stretch of road is lined with dense mature woodland belts which significantly reduce visual impact on the countryside. Roads such as Lyons Hall Road and Kings Lane, which link the A131 to Stisted and other settlements east of Braintree, are narrow and enclosed by roadside vegetation which limits their visual impact. Kings Lane is strongly contained by mature trees and hedgerow which limit views, but occasional gaps in the tall hedgerow lining Lyons Hall Road allow glimpse views towards the ancient woodlands in the north and river valley to the south. Although the speed of drivers using this route will reduce their appreciation of views, the majority of roads within the parish are narrow and sinuous which forces people to drive more slowly.

- 6.6.5 From areas further north, the ancient woodland blocks including Rayne Hatch Wood, Leafy Wood and Lower Wood create a poignant wooded skyline that contains the parish and enhances the rural character of the landscape.

View 16 - From Kings Lane looking north



View 17 - From Footpath 111\_18 looking north west



View 18 - From Lyons Hall Road east of Woolmer Green Farm, looking north east.



View 19 - From an unnamed lane off Rectory Road, looking north west.



View 20 - From an unnamed road north of Kentishes Farm, looking south west.



**6.7 Views within the River Blackwater Valley Floor**

- 6.7.7 The River Blackwater runs from the south east of Stisted Parish to south west. This watercourse, with several small connecting streams and tributaries, is lined with mature riparian vegetation and marks the southern boundary of Stisted Hall Park, now Braintree Golf Course.
- 6.7.7 The combination of riparian woodland along the river, Boathouse Plantation and designed tree belts in Stisted Hall Park sufficiently to contain views to within the immediate vicinity. Due to the low-lying topography and enclosing vegetation, views into the Blackwater Valley Floor are not possible- you have to be *on* the valley floor to experience the rural, tranquil character of this part of the Parish. Hence, views are limited to just a few footpaths and roads.
- 6.7.7 Footpath 111\_45 follows the route of the river as it skirts around the southern boundary of the parkland. From this footpath, views are possible northwards into designed, cultural Stisted Hall Park, and south across the more rural grassland/wetland. The Blackwater valley floor also contains Footpaths 111\_22 and 111\_23, which transect streams connecting to

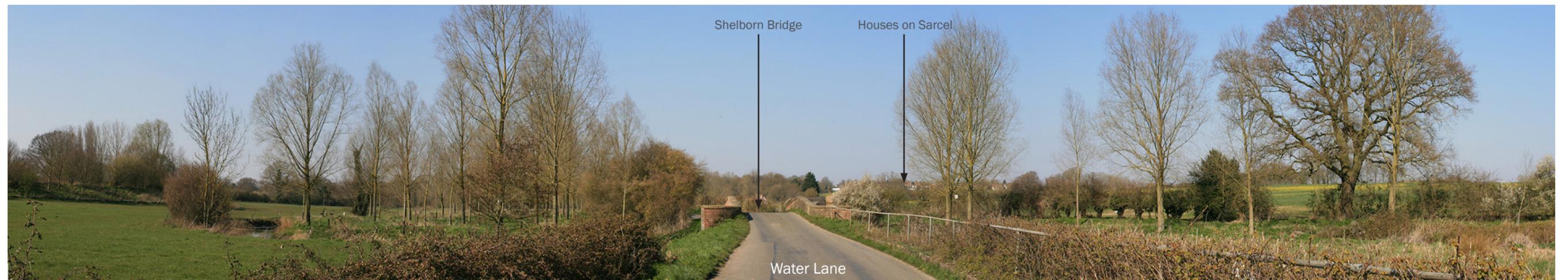
the River Blackwater. From the lower slopes of the Blackwater Valley, views are possible northwards towards All Saints Church and houses along Sarcel to the east of the village. Footpath 111\_18 offers enclosed views along Coven Brook, a tributary of the River Blackwater, across gently undulating areas of wetland.

- 6.7.7 Kings Lane and Water Lane both pass over the river as the main routes into Stisted from the south west and south east respectively. Both roads are narrow and require gentle bridges which have low walls to allow views over and into the surrounding valley floor. Both bridges use walls of brick with traditional granite cappings as the gateways into the principle urban area with the parish. The bridge at Kings Lane is very intimately enclosed by dense riparian woodland either side of the river bed. Views of the Grade II-Listed Stisted Mill to the north are framed by mature broadleaf trees. The nearby sluice and overflow are shielded by tall willow trees, but there is still a strong historic presence that welcomes drivers into Stisted. Shelborn Bridge along Water Lane, however, lacks in trees to the south of the river, affording expansive views across the wetland and fields to the south.

