Norwich to Tilbury National Grid Pylon Project

Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal: Colne Valley

for

Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons

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thelandscapepartnership
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The Landscape Partnership Ltd is a practice of Chartered Landscape Architects, Chartered Ecologists and Chartered Environmentalists, registered with the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment and the Arboricultural Association.

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Introduction

National Grid Electricity Transmission (National Grid) is proposing to build c.184km of new electricity transmission infrastructure in order to reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk, and Tilbury in Essex, as well as to connect new offshore wind generation. The project is known as Norwich to Tilbury.

The Landscape Partnership has been commissioned by Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons action group and Aldham Parish Council to undertake a Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal of the Colne Valley and adjoining landscapes affected by the proposed Norwich to Tilbury project. The appraisal has been prepared to inform the ongoing Examination process and to provide an independent review of landscape and visual sensitivity within the area, together with consideration of whether the circumstances identified in National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) regarding widespread and significant adverse landscape and visual effects may arise.

The Area of Interest for the appraisal extends across the Colne Valley and adjoining plateau landscapes between the Dedham Vale National Landscape and the Roman River valley. It comprises a distinctive and interconnected landscape of river valleys, tributary valleys, rolling farmland, woodland, wetlands, historic settlements, rural lanes and recreational routes, which collectively contribute to a strong sense of place, local distinctiveness and landscape value.

The appraisal draws upon the evidence base presented within National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (N2T LVIA), supplemented by additional desktop research, field survey and professional judgement. It has been undertaken using established landscape sensitivity assessment principles derived from Natural England guidance and GLVIA3, whilst presenting findings in a format that allows comparison with the N2T LVIA.

The review broadly agrees with the N2T LVIA findings regarding the sensitivity of the principal Colne Valley landscapes. However, it also identifies two localised landscape character areas, the Grove Tributary Valley and the Roman River Corridor, that exhibit characteristics materially different from the wider plateau landscapes within which they occur. These areas contain concentrations of ecological, historic, cultural and perceptual features that contribute to elevated landscape sensitivity and are considered capable of experiencing substantial effects from the proposed development.

The appraisal identifies High landscape sensitivity within the Colne River Valley Floor, Colne River Valley Slopes, Grove Tributary Valley and Roman River Corridor. Collectively, these areas form a connected landscape framework extending through the Area of Interest. In line with the NT2 LVIA, the findings of the appraisal indicate that there is the potential for Significant landscape effects to occur across a substantial and continuous section of the route corridor rather than being confined to isolated locations.

Review of the visual assessment similarly indicates the potential for widespread and Significant adverse visual effects affecting a broad range of receptors, including walkers, recreational users, road users and local communities; again in line with the N2T LVIA. Both studies show that the effects

identified are not limited to a small number of representative viewpoints but have the potential to be experienced across extensive parts of the valley landscape and associated public access network.

The appraisal also demonstrates that the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor have been consistently recognised through landscape studies, planning policy documents and green infrastructure strategies as landscapes of particular importance. These landscapes perform strategic functions in relation to ecological connectivity, recreation, heritage, countryside access and local identity.

A comparison with the Stour Valley section of the Norwich to Tilbury project, where undergrounding has been incorporated within the scheme, indicates that landscapes of comparable value occur within both sections of the route. Whilst the Dedham Vale National Landscape designation remains an important distinction, the comparison demonstrates that the Colne Valley contains extensive areas of landscape value and sensitivity that are comparable in several respects to those present within the underground cable section.

EN-5 recognises that, whilst overhead lines remain the starting presumption for electricity transmission infrastructure, consideration may be given to alternatives including undergrounding where there is potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual effects. Importantly, the policy makes clear that such considerations are not confined to nationally designated landscapes and should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Having regard to the identified landscape sensitivity, the concentration of significant landscape and visual effects, the strategic importance of the Colne Valley and Roman River corridors, and the provisions of EN-5, this appraisal concludes that there is a reasonable evidential basis for further consideration of localised undergrounding within this section of the route as a means of reducing landscape and visual effects. The appraisal does not seek to determine whether undergrounding should occur but concludes that the characteristics of the area are such that further examination of this option is justified within the decision-making framework established by EN-5.

The Landscape Partnership, June 2026

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 National Grid Electricity Transmission (National Grid) is proposing to build c.184km of new electricity transmission infrastructure in order to reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk, and Tilbury in Essex. The project is known as Norwich to Tilbury.

1.1.2 National Grid states that the project is required in response to increasing electricity demand and the need to connect new generation capacity, particularly offshore wind, into the national grid. Early route development and consultation work considered a range of corridor options across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.

1.1.3 Norwich to Tilbury comprises a new 400kV electricity transmission connection between Norwich Main Substation and Tilbury Substation, including approximately 159km of new overhead line supported by steel lattice pylons, approximately 25km of underground cabling, six Cable Sealing End compounds, a new East Anglia Connection Node substation, a new Tilbury North substation, works at existing substations and associated construction and access infrastructure, referred to here as the *proposed development*.

1.1.4 Norwich to Tilbury meets the criteria of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008, since it would comprise more that 2km of overhead line. As such, the application for development consent is being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. If consent for the project is awarded, this would be granted in the form of a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government following a public examination of the application. Consultation is an important part of the DCO process.

1.1.5 Following submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application and its acceptance for examination by the Planning Inspectorate, the Norwich to Tilbury project entered the Examination phase on 10th February 2026. The Examination is ongoing and provides an opportunity for interested parties, statutory consultees and other stakeholders to submit evidence and representations to the Examining Authority.

1.1.6 At the time of writing (June 2026), the Examination has progressed to Deadline 5. This deadline includes the submission of responses to the Examining Authority's Second Written Questions (ExQ2), comments on submissions made at Deadline 4, updated application documents and any additional information requested by the Examining Authority.

1.2 Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons

1.2.1 Throughout the development of the proposals, concerns have been raised by groups and individuals regarding the potential effects of the scheme on valued landscapes, countryside character and green infrastructure corridors. One of the organisations expressing such concerns is the Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons action group.

1.2.2 The Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons, which currently has approximately 40,000 supporters, opposes the proposed Norwich to Tilbury overhead line and the limited sections of underground cabling currently proposed by National Grid. The Group advocates consideration of alternative approaches, including an integrated offshore grid, HVDC undergrounding and reinforcement or re-rating of the existing transmission network, which the group considers may reduce environmental and landscape effects associated with the proposed scheme.

1.2.3 Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons has raised concern regarding the potential effects of the proposed overhead transmission lines crossing the landscape of the Colne Valley in north Essex. It has sought to understand whether the landscape is of sufficient sensitivity, and whether the likely adverse landscape and visual impacts may be sufficiently widespread and significant, to support consideration of underground cabling for this section of the route, as has been proposed for other sensitive landscapes including the Dedham Vale National Landscape and the Waveney Valley.

1.3 Planning context for undergrounding within sensitive landscapes

1.3.1 The consideration of undergrounding within sensitive landscapes is reflected within national planning policy for electricity transmission infrastructure. National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) §2.9.21 identifies that overhead lines should be the strong starting presumption for electricity transmission infrastructure, whilst noting that *"this presumption is reversed when proposed developments will cross part of a nationally designated landscape (i.e. National Park, The Broads, or National Landscape)"*. In the latter circumstances, and where harm to the landscape, visual amenity and natural beauty cannot be avoided by re-routing, the strong starting presumption will be to underground the relevant section of the line.

1.3.2 Notwithstanding this, §2.9.24 recognises that cases will arise where: "*though no part of the proposed development crosses a designated landscape, a high potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual impacts along certain sections of its route may result in recommendations to use undergrounding for relevant segments of the line or alternatively consideration of using a route including subsea cabling*".

1.3.3 EN-5 notes that when considering underground options, the Secretary of State must weigh the feasibility, cost, and any harm of the undergrounding against the adverse implications of the overhead line proposal; the cost and feasibility of re-routing overhead lines or mitigation proposals for the relevant line section; and the cost and feasibility of the reconfiguration, rationalisation, and/or use of underground of existing infrastructure [§2.9.25].

1.3.4 They should only grant development consent for underground sections if they are satisfied that *"the benefits accruing from alternative proposal clearly outweigh any extra economic, social, or environmental impacts that it presents, the mitigation hierarchy has been followed, and that any technical obstacles associated with it are surmountable"* [§2.9.26]. In making this judgement, consideration should be given to several financial and environmental factors. Those of relevance to this appraisal include:

- The landscape and visual baseline characteristics of the relevant section of the proposed route, and especially the impact on any high sensitivity visual receptors (as defined in the

Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment[1] (GLVIA3), residential areas, designated landscapes, valued landscapes, designated heritage assets and Heritage Coasts (including impacts on the setting of these designated features and areas).

- The potentially very disruptive effects of undergrounding, including on landscape and visual amenity. The text notes that undergrounding an overhead line would mean digging a trench along the length of the route, and that as such, the works will often be more disruptive – albeit temporarily – to receptors than would an overhead line.

1.3.5 When making decisions, the Secretary of State should be satisfied that the development, so far as is reasonably possible, complies with the Holford and Horlock Rules (see Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons' High-Level Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal) and that all feasible options for mitigation, including *"the rationalisation, reconfiguration, or undergrounding of existing electricity networks infrastructure, have been considered and evaluated appropriately"* [§2.11.3].

1.3.6 EN-5 provides further clarification regarding the decision-making process at §2.11.6:

> *Away from designated landscapes and in locations where there is a high potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual impacts, the Secretary of State should be satisfied that the applicant has provided evidence to support a decision on whether undergrounding is or is not appropriate, having considered this on a case-by-case basis, weighing the considerations in paragraph 2.9.25 above.*

1.4 Commission and objective of the appraisal

1.4.1 The Landscape Partnership has been commissioned by Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons and Aldham Parish Council to carry out a sensitivity appraisal of the Colne Valley landscape. The primary purpose of this appraisal is to consider whether the proposed overhead transmission infrastructure has the potential to give rise to widespread and significant adverse landscape and visual effects within the Colne Valley, such that the considerations set out in EN-5 §§2.9.24 and 2.11.6 may be engaged.

1.4.2 Through reference to the parameters set out in EN-5, the appraisal seeks to provide initial observation as to whether the section of Norwich to Tilbury that crosses the Colne Valley might be a candidate for undergrounding from a landscape and visual perspective. It is recognised that other matters that the Secretary for State will need to consider are beyond the scope of this report.

1.4.3 The appraisal builds on the evidence base provided in the N2T LVIA, supplemented with additional desktop research, field work and local knowledge to summarise the baseline landscape and visual sensitivity of the Area of Interest, including its value and its susceptibility to large-scale overhead electricity transmission infrastructure of the type proposed for the Norwich to Tilbury project, together with a high-level overview of the degree and extent of the likely impact of the development on landscape and visual receptors.

[1] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd Edition, April 2013

1.5 Area of Interest

1.5.1 The appraisal focuses on a section of the Colne Valley and immediate adjoining plateau landscapes, located between the Dedham Vale National Landscape to the north and the Roman River valley to the south. This *Area of Interest* (see Figure 01) extends westwards to the National Rail line and eastwards to the outskirts of Colchester. This landscape is characterised by a distinctive mosaic of river valley scenery, open farmland, wooded slopes, wetlands, narrow rural lanes and historic settlement patterns, creating a landscape of strong rural character, characterised by visual diversity, a richness of landscape pattern and a pronounced sense of time-depth.

1.5.2 The Area of Interest would be directly affected by the Norwich to Tilbury proposals, which would include a Sealing End Compound located between Wormingford and Horkesley and, from this, overhead electricity transmission lines extending southwards across the valley landscape, passing between Fordham, Ford Street and Aldham to the west, and West Bergholt and Eight Ash Green to the east.

1.5.3 The appraisal will consider whether the proposed development has the potential to threaten the intrinsic qualities of the Colne Valley landscape through the introduction of large-scale vertical infrastructure into a predominantly open and rural valley setting. Potential areas of concern include whether the proposed overhead lines and pylons may adversely affect the area's scenic quality, sense of tranquillity, historic landscape character, and long-distance views across the valley and adjoining plateau landscapes. Likewise, whether the scale and industrial appearance of the infrastructure have the potential to diminish the coherence of the valley's distinctive mosaic of farmland, woodland, wetlands and historic settlements, altering its perceived rural character and visual integrity.

1.6 Scope of the appraisal

1.6.1 This Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal builds on previous work undertaken by The Landscape Partnership, including the High-Level Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal of the whole route prepared in July 2024 as part of the Pre-Application Consultation.

1.6.2 The appraisal has had regard to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) prepared for National Grid as part of the Environmental Statement for the Norwich to Tilbury project. Whilst the purpose of this appraisal is not to replicate or replace the LVIA, the methodology, baseline assessment, sensitivity judgements and significance conclusions have been reviewed in order to understand the nature, extent and significance of the landscape and visual effects identified within the Area of Interest. In this report this LVIA is referred to as N2T LVIA (Norwich to Tilbury LVIA).

1.6.3 The appraisal reviews the value of the landscape and visual receptors within the Area of Interest and their susceptibility to change arising from the type of development proposed, before making a judgement regarding the overall sensitivity of each receptor. It then provides a high-level review of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development and commentary on comparisons with other sections of the Norwich to Tilbury project where undergrounding has been adopted or considered. Finally, it considers the implications of these findings in relation to EN-5, including whether there is potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and visual

effects such that consideration of feasible alternatives, including localised undergrounding, may be appropriate.

1.6.4 The findings of the appraisal, including any commentary and advice, will be used by Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons to enable them to compile an informed consultation response.

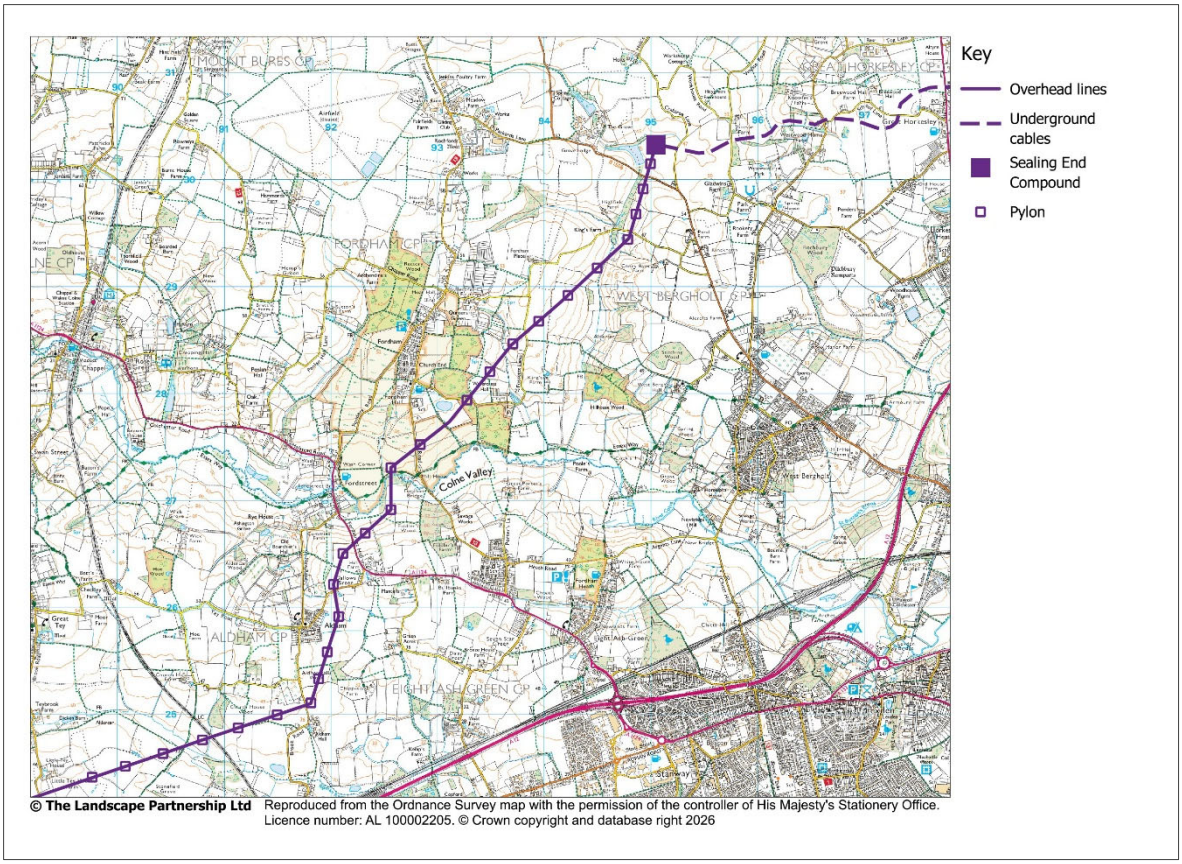

Figure 01: The Area of Interest

1.7 Statement of Competency

1.7.1 The Landscape Partnership has been at the forefront of environmental and landscape planning in the UK for 40 years and is a specialist in undertaking strategic landscape studies and in providing landscape planning advice.

1.7.2 The practice's services range from large scale landscape character assessments, regional green infrastructure strategies, landscape capacity and sensitivity studies, through to site specific landscape and visual impact assessments and appraisals. Its clients encompass the public, private and voluntary sectors and its team of Chartered Landscape Architects provide professional and impartial advice to assist at all stages of the development planning process.

1.7.3 The Landscape Partnership is able to advise on the protection and enhancement of landscapes, and has developed robust and rigorous methodologies to assess the potential landscape effects associated with development. Its staff provide clear analysis and are able to defend their judgements as expert witnesses.

1.7.4 This Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal was led by Simon Neesam. Simon is a Director of The Landscape Partnership and a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 30 years' experience in landscape architecture and landscape planning. He holds a degree and postgraduate diploma in Landscape Architecture and became a fully qualified Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute in 1994. Simon has extensive experience undertaking Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, landscape sensitivity and capacity studies, and strategic landscape planning work for private clients and national, regional, and local public sector bodies throughout the UK. His experience includes retail, highway, commercial, renewable energy, landfill and mineral, flood alleviation, and major residential development projects, often within sensitive or potentially contentious landscapes. Where necessary, he has defended his decisions and judgements as an expert witness at public inquiries and appeal hearings. Simon has also acted as Project Landscape Architect for several HLF-funded restorations and public realm projects, and has coordinated design guides and green infrastructure strategies; including the Cambridge Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Design Guide, which won Project of the Year at the Landscape Institute Awards.

2 Methodology

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The methodology for undertaking this Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal was based on the process set out in *An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management* (ALSA), Natural England, June 2019[2], informed by the Landscape Institute's *TGN 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations* (ALVOND), May 2021. Reference was also made to *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment,* 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) and *Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*, Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002.

2.1.2 ALSA and GLVIA3 adopt a similar basic approach to the assessment of sensitivity, whereby sensitivity is derived from a combination of the value of a landscape or visual receptor and its susceptibility to a particular type of change.

2.1.3 Unlike a project-specific LVIA, which typically involves a detailed assessment of effects on all identified receptors, this appraisal focuses on reviewing landscape sensitivity and providing a high-level commentary on likely effects within the Area of Interest.

2.1.4 The methodology has been applied in a transparent and auditable manner to enable a clear understanding of the basis for the sensitivity judgements presented within this report, proportionate to the scope of the commission. For ease of comparison with the N2T LVIA, the presentation of value, susceptibility, sensitivity and effect judgements has been structured, where appropriate, to align with the approach set out in N2T Environmental Statement Appendix 13.1: Landscape and Visual Methodology. This does not affect the independent nature of the appraisal or the methodology described above.