View 21 - From Footpath 111\_23 looking north towards Stisted Village.



View 22 - From Water Lane just before Shelborn Bridge, looking north towards Stisted Village.



View 23 - From Footpath 111\_18 looking south west.



View 24 - From Footpath 111\_45 looking south east.



View 25 - From Footpath 111\_45 looking south west.



**6.8 Views towards and within the urban area of Stisted**

6.8.1 The Braintree Local Plan designates a Conservation Area for Stisted which contains the Grade II\* Listed Stisted Hall (now a care home), Stisted Hall Park (now Braintree Golf Course) which contains a number of Grade II Listed features and the Grade II-Listed Stisted Mill, as well as the Grade I Listed Stisted All Saints Parish Church.

6.8.2 The Stisted Village Envelope contains the majority of housing and services within the village, such as Stisted Village Hall and Stisted Church of England Primary Academy. The oldest housing in the village, centred around The Street, is also contained within Stisted Conservation Area. It dates from at least late 19th Century. The post-war era of the mid-20th Century witnessed a national growth in housing which is evident in Stisted. Housing in Stisted Village extended northwards along Kings Lane and Rectory Road, and along Back Lane. The late 20th Century saw Stisted expand significantly, as Sarcel (street) was built protruding east of Back Lane, thrusting modern housing further into the surrounding countryside.

6.8.3 The age differences between the various parts of Stisted Village are evident through building design. The older buildings within the historic core, mostly along The Street, have gabled slate or tiled roofs and painted facades with Tudor-style timber detailing. Many of these buildings are 1.5 or 2.5 storey. Streets are narrow and some, such as The Street, are lined with stone walls characteristic of rural settlements.

6.8.4 Views towards the urban area from the east show the housing along Sarcel extending into the countryside, and the backdrop of coniferous and broadleaf woodland lying within the designed parkland surrounding Stisted Hall. Its development into Braintree Golf Course saw the removal of some periodic features of the designed gardens around Stisted Hall, but some gateposts, remnants of walled gardens and the Icehouse still remain.

6.8.5 The tower of Stisted All Saints Parish Church may feature a rather short, broad spire, but this is still present in many views across the valley towards the village.

View 16 - From Footpath 111\_45, looking north east towards Stisted Hall.



View 17 - From Footpath 111\_22 looking north west towards All Saints Parish Church.



View 18 - From Footpath 111\_22, looking into the playing field north east of Stisted Hall Park / Braintree Golf Course.



View 19 - From Footpath 111\_19, looking north west towards Stisted Village.