2.1.5 This appraisal has been prepared as a proportionate review of the sensitivity and likely effects identified within the N2T LVIA. It does not seek to replicate the detailed assessment undertaken as part of the Environmental Statement. Instead, it draws upon that existing evidence base, supplemented by targeted desktop review, field survey and professional judgement, in order to consider whether the characteristics of the Area of Interest indicate potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and visual effects of the type referred to in EN-5.

2.2 Landscape sensitivity

2.2.1 In accordance with ALSA and GLVIA3, overall sensitivity is derived through the combination of value and susceptibility.

2.2.2 **Landscape value** is based on considerations such as landscape quality/condition; landscape fabric and rarity; scenic quality; wildlife, heritage and cultural interest; recreation value; and perceptual aspects. The presence of a landscape designation can help to identify value, and the reasons for a designation are typically established through supporting studies. Landscapes or features without any formal designation may also express characteristics that are valued locally. Where there is no

[2] Tudor, C, Natural England, 2014, Op Cit

supporting evidence base, details regarding value should typically be derived from landscape character assessments.

2.2.3 **Susceptibility to change** assesses the relative ability of a landscape to accommodate the changes that would result from a particular type of development. This is an integral element of the landscape assessment but one that can only be judged in the context of the generic type of development being proposed. However, it is not necessary to understand the specifics of the development to make this judgement and thus susceptibility to change can be considered as part of the baseline assessment.

2.3 Landscape value

2.3.1 TGN 02-21, ALVOND uses the following definition for Landscape Value:

> *Landscape value = the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities (see Table 1).*
>
> *The definition of landscape value used in this TGN draws on, and is compatible with, the GLVIA3 definition of landscape value as well as Natural England's definition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013; Tudor, 2014). The definition makes it clear that it is 'society' that assigns value to landscapes. However, landscape value means more than popularity and the Landscape Institute suggests that value assessments should be undertaken by a landscape professional, drawing on evidence from stakeholders where available.*

2.3.2 The N2T LVIA includes an assessment of landscape value for the Landscape Character Areas within the Area of Interest. This Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal reviews those value judgements and considers whether local landscape, ecological, historic and perceptual characteristics within the Area of Interest are adequately reflected in those judgements. Professional judgement has been applied, having regard to the evidence base listed below, to determine whether any refinement to the value judgements presented within the N2T LVIA is warranted.

2.4 Susceptibility to change

2.4.1 In 2024 The Landscape Partnership was instructed by Essex Suffolk Norfolk Pylons to undertake an independent High-Level Landscape Susceptibility Appraisal (HLSA), which considered the potential influence of the proposed Norwich to Tilbury overhead transmission line on landscape character and visual receptors across the wider route corridor. As a strategic route-wide appraisal, the study was undertaken at a broader scale than the present appraisal.

2.4.2 The current appraisal focuses specifically on the Colne Valley section of the proposed route and reviews the susceptibility judgements presented within the N2T LVIA and considers whether local variations in landscape character within the Area of Interest are adequately reflected in those judgements. Again, professional judgement has been applied, together with consideration of the findings of the HLSA, to determine whether any refinement to the susceptibility judgements presented within the LVIA is warranted.

2.4.3 Overhead transmission lines introduce large-scale vertical infrastructure into the landscape. Pylons are typically perceived as modern features that can contrast with established rural landscape

patterns and are often visually prominent due to their height and scale. The ability of a landscape to accommodate such change is influenced by its character, scale, enclosure, existing infrastructure and perceptual characteristics.

2.4.4 Landscape susceptibility is influenced by topography, scale and enclosure. Smaller-scale valley landscapes and tributary valleys are often less able to accommodate large vertical structures than broader, more expansive landscapes, where infrastructure may be perceived as a less dominant element.

2.5 Landscape and visual effects

2.5.1 The appraisal does not seek to replicate the detailed LVIA undertaken for the Norwich to Tilbury project. Instead, it provides a high-level review of the landscape and visual effects identified within the N2T LVIA, supplemented by targeted desktop review, field survey and professional judgement.

2.5.2 Particular attention is given to:

- the geographic extent of identified effects
- the sensitivity of affected receptors
- the magnitude and significance of effects reported within the Area of Interest
- the extent to which local landscape characteristics may influence those effects

2.5.3 The review is intended to provide an overview of the potential implications of the proposed development for the Area of Interest and to inform consideration of the policy tests contained within EN-5.

2.6 National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5)

2.6.1 As noted above, this appraisal has been undertaken having regard to the contents of National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5), including its provisions relating to landscape and visual effects associated with overhead electricity transmission infrastructure. The findings are intended to provide an evidence base to inform consideration of whether the proposed overhead transmission infrastructure has the potential to give rise to widespread and significant adverse landscape and visual effects within the Colne Valley.

2.6.2 The appraisal is not intended to determine whether undergrounding should occur. Rather, it seeks to inform consideration of whether the circumstances described in EN-5 §§2.9.24 and 2.11.6 may arise within the Area of Interest.

2.7 Baseline data collection

2.7.1 Baseline data was collated with reference to the following sources:

- Essex Landscape Character Assessment - 2003
- Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, Chris Blandford Associates – 2005
- Colchester Landscape Character Assessment, Land Use Consultants, 2024

- Review of Countryside Conservation Areas (Chris Blandford Associates) - 2006
- Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy -2008
- Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy – Report Part 1 2011
- Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy - 2020
- High-Level Landscape Susceptibility Appraisal (HLSA), The Landscape Partnership, 2024
- Colchester Borough Local Plan 2017–2033 Section 2 – July 2022
- Colchester Protected Lanes Report - 2015
- West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan – 2016
- West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan – 2019
- Marks Tey Neighbourhood Plan, 2017
- Norwich to Tilbury NSIP Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) – June 2024
- Norwich to Tilbury - Environmental Statement – August 2025
- DEFRA's MAGIC map
- Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 mapping
- Ordnance Survey Six-inch maps (first and second editions)

2.7.2 To verify the desktop research, a site visit was undertaken by Chartered Landscape Architects and Members of the Landscape Institute in June 2026. The Area of Interest, local rights of way and publicly accessible locations (including areas with recreational access) were visited. Weather conditions were good and visibility across the landscape was clear. The site visit was undertaken when deciduous trees were in full leaf and seasonal vegetation within fields was present, allowing an understanding of the existing degree of enclosure and vegetation structure within the landscape, whilst recognising that large-scale overhead transmission infrastructure would remain visually prominent above much of the vegetation cover. Consideration is given to the seasonal effects of the deciduous vegetation, and any consequent changes in visibility.

3 Landscape context

3.1 Landscape Character context

3.1.1 The Area of Interest comprises the Colne Valley and adjoining plateau landscapes west of Colchester. The landscape is characterised by a combination of river valleys, tributary valleys, rolling farmland, woodland, historic settlements and a dense network of rural lanes and Public Rights of Way. The area forms part of the wider rural hinterland of Colchester and exhibits a strong sense of continuity, local distinctiveness and rural character.

3.2 Published landscape character assessments

3.2.1 The importance of understanding the landscape character of all landscapes in England is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at §180, which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan; and by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, including trees and woodland. Landscape character assessment is the process which can identify these intrinsic values and unique characteristics of the diverse landscapes in the UK.

3.2.2 Landscape character assessments enable landscapes to be described and understood by mapping natural, physical and cultural features in order to define different landscapes and demonstrate what makes them special. Landscape character types share similar characteristics, such as underlying geology, soil type, topography and landform, the pattern and type of land/field enclosure, historic land use, the pattern of settlements and types of building that these comprise, tree and woodland cover and the general visual experience of the area. Landscape character areas are specific geographic areas that exhibit a particular landscape character type.

3.2.3 Effects on landscape character can be both direct, i.e. on the character area/landscape type that the site is located within, and indirect, i.e. changes to characteristics or perceptions of character that occur beyond the boundary of a character area/landscape type. In addition, effects on landscape character may be positive or negative, i.e. strengthening and enhancing the characteristic patterns and features, or eroding and losing the patterns and features that contribute to landscape character.

3.2.4 There are three relevant landscape character assessments that encompass the Area of Interest. These are the national-level National Character Area profiles, the county level Essex Landscape Character Assessment, and the district level Colchester Landscape Character Assessment.

3.2.5 The Area of Interest encompasses two **National Character Areas**; NCA 111: Northern Thames Basin, which is characterised as a varied landscape comprising river valleys, rolling farmland, woodland, historic settlements and a strong network of transport and infrastructure corridors, and NCA 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, which is an enclosed wooded arable landscape with gently undulating clay plateau, small river valleys, ancient woodlands and species-rich hedgerows.

3.2.6 The **Essex Landscape Character Assessment** (2003) provides the strategic county-level framework for understanding landscape character across Essex. Within this assessment, the Area of Interest falls broadly within the River Valley Landscapes character type associated with the Colne Valley and its tributaries.

3.2.7 **Colchester Landscape Character Assessment** (CLCA), which was prepared in 2024, updates the earlier Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, 2005. The Area of Interest falls within the following LCAs.

- A4 – Colne River Valley Floor: forms the central corridor of the Area of Interest, comprising the flat to gently undulating floor of the River Colne with pasture, wetlands, riparian vegetation and a strong sense of enclosure associated with the valley landscape.
- A5 – Colne River Valley Slopes: occupies the valley sides on either side of the Colne Valley within the Area of Interest, characterised by sloping agricultural land, woodland, historic parkland and elevated views across the valley floor.
- B2 – Easthorpe Farmland Plateau: located in the southern part of the Area of Interest, comprising gently rolling agricultural plateau landscapes with arable farmland, hedgerows, scattered woodland and dispersed rural settlement.
- B4 – Great Tey Farmland Plateau: forms part of the western extent of the Area of Interest, characterised by open arable farmland, hedgerow field boundaries, rural lanes and a network of small villages and farmsteads.
- B5 – Rochford's Farmland Plateau: occupies parts of the northern side of the Area of Interest between the Colne Valley and Dedham Vale landscapes, comprising a predominantly agricultural plateau with a mix of arable fields, hedgerows, woodland blocks and historic rural settlement.
- B6 – Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau: located within the northern part of the Area of Interest around Great Horkesley and Wormingford, characterised by elevated farmland, mature hedgerows, woodland cover and strong visual relationships with the adjacent Colne Valley landscape.