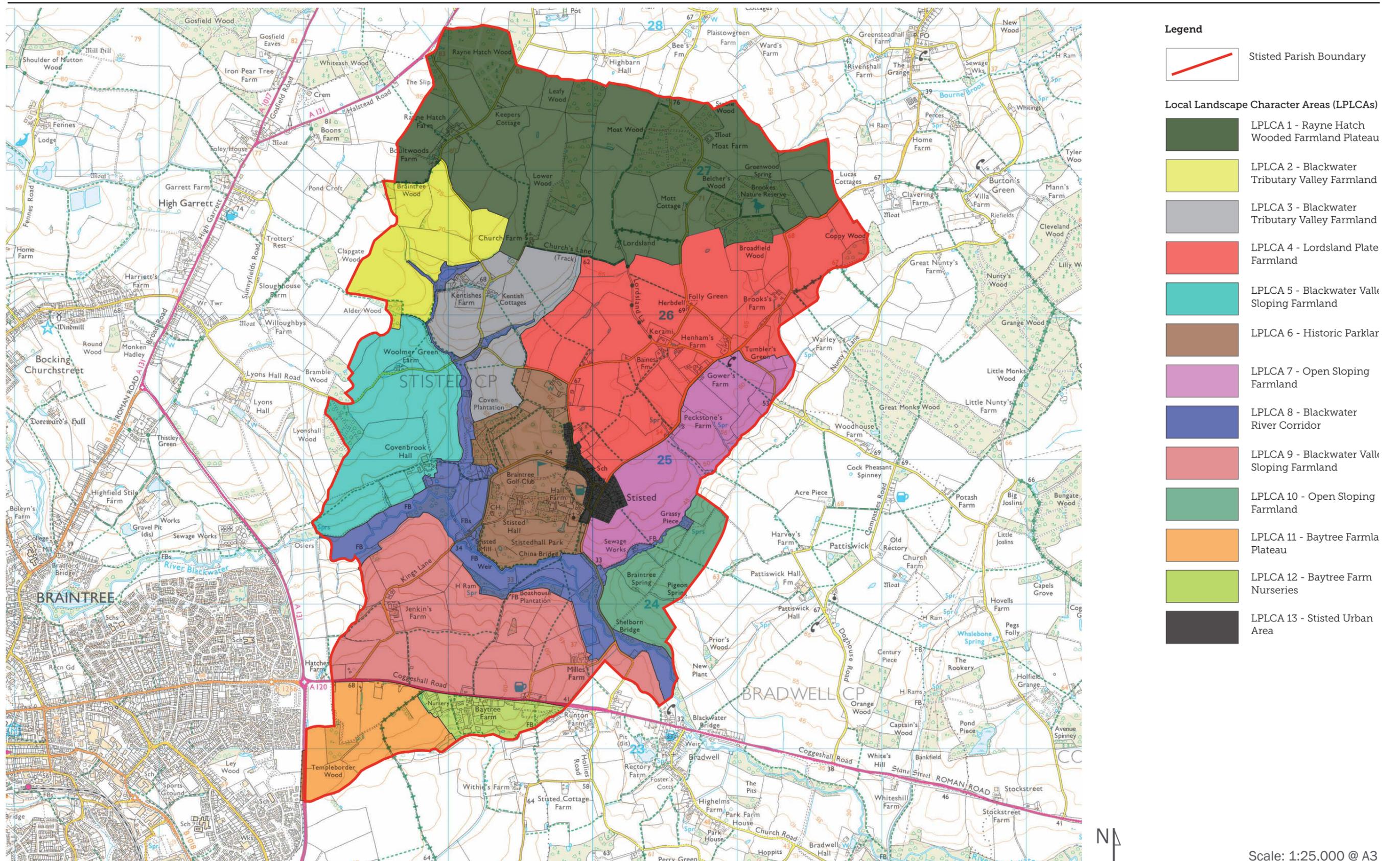


View 20 - From Back Lane, looking south west towards Stisted Village.



Figure 17

Local Parish Landscape Character Areas



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**7. IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL PARISH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS (LPLCAS)**

**7.1 Identification of LPLCAs**

7.1.1 A combination of landscape baseline desktop study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation (Section 3.2 ‘Information sources’ above refers) was used to divide the landscape of Stisted into 13. broad parcels of land with common characteristics, hereafter referred to as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs).

7.1.2 The parcels were defined initially by desktop research, and then adjusted and refined subsequently in the light of findings in the field and through consultation, as necessary. Analysis is typically at the field level grain/scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.

**7.2 Arrangement of LPLCAs**

7.2.1 **Figure 17 - Local Parish Landscape Character Areas** (LPLCAs) depicts the arrangement of the various Landscape Character Areas at a scale of 1:25,000.

7.2.2 It should be noted that following initial research and fieldwork, it was decided to omit the area within the Stisted Village Parcel from the Landscape Character Assessment for the following reasons:

- Stisted is a nucleated village with a strong boundary defined by both The Conservation Area (Policy RLP 95) and its Village Envelope (Policy RLP 2); and
- Views of the village from the north, west and south are of a predominantly wooded area associated with Stisted Hall and Stisted is perceived as a discrete element within the wider landscape.

**7.3 Local Parish Landscape Character Areas**

7.3.1 This study has identified 12 Local Parish landscape Character Areas within Stisted Parish:

LPLCA no 1: Rayne Hatch Wooded Farmland Plateau

LPLCA no 2: Blackwater Tributary Valley Farmland

LPLCA no 3: Blackwater Tributary Valley Farmland

LPLCA no 4: Lordsland Plateau Farmland

LPLCA no 5: Blackwater Valley Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 6: Historic Parkland

LPLCA no 7: Open Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 8: Blackwater River Corridor

LPLCA no 9: Blackwater Valley Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 10: Open Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 11: Baytree Farmland Plateau

LPLCA no 12: Baytree Farm Nurseries

7.3.2 Descriptions of each Local Parish Landscape Character Areas are provided in **Appendix A**.

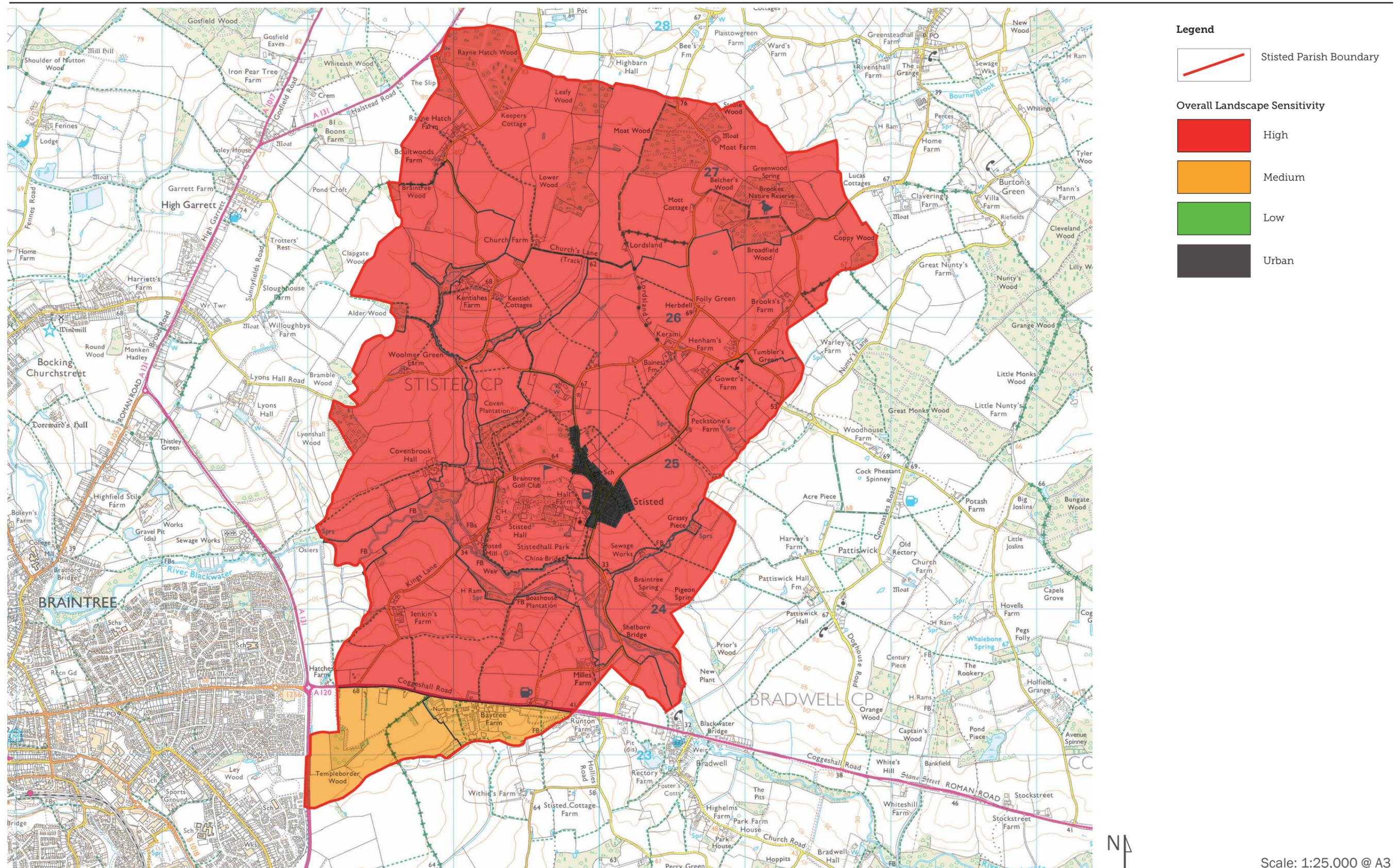
**7.4 LPLCA analysis**

7.4.1 A range of landscape and visual criteria were identified and assessed in order to evaluate both the landscape and visual sensitivity of the landscape, parcel by parcel (refer to Appendix B - proformas). These were combined to provide an overall landscape sensitivity where “Existing Landscape Character Sensitivity + Visual Sensitivity = Overall Landscape Sensitivity” and are defined as high, medium or low (Section 3.6.8 ‘Assessment of Overall Sensitivity’ refers).