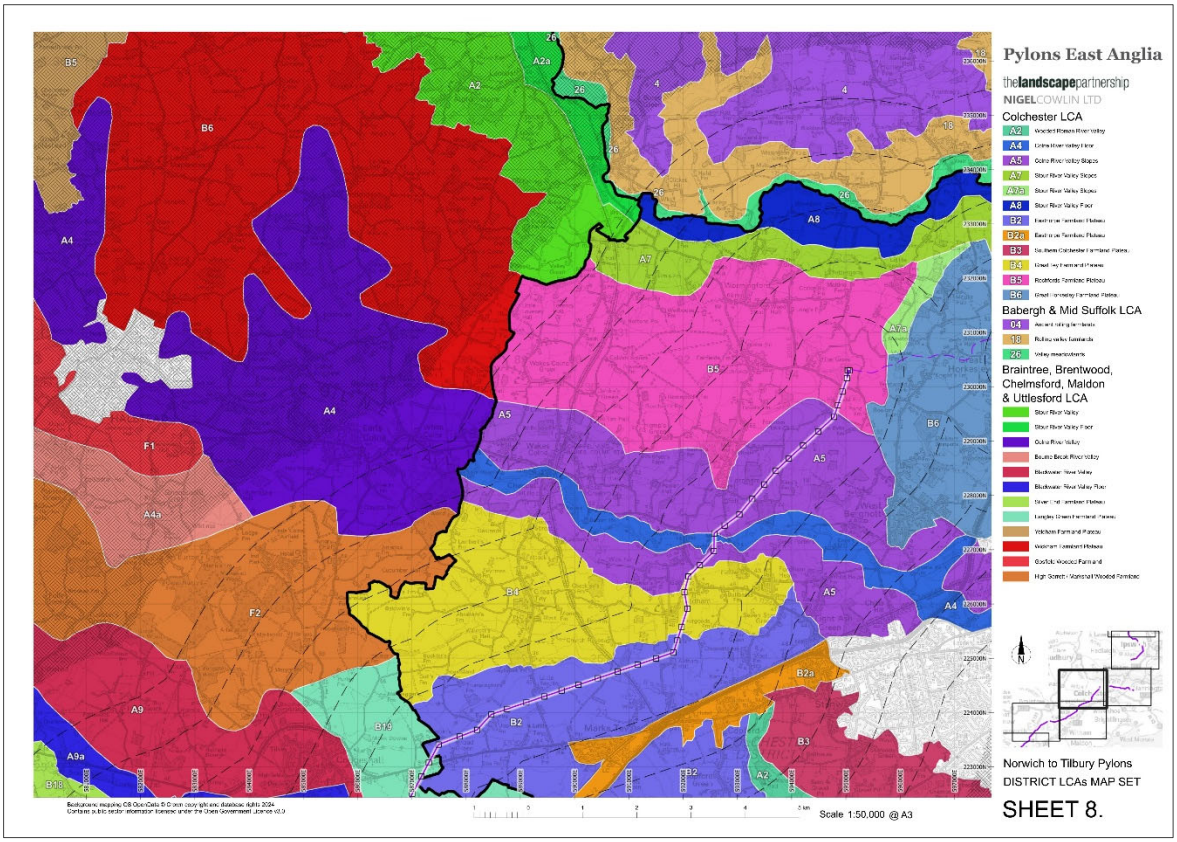

Figure 02: Landscape Character Areas (extract from HLSA, 2024)

3.3 Localised Landscape Character Areas

3.3.1 While the CLCA provides an appropriate framework for understanding landscape character within the Area of Interest, it is recognised that landscape character assessments are undertaken at a strategic scale and that localised variations in landscape character can occur within broader landscape character areas.

3.3.2 Areas located close to landscape character boundaries may exhibit characteristics and sensitivities associated with more than one character area. In addition, locally distinctive combinations of landscape, ecological, historic and cultural features may result in areas of elevated landscape sensitivity that are not fully reflected within broader character area descriptions.

3.3.3 Study of the Area of Interest as part of the field work for this review identified two additional localised landscape character areas (LLCAs) which were considered to exhibit characteristics that differ materially from the wider landscape character areas within which they are located. For the purposes of this appraisal, these areas are referred to as:

- B5a – Grove Tributary Valley
- B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor

3.3.4 The extent of the refined localised landscape character areas is shown on Figure 02.

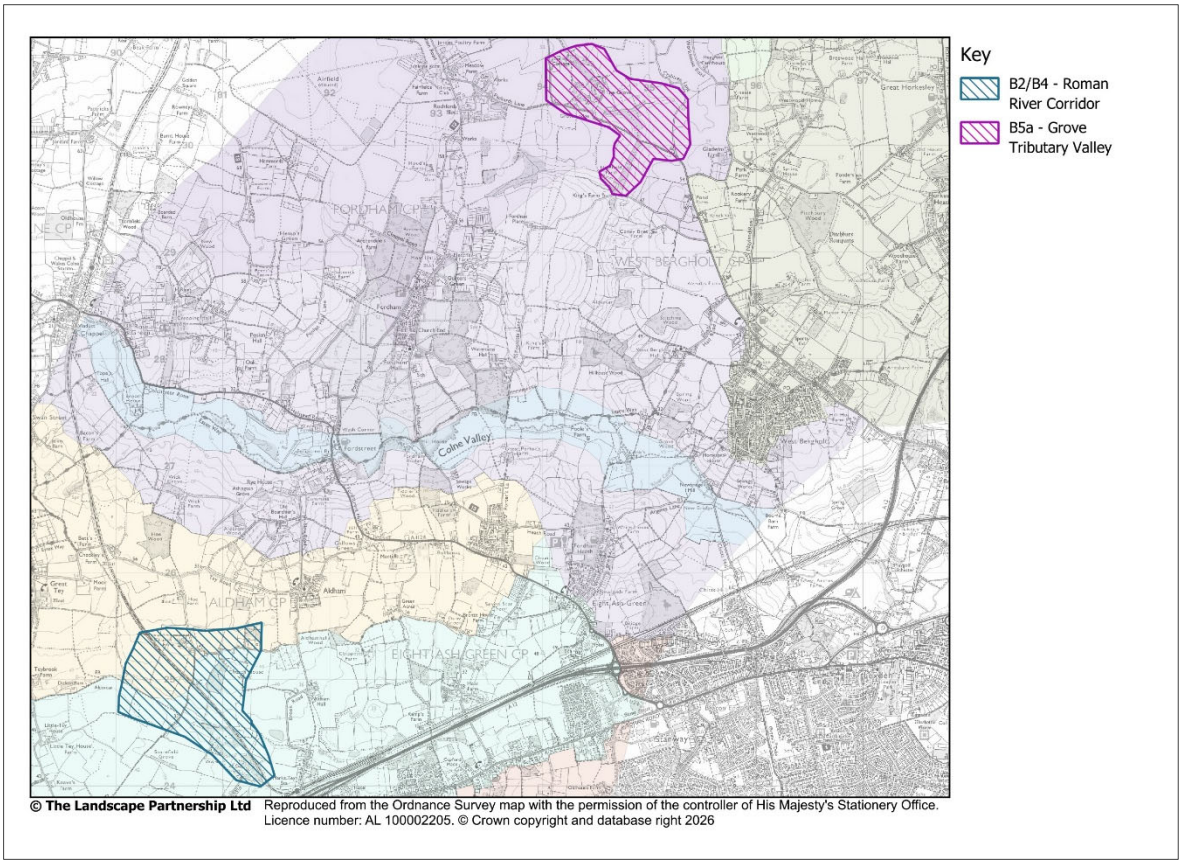

Figure 03: B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor

B5a – Grove Tributary Valley

3.3.5 This LLCA is located within the B5: Rochford's Farmland Plateau landscape character area. While currently included within the wider plateau landscape LCA, the area exhibits a distinct combination of topographical, ecological and historic characteristics.

3.3.6 The area comprises a tributary valley landscape associated with an unnamed watercourse draining southwards towards the River Colne. The valley is characterised by a network of watercourses, ponds and associated riparian vegetation, creating a more enclosed and visually contained landscape than is generally evident within the wider Rochford's Farmland Plateau.

3.3.7 The area also contains dispersed historic farmsteads and listed buildings, including The Grove, Highfield Farm and Spring Cottage, together with numerous Historic Environment Record assets and Protected Lanes, including Crabtree Lane, which collectively contribute to the area's strong sense of history, time-depth and local distinctiveness.

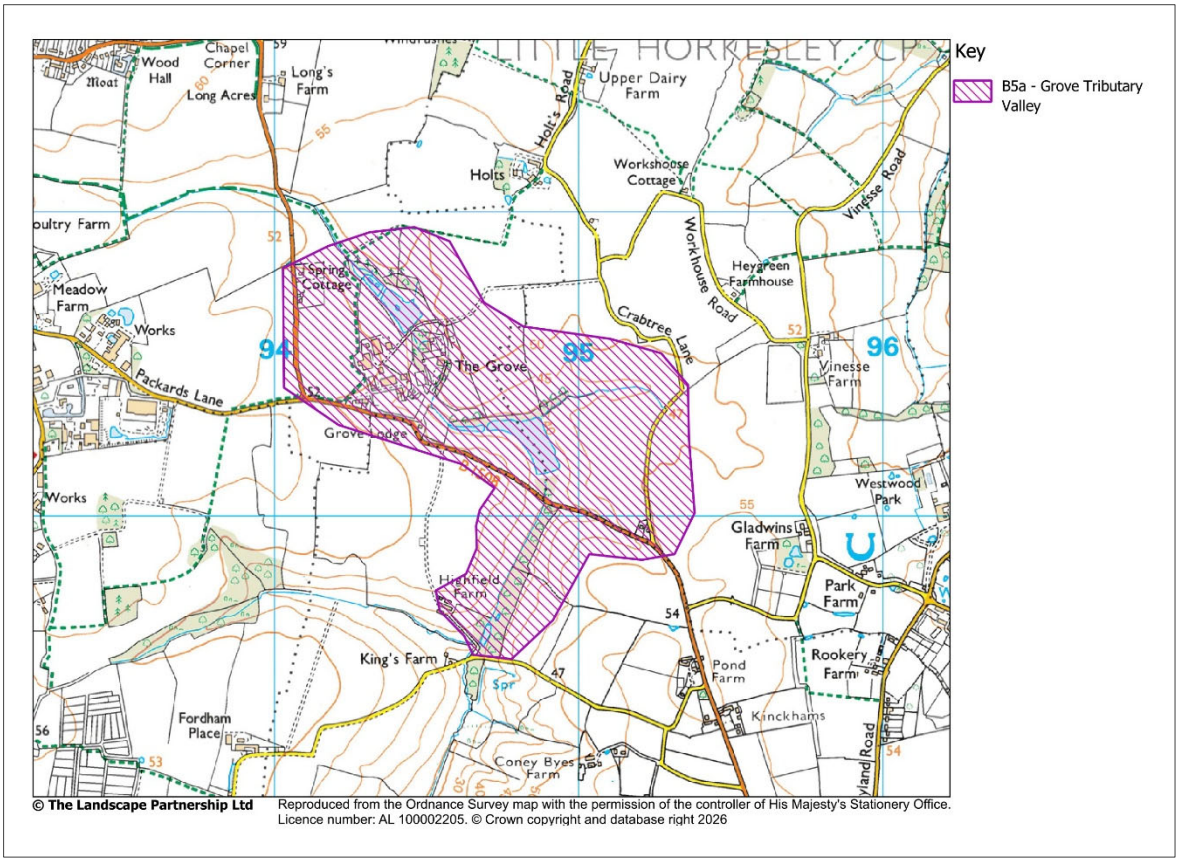

Figure 04: B5a – Grove Tributary Valley

B2/B4 - Roman River Corridor

3.3.8 This LLCA occurs along the Roman River corridor within parts of B4: Great Tey Farmland Plateau and B2: Easthorpe Farmland Plateau. This corridor exhibits a distinct combination of ecological, historic and landscape characteristics associated with the river valley and its immediate setting, discrete from the wider plateau landscapes identified in the CLCA.

3.3.9 The LLCA is characterised by the presence of the Roman River and associated riparian vegetation, Church House Wood Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Site, Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI, Local Wildlife Site and Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site, Historic Environment Record assets, and the corridor of the Gainsborough Line railway, a well-established scenic rural railway linking Marks Tey with Chappel, Sudbury and the wider Stour Valley landscape. Pastoral land use associated with the river corridor further contributes to the LLCA rural character and reinforces its traditional agricultural landscape. Together, these features form the distinct ecological, historic and recreational character of the landscape corridor.

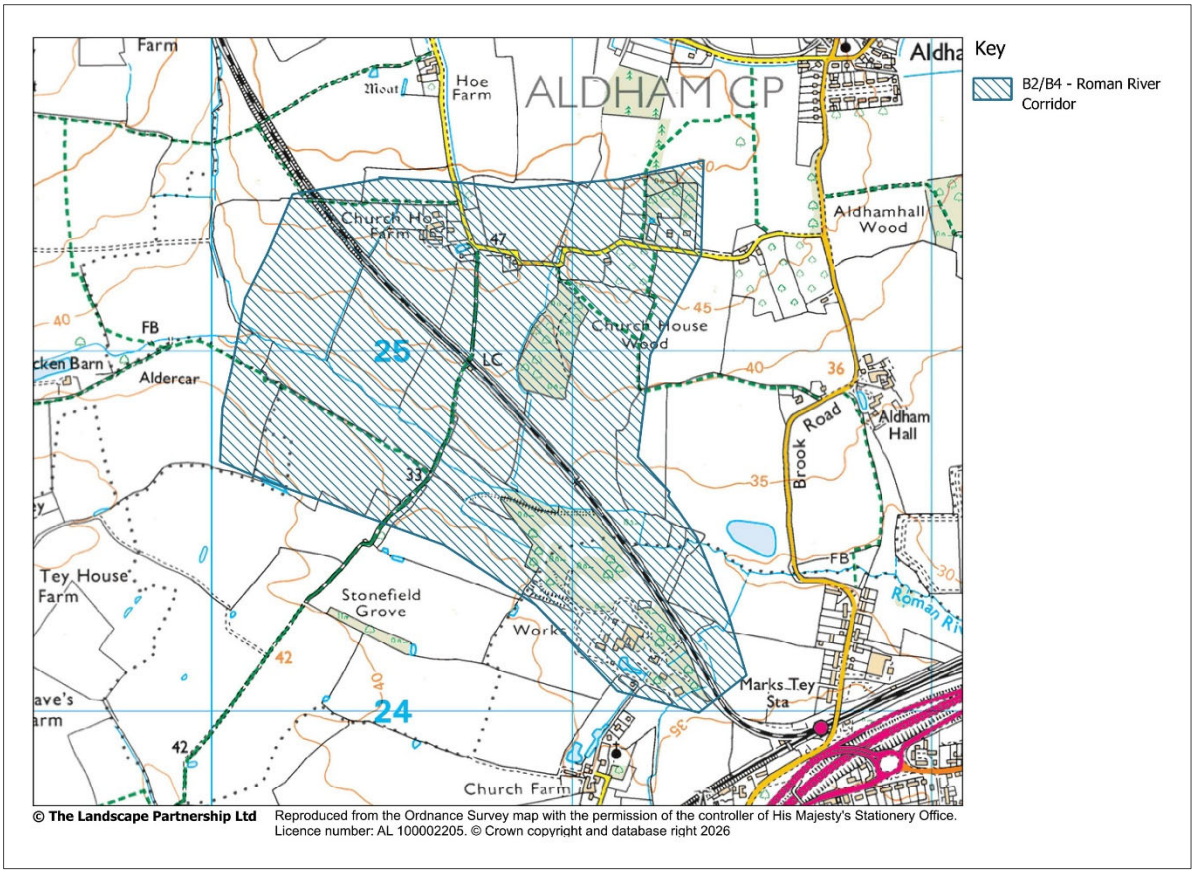

Figure 05: B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor

3.3.10 Historic Ordnance Survey mapping indicates that Church House Wood formerly extended beyond its present south-eastern boundary. Although this area is no longer wooded, the historic mapping evidence provides an understanding of the area's long-term landscape evolution and the continuity of woodland cover within the Roman River Valley.

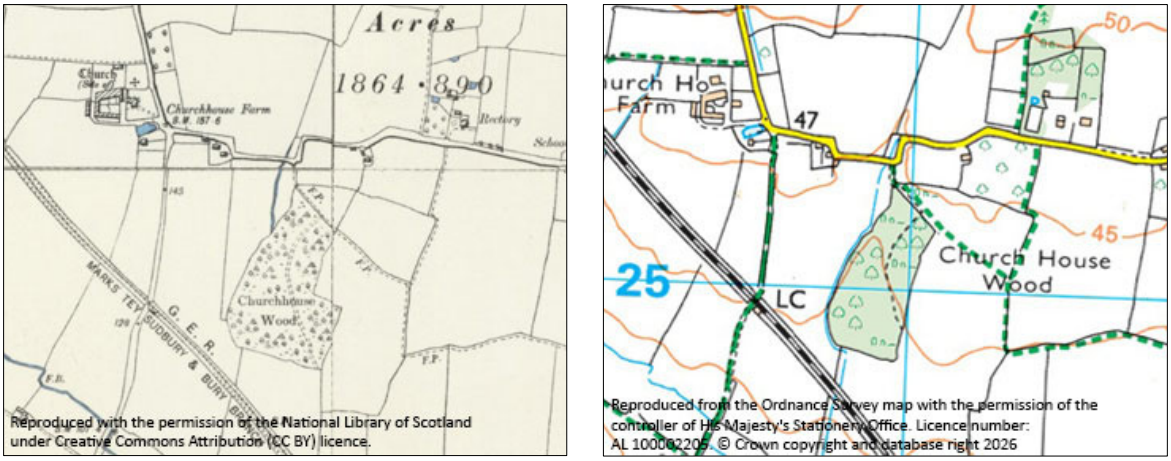

Figure 06: Church House Wood - OS Six Inch, 1888-1915 (left) and current edition OS Map Explorer (right).

3.3.11 Comparison of historic Ordnance Survey mapping (1888–1915) with current mapping also indicates that the Roman River corridor has retained a high degree of field pattern continuity. The alignment of the river crossing, adjacent routeways and a number of field boundaries remains largely unchanged, with little evidence of substantial field boundary loss or reorganisation. This enhances the legibility of the historic landscape and demonstrates the persistence of its underlying landscape structure.