The undulating farmland and wooded ancient field boundaries of Stisted Parish from the east

Figure 18  
Landscape Sensitivity



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## 8. LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

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### 8.1 Landscape Sensitivity

8.1.1 The overall landscape sensitivity for each LPLCA is shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A and are depicted in **Figure 18 - Landscape Sensitivity** and summarised below:

#### High overall landscape sensitivity

8.1.2 Evaluation of the landscape and visual factors revealed that the following parcels have a High overall landscape sensitivity:

LPLCA no 1: Rayne Hatch Wooded Farmland Plateau

LPLCA no 2: Blackwater Tributary Valley Farmland

LPLCA no 3: Blackwater Tributary Valley Farmland

LPLCA no 4: Lordsland Plateau Farmland

LPLCA no 5: Blackwater Valley Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 6: Historic Parkland

LPLCA no 7: Open Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 8: Blackwater River Corridor

LPLCA no 9: Blackwater Valley Sloping Farmland

LPLCA no 10: Open Sloping Farmland

#### Medium overall landscape sensitivity

8.1.3 Evaluation of the landscape and visual factors revealed that the following parcels have a Medium overall landscape sensitivity:

LPLCA no 11: Baytree Farmland Plateau

LPLCA no 12: Baytree Farm Nurseries

#### Low overall landscape sensitivity

8.1.4 Evaluation of the landscape and visual factors revealed that there were no parcels within the study area of a Low overall landscape sensitivity.

## 8.2 Landscape strategy objectives

8.2.1 The assessment of Landscape Sensitivity shows that the majority of Stisted Parish has an overall High sensitivity which reflects its rural landscape character and historic integrity. LPLCAs in the southern part of the project area have a Medium overall sensitivity due to the impact of the A120 main road on tranquillity including a poorer landscape condition and weaker time depth.

8.2.2 General landscape strategy objectives which relate to the overall landscape sensitivity of each LPLCA are to conserve, enhance or restore the landscape through effective planning and positive land management measures, as follows:

#### High overall landscape sensitivity

- **Conserve** – seek to protect and enhance the positive landscape features that are essential in contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

#### Medium overall landscape sensitivity

- **Enhance** – seek to improve and enhance the integrity of the landscape, and reinforce its character, by introducing new and/or enhanced elements where distinctive features are absent or landscape characteristics are weak.

#### Low overall landscape sensitivity

- **Restore** – seek opportunities to restore or create new landscapes for multiple benefits of nature conservation, recreation and landscape interests in areas where landscape character has been degraded or lost.
- 

## 8.3 Suggested land management guidelines

8.3.1 The land management suggestions for each Landscape Character Area are based on a consideration of both the inherent characteristics of Landscape and the general concerns regarding the challenges to the condition of those characteristics in the landscape today.

8.3.2 Suggested land management guidelines (LPLCA-specific) are shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A.

#### General land management guidelines – applicable to all areas

- Conserve and manage the ecological structure of woodland, copses and hedgerows within the study area;
  - Conserve and enhance the existing hedgerow pattern where appropriate to local landscape character, and strengthen through planting with hawthorn where gappy and depleted;
  - Conserve and manage the ecological structure of pasture and meadows;
  - Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges; and
  - Use traditional management practices where possible.
  - Establish arable field margins as important nature conservation habitats.
  - Narrow, single track roads could be designated as Quiet Lanes.
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## 9. LANDSCAPE PLANNING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

### 9.1 Background

9.1.1 This chapter is intended to assist the Parish Council in making informed decisions as to whether any future residential development(s) can be appropriately absorbed into the landscape within Stisted Parish, and, if so, where, at what scale and with what associated mitigation measures, to ensure that no unacceptable effects on the landscape result and its special qualities are maintained and, where opportunities exist, enhanced.