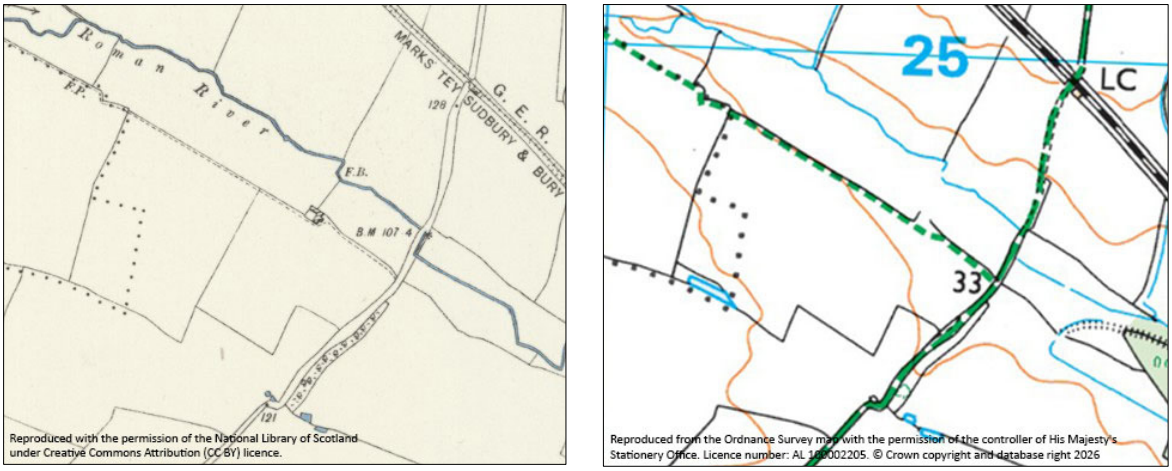

Figure 07: Field patterns - OS Six Inch, 1888-1915 (left) and current edition OS Map Explorer (right)

3.3.12 The combined presence of long-established woodland, a largely intact historic field pattern, archaeological interest and surviving historic landscape features creates a strong sense of time-depth within the Roman River Valley.

3.3.13 The landscape also exhibits a strong sense of historic continuity associated with dispersed settlement and ecclesiastical features, including the former medieval church site east of Great Tey along the narrow rural corridor of Rectory Road, together with associated historic place names such as Church House Farm and Old Rectory.

3.3.14 The refined LLCAs identified above are not intended to replace the LCAs identified within the CLCA. Rather, they provide a more detailed understanding of character of the local landscape within specific parts of the Area of Interest and are used to inform the subsequent appraisal of landscape value, susceptibility, sensitivity and likely effects.

3.4 Evidence of Landscape Value

Environmental and Heritage Assets

3.4.1 The Area of Interest and its immediate setting, contains a wide range of environmental and heritage assets that contribute positively to landscape character, local distinctiveness and landscape value. These include:

- **Dedham Vale National Landscape** immediately to the north of the Area of Interest;
- **Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI** and Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site;
- **Areas of Ancient Woodland** including Hillhouse Wood, Stitching Wood and Church House Wood;

- Other woodland blocks and shelterbelts which contribute to landscape structure, enclosure and ecological connectivity;
- Local Wildlife Sites and associated ecological corridors;
- Veteran trees and mature hedgerow networks;
- **Conservation Areas** at Fordstreet and Little Horkesley;
- Scheduled Monument at Pitchbury Ramparts;
- Numerous Listed Buildings, historic farmsteads and churches;
- **Protected rural lanes** including Crabtree Lane, Workhouse Road and Holt's Road;
- Fordham Heath, Fordham Hall Estate Woodland and Iron Latch Nature Reserve;
- Extensive Public Rights of Way and recreational routes including the **Essex Way, Colne Valley Path** and **Route 13 of the National Cycle Network**

3.4.2 Collectively, these assets contribute to the ecological, historic, cultural, recreational and scenic qualities of the landscape and provide evidence of its elevated value. Those assets illustrated on Figure 08 are highlight in **bold**.

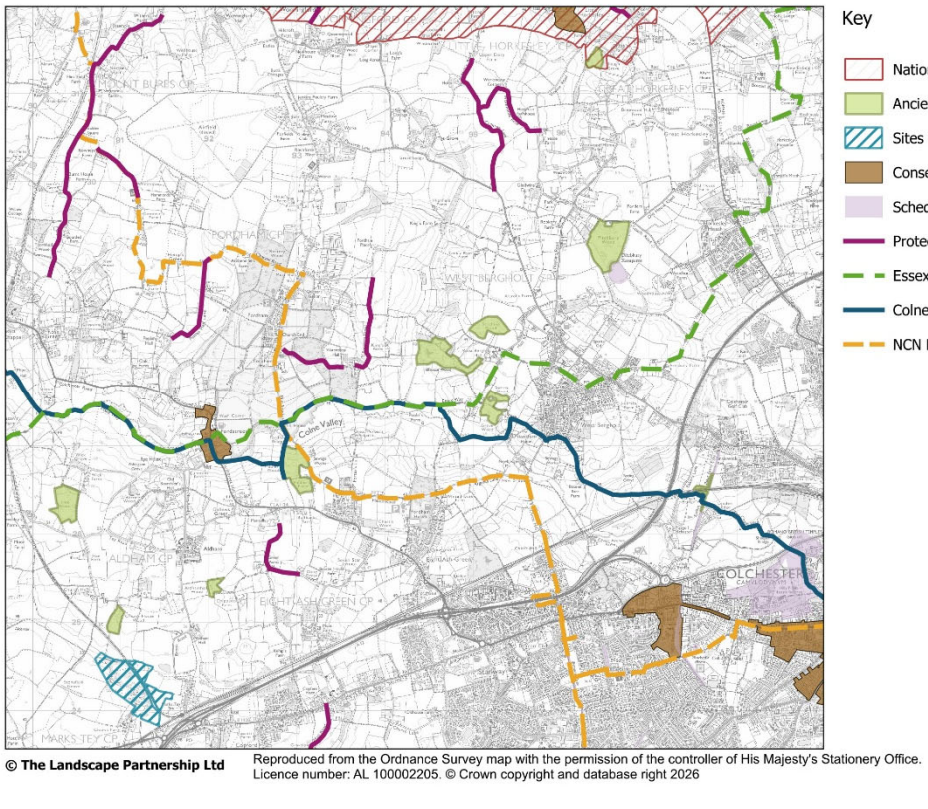

Figure 08: Environmental and Heritage assets

3.5 Historic recognition of landscape value

3.5.1 The countryside of the Colne Valley west of Colchester has been consistently recognised through successive planning policy and evidence-base studies as a landscape of particular value and sensitivity. Historically, much of the area formed part of the Essex Structure Plan Special Landscape Areas (SLA) and was subsequently identified by Colchester Borough Council as Countryside Conservation Areas (CCAs).

3.5.2 Field survey, review of historic mapping and consideration of more recent evidence-base studies indicate that many of the landscape characteristics that contributed to the area's identification as a Special Landscape Area and Countryside Conservation Area remain evident today.

3.5.3 Although these designations no longer form part of the current planning framework, the studies that informed their designation provide evidence of the area's long-recognised landscape qualities. As such, they are a relevant consideration when understanding the evolution of landscape policy and the enduring characteristics that contribute to the area's value and sensitivity.

3.5.4 The continued relevance of these characteristics is reflected in more recent landscape character assessments, green infrastructure studies and local planning evidence, which continue to identify the Colne Valley as a distinctive and valued landscape within the wider Colchester area.

Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance, 2005

3.5.5 In Colchester Borough Council's Review of Countryside Conservation Areas (RCCA), 2005, the existing CCAs were reassessed using landscape character assessment methodology and proposed as Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance (ALCIs). The review drew upon the findings of the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2005).

3.5.6 The RCCA concluded that the River Valley Landscape Type, including the Colne Valley landscapes, was of High Value and worthy of conservation. The report states that: *"The River Valley landscape type is also evaluated as high and considered to be worthy of conservation...".* In support of this conclusion, the report noted that these landscapes exhibit strong surviving time-depth, a richness of natural and man-made landscape features, and provide important recreational corridors linking Colchester with the wider countryside.

3.5.7 The review further concluded that landscapes outside the Dedham Vale AONB (now National Landscape) assessed as being of *"highest"* or *"high"* value represented some of the most important landscapes within the Borough. These were identified as exhibiting strong visual and scenic qualities, significant nature conservation interest, tranquillity, cultural associations and distinctive landscape character.

3.5.8 As a consequence, the review recommended the designation of ALCIs as a replacement for the existing Countryside Conservation Areas. Figure 09 illustrates how the proposed ALCIs included a substantial area of the Colne Valley extending westwards from Colchester to the city boundary, together with land south of the Dedham Vale National Landscape. This demonstrates that recognition of landscape value extended across a broad area of the Colne Valley rather than being confined to isolated sites or features and provides further evidence of the longstanding recognition of the Colne Valley as a landscape of elevated value outside of the nationally designated landscape of the Dedham Vale.

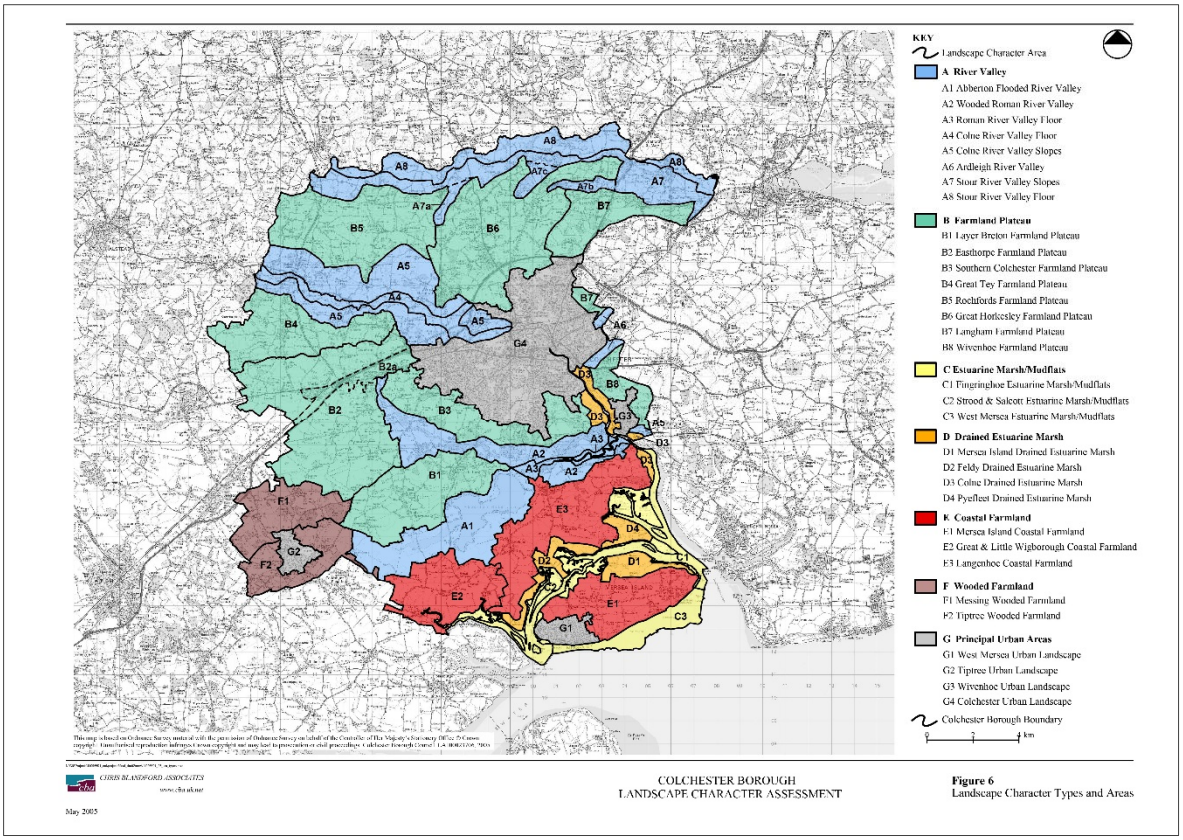

Figure 09: Extract from Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, 2005

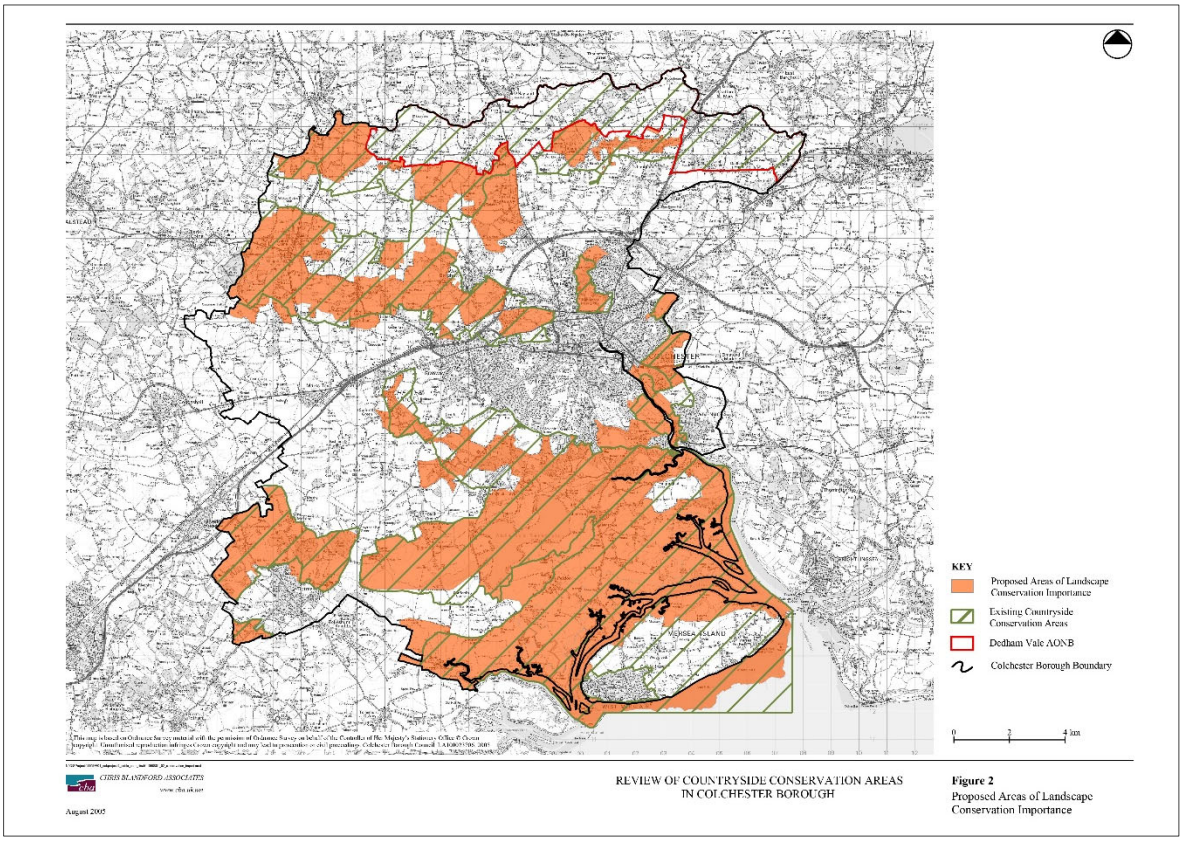

Figure 10: Proposed Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance (Extract from Review of Countryside Conservation Areas in Colchester Borough, 2005)

Neighbourhood Planning

3.5.9 Local recognition of landscape value has also been expressed through neighbourhood planning. A draft 2016 consultation version of the West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan proposed an *"Area of Special Landscape*" covering countryside to the south-east and west of the village envelope. Although this designation did not form part of the final made Neighbourhood Plan (2019), its inclusion within the consultation draft provides evidence of local recognition of the landscape sensitivity, rural character and importance of the area.

3.6 Green Infrastructure

3.6.1 Successive Green Infrastructure studies have identified the Colne Valley as an important multifunctional landscape corridor providing ecological connectivity, recreation, landscape character and settlement separation functions.

Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2008

3.6.2 The Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008), prepared by The Landscape Partnership, recognised the Colne Valley and surrounding countryside as part of a multifunctional green infrastructure network providing landscape, ecological, recreational and settlement separation functions.

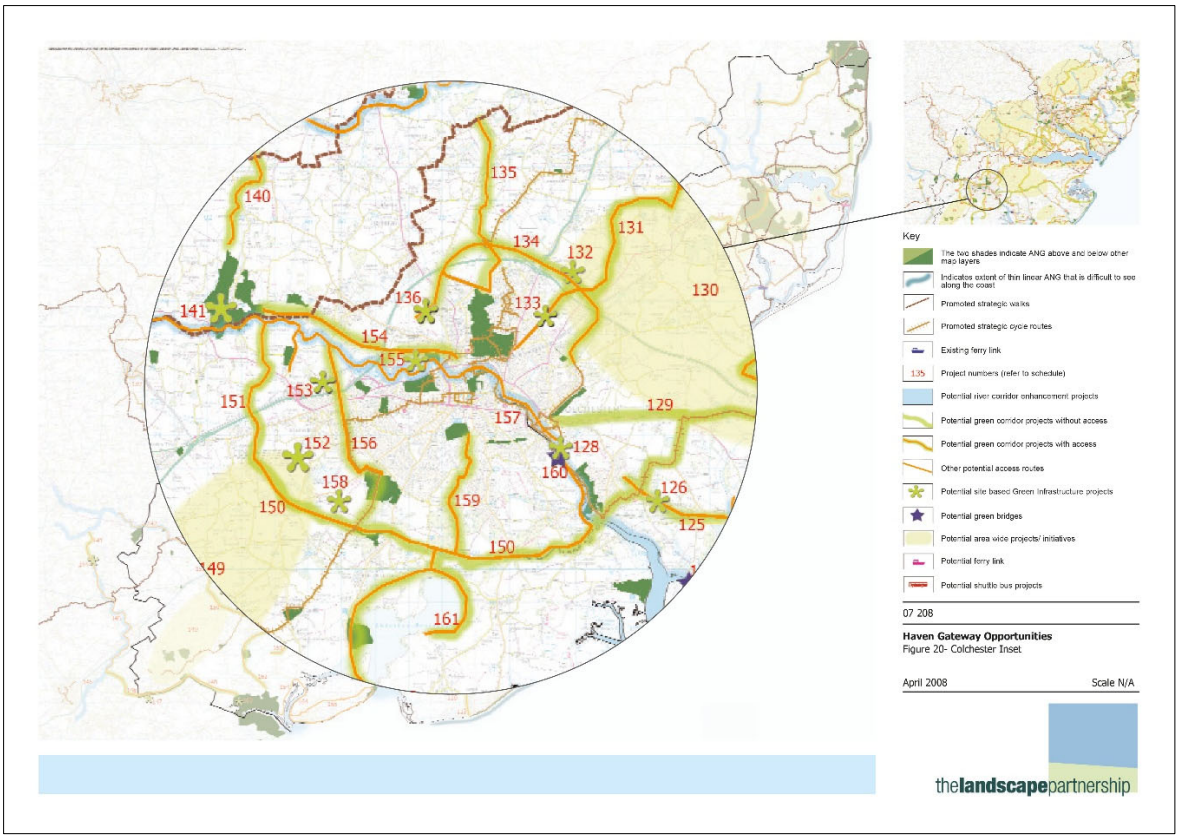

Figure 11; Haven Gateway Opportunities

3.6.3 The strategy specifically identified the Colne Valley and Roman River Valley as important landscape corridors. In describing these landscapes, the report notes: "*The Colne Valley has extensive meadow*

pasture and pre-C18th irregular fields, with the adjoining Roman River Valley extensive areas of ancient woodland and meadow pasture". The strategy also identified opportunities to strengthen recreational and ecological connectivity within the area, including the extension of Fordham Hall Community Woodland and the creation and enhancement of green corridors linking Colchester, West Bergholt, Fordham and the River Colne.