9.1.2 Within Stisted Parish there are three specific types of potential development pressure (Figure 19 refers) as follows:

- Limited development, within the defined village envelope of Stisted - Policy RLP 2
- Development within hamlets and previously developed sites such as farm buildings within the countryside. In these areas there is a presumption against development; Policy CS 5 - The Countryside (the area encompasses the whole of Stisted Parish outside of the defined village envelope above); and
- An 865ha (2137 acres) area of arable farmland in Pattiswick, in the parish of Bradwell, has been promoted as a potential site for 'Monks Wood Garden Village'. The proposed development has the potential to deliver around 1500 homes in the initial phase, with an additional 150,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space. The scale of the development has the potential to have a major impact on the rural character and setting of Stisted.

### 9.2 Landscape planning issues

9.2.1 The potential to alleviate the effects of any potential 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 of mitigation was undertaken as part of the

fieldwork, and is based on factors such as scale, enclosure, pattern, type and maturity of vegetation, movement and visibility of each parcel.

9.2.2 Specific Landscape planning and management issues for each LPLCA are shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A and are summarised below for the three different potential development pressures identified above:

#### Limited development, within the defined village envelope of Stisted

9.2.3 Consider the visual impact of small scale residential development within the village envelope on:

- views to Stisted Conservation Area, especially from the east where development is more likely.
- the setting of listed buildings within Stisted Conservation Area.
- rural views from public rights of way especially views towards heritage assets such as All Saints Church to the south.

#### Development in hamlets and the countryside

9.2.4 Hamlets and countryside equate to the whole project area outside of the defined village envelope of Stisted. Although there is a presumption against development in hamlets and the countryside there is potential for small scale infill development within hamlets and barn conversions within farmsteads for both residential and commercial purposes. Considerations should include:

- the effect of development on the undeveloped open rural landscape character.
- the visual impact of new residential development upon the farmland plateau and its rural character.
- the potential loss of small pastoral fields associated with farmsteads.
- the setting of listed buildings within the countryside.
- rural views from public rights of way, especially views towards heritage assets such as Stisted All Saints Church.
- the pressure of increased traffic on rural lanes and protected lanes.



The settlement edge of Stisted from Back Lane

### Development at Monks Wood Garden Village

9.2.5 The Monks Wood garden Village is located outside of the study area. It is located within an area of open countryside, where Policy CS5 - The Countryside applies. In these areas there is a presumption against development. Considerations of any development at the Monks Wood Garden Village should consider:

- the effect of development on the undeveloped open rural landscape character of Stisted Parish.
- the visual impact of new residential development upon the farmland plateaus of Stisted Parish and its rural character.
- the setting of listed buildings within the countryside.
- rural views from public rights of way, especially views on the edge of Stisted Village.
- the pressure of increased traffic on rural lanes and protected lanes.

### 9.3 Suggested landscape planning guidelines

9.3.1 Suggested landscape planning guidelines (LPLCA- specific) are shown in the descriptions for each parcel in Appendix A and are summarised below:

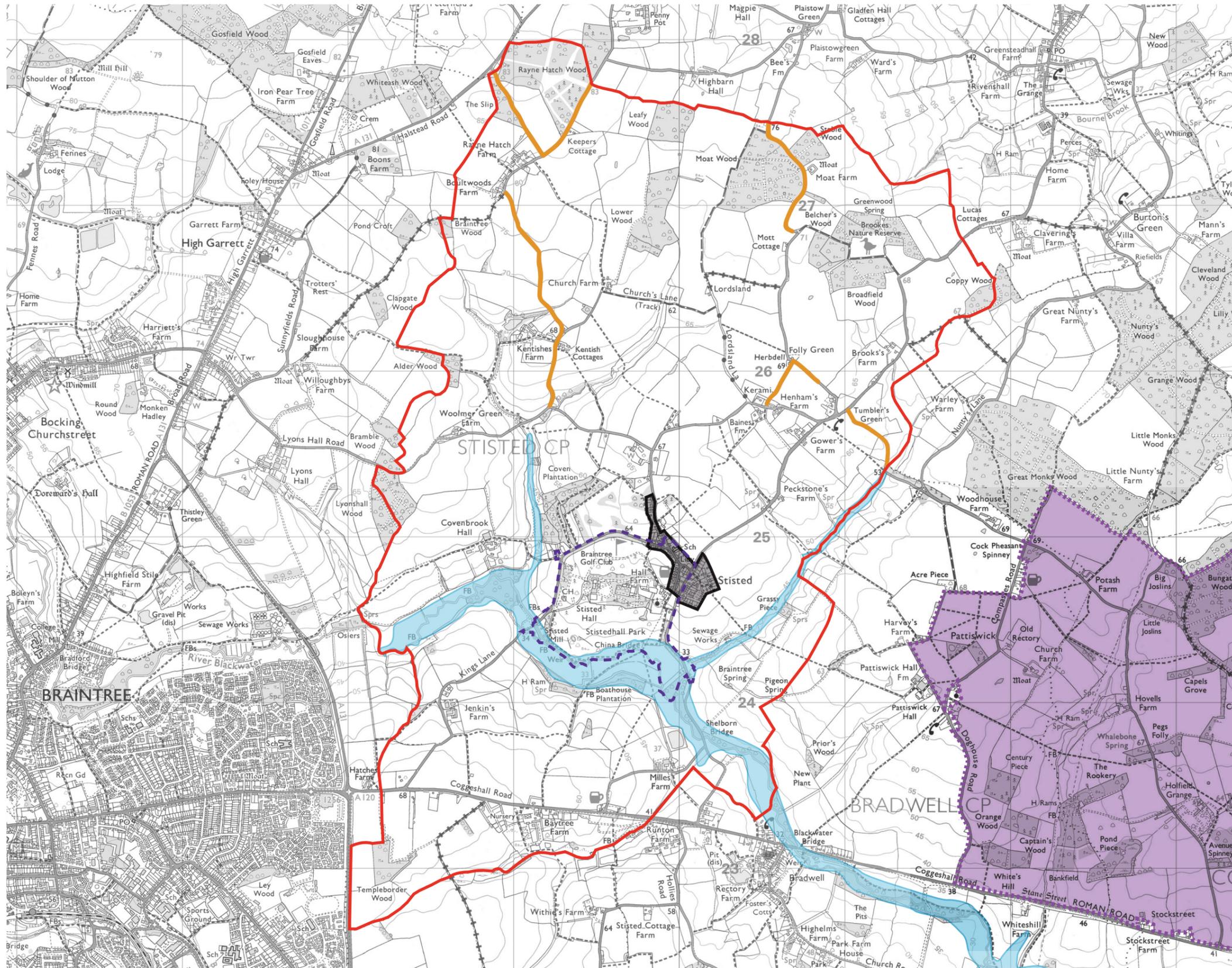
#### General landscape planning guidelines – applicable to all areas

- Conserve and protect the rural and undeveloped character of the landscape within Stisted Parish.
- Conserve the strongly nucleated character of Stisted Village by encouraging new development to take place within the existing settlement boundary where possible.
- Any development on the edge or approaches to the village needs to protect important views to the village and its rural landscape setting.
- Explore possible opportunities to improve some existing visually poor urban edges.
- Provide traditional locally sensitive boundary treatments, to integrate potential development into the local context.

- Protect the traditional dispersed rural settlement pattern.
- Conserve and enhance the historic field patterns and existing hedgerows.
- Protect small pastoral fields, paddocks and meadows associated with peripheral farmsteads.
- Small scale development should be carefully sited in relation to existing farm buildings.
- Consider cumulative effects of developments on landscape character and visual amenity.
- Ensure that new development is sympathetic, complementary and responds to the intrinsic local character of Stisted in terms of its location, scale, density, design layout/settlement pattern and use of traditional materials (for example the use of colour-washed render and pegtiles).
- Consider the vulnerability of the visually prominent valley landscapes to insensitive development.
- Consider the visual impact of new residential development upon the farmland plateau, utilising existing or new native buffer planting as a screen.
- Incorporate green infrastructure that provides opportunities for wildlife, public access and climate change adaptation which screens intrusive urban influence (especially on the periphery of settlements), with the use of substantial and appropriate landscaping, such as native woodland planting, earthworks and green roofs.
- Raise the design quality of new development.



Areas of Potential Development



Key

-  Study Area
-  RLP 2 - Village Envelope
-  Policy CS 5 - The Countryside
-  RLP 86 - River Corridors
-  RLP 87 - Protected Lanes
-  Conservation Area
- Monks Wood Garden Village**
-  Promotion Area



Scale: 1:25,000 @ A3

## 10. CONCLUSION

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10.0.1	Stisted is a Civil Parish situated in the Braintree district of Essex. It lies to the east of Braintree and includes the village of Stisted. Stisted Parish Council is currently working on the production of a Neighbourhood plan.		
10.0.2	Development in Stisted Parish is restricted by Braintree's Core Strategy policy framework with development limited to within the defined village envelope of Stisted, and a general policy against development in the hamlets and the countryside.		
10.0.3	Stisted Parish Council commissioned Liz Lake Associates to undertake a locally based Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and landscape sensitivity assessment, of the landscape of Stisted Parish, which forms the project area for the Neighbourhood Plan. The boundary of the study area is contiguous with the parish boundary and is shown on Figure 1 - Study Area.		
10.0.4	<p>The rural landscape of Stisted Parish generally comprises a valley landscape with gently sloping sides. It is a predominantly agricultural landscape with large, irregular fields bound by hedgerow with hedgerow trees. Mature woodland blocks are scattered throughout the parish and provide a rural backdrop to expansive views across arable countryside and a tranquil setting for Stisted Village and surrounding hamlets. Key characteristics which contribute towards the landscape's special qualities include its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly undeveloped rural character, with some areas of considerable time-depth; historic field patterns, extensive network of lanes and pathways and mature trees and hedgerows which all provide a strong sense of historic continuity, integrity and cultural value;</li> <li>• Visual amenity value, with attractive panoramic views across the countryside as well as more intimate, enclosed views within the valley and woodland blocks. Closer-range views of the edge of Stisted village, Stisted Conservation Area and listed buildings;</li> <li>• Biodiversity value; and</li> <li>• Agricultural value</li> </ul>	10.0.8	A combination of landscape baseline desktop study, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation (Section 3.2 'Information sources' above refers) was used to divide the landscape of Stisted into 13. broad parcels of land with common characteristics, referred to as Local Parish Landscape Character Areas (LPLCAs).
		10.0.9	The parcels were defined initially by desktop research, and then adjusted and refined subsequently in the light of findings in the field and through consultation, as necessary. Analysis is typically at the field level grain/scale, with some aggregation of field and landscape units where appropriate.
		10.0.10	<p>This study has identified 12 Local Parish landscape Character Areas within Stisted Parish:</p> <p>LPLCA no 1: Rayne Hatch Wooded Farmland Plateau</p> <p>LPLCA no 2: Blackwater Tributary Valley Farmland</p> <p>LPLCA no 3: Blackwater Tributary Valley Farmland</p> <p>LPLCA no 4: Lordsland Plateau Farmland</p> <p>LPLCA no 5: Blackwater Valley Sloping Farmland</p> <p>LPLCA no 6: Historic Parkland</p> <p>LPLCA no 7: Open Sloping Farmland</p> <p>LPLCA no 8: Blackwater River Corridor</p> <p>LPLCA no 9: Blackwater Valley Sloping Farmland</p> <p>LPLCA no 10: Open Sloping Farmland</p> <p>LPLCA no 11: Baytree Farmland Plateau</p> <p>LPLCA no 12: Baytree Farm Nurseries</p>
10.0.5	The assessment draws on the existing published landscape character assessment for Braintree District Council and on the Braintree Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (see sections below for further detail). Both documents are essential parts of the existing, adopted local planning policy and have therefore been important in the development of this parish based study which seeks, where relevant, to further sub-divide the area into a finer grain of characterisation.	10.0.11	Descriptions of each Local Parish Landscape Character Areas are provided in <b>Appendix A</b> .
10.0.6	This study will provide a clear and concise evaluation of various discrete geographical areas/parcels of land which have a recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the area. The landscape's biodiversity and agricultural values which contribute towards its special qualities will also be identified. These parish level landscape character areas will be analysed to determine their overall sensitivity.		
10.0.7	The results of this assessment are to form part of the evidence base that Stisted Parish Council		