3.6.4 Collectively, these findings contribute to the continuing recognition of the Colne Valley as a strategically important landscape resource valued for its landscape character, ecological connectivity and recreational function.

Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2011

3.6.5 Building upon the work of the Haven Gateway study, the Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) developed a more detailed borough-level framework for green infrastructure planning and delivery. The strategy further recognised the importance of the Colne Valley and surrounding countryside in contributing to ecological connectivity, recreation, landscape setting, environmental resilience and quality of life.

Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2020

3.6.6 More recent green infrastructure planning has continued to recognise the importance of connected landscape networks and recreational corridors across Essex. The Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020) identifies the protection, enhancement and creation of multifunctional green infrastructure as a key objective and specifically references the Essex Way, which passes through the Area of Interest.

Roman River Corridor

3.6.7 The role of the Roman River corridor as a strategic green infrastructure asset has been recognised through a number of local planning and masterplanning initiatives.

3.6.8 The Marks Tey Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's Masterplanning Support report, prepared in 2017, identified the Roman River corridor and surrounding countryside to the north of Marks Tey as a key green infrastructure opportunity. The report proposed the creation of a continuous green corridor associated with the Roman River, linking existing landscape features, habitats and recreational routes whilst maintaining a visual and physical separation between Marks Tey and neighbouring settlements.

3.6.9 This concept was subsequently incorporated within the made Marks Tey Neighbourhood Plan (2020–2033), which supports the creation of a continuous accessible green corridor broadly following the Roman River corridor and surrounding countryside to encourage active lifestyles and improve access to the countryside. The Neighbourhood Plan also identifies the role of the corridor in providing a visual and physical separation between Marks Tey and Copford.

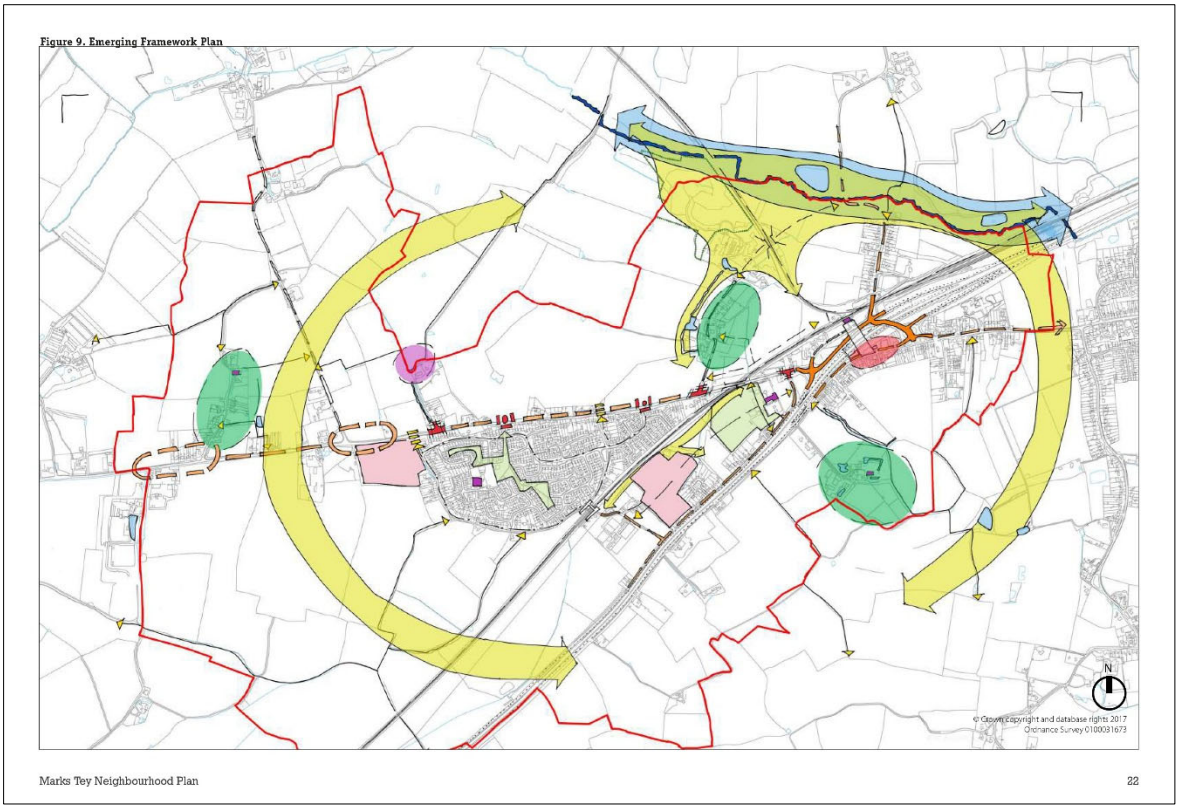

Figure 12; Concept plan (extract from Marks Tey Neighbourhood Plan, 2020–2033)

3.6.10 More recently, the emerging Colchester Local Plan (Preferred Options) identifies the Roman River Corridor as a Strategic Green Space and Nature Recovery Area under Policy GN2. The mapped corridor follows the Roman River west of Marks Tey and incorporates a range of interconnected natural assets including the Roman River, Church House Wood Ancient Woodland, Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites and the Gainsborough Line corridor.

3.6.11 Policy GN2 notes that the purpose of the policy is "*to support the delivery of the Essex LNRS and encourage delivery of the strategic opportunity areas".*

3.6.12 It continues: "*The Roman River corridor nature recovery area is specifically referred to in the policy and shown on the policies map. This area is identified in the draft Essex LNRS as a strategic opportunity area for woodland, grassland, freshwater standing water and freshwater river buffers. A proposal for a multi-parish nature green space / local nature recovery corridor was submitted to the Council by Aldham, Great Tey and Marks Tey Parish Councils as part of the Green Network and Waterways engagement. The corridor includes mature hedgerows and trees, pastureland, floodplain, a reservoir and some arable land. Much of the Roman River is followed by a public right of way. Just to the north of the river is the 'Gainsborough Line', also a linear habitat, with trees the length of it. Marks Tey Brick Pit SSSI, local wildlife sites and ancient woodland are located within the proposed corridor. Marks Tey's Neighbourhood Plan includes a 'green corridor' which brings in the Roman River".*

3.6.13 The inclusion of the Roman River Corridor within Policy GN2 provides emerging policy recognition of a landscape that has previously been identified through local masterplanning and neighbourhood planning initiatives as an important green infrastructure, nature recovery and recreational

resource. The policy recognition of the corridor further reinforces its role in supporting ecological connectivity, access to the countryside and the wider green infrastructure network.

Summary

3.6.14 Successive green infrastructure strategies, neighbourhood planning initiatives and emerging local plan policy consistently recognise both the Colne Valley and Roman River Corridor as strategically important landscape resources. Together, these studies identify the area as a multifunctional green infrastructure network supporting ecological connectivity, nature recovery, recreation, landscape character and access to the countryside, thereby contributing to its overall landscape value.

3.7 Landscape Value

3.7.1 The N2T LVIA includes an assessment of landscape value for each of the Landscape Character Areas within the Area of Interest. The LVIA identifies Medium Value for the plateau landscapes (B2, B4, B5 and B6) and Medium-High Value for the Colne River Valley landscapes (A4 and A5).

3.7.2 Having regard to the landscape character assessments, environmental and heritage assets, historic recognition of landscape value and green infrastructure studies described above, The Landscape Partnership broadly agrees with the value judgements presented within the N2T LVIA.

3.7.3 Notwithstanding the above, this review has identified two LLCAs that differ materially from the wider plateau landscapes within which they occur. These areas exhibit a combination of landscape, ecological, historic and perceptual characteristics that are not fully reflected within the broader LCAs. A more detailed assessment of landscape value has therefore been undertaken in accordance with the principles set out in TGN 02-21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations (ALVOND).

3.7.4 The LLCAs comprise B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Western Roman River Corridor, both of which are described above. The landscape value assessments for these areas are set out in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below.

Table 3.1; B5a – Grove Tributary Valley

Natural heritage	
Definition	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Tributary shallow valley landform. • Watercourses, ponds and riparian vegetation. • Wetland and riparian habitats. • Enclosed valley character in the southern part. • Local ecological connectivity. • Seasonal variation and natural interest.
Examples of evidence	• OS map 1:25,000 Explorer • Magic Map • Colchester City Council Interactive Mapping Portal

Assessment	The B5a – Grove Tributary Valley exhibits a combination of ecological and physiographic features, including the tributary valley landform, watercourses, ponds and riparian habitats, which contribute positively to landscape value.
Value	Medium-high

Cultural heritage	
Definition	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Dispersed historic farmsteads, including The Grove and Highfield Farm. • Listed buildings, including The Grove, Highfield Farm and Spring Cottage. • Historic Environment Record (HER) assets, including evidence of Iron Age activity. • Protected lanes, including Crabtree Lane. • Listed buildings and historic farmsteads
Examples of evidence	• Historic England • Colchester Borough Protected Lanes Assessment, 2015 • HER and historic OS maps
Assessment	The B5a – Grove Tributary Valley contains a range of historic features, including listed buildings, historic farmsteads, HER assets and protected lanes. Together, these features provide evidence of long-established settlement and land use, contributing positively to landscape value in terms of cultural heritage.
Value	Medium-high

Landscape condition	
Definition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Intact tributary valley landform. • Well-defined network of watercourses and ponds. • Established riparian vegetation. • The survival of protected lanes and dispersed farmsteads. • Largely rural landscape with limited urbanising influences or intrusive modern development.
Examples of evidence	• Google Earth • Colchester Landscape Character Assessment, 2024 • Colchester Borough Protected Lanes Assessment, 2015
Assessment	A review of available mapping and aerial photography indicates that the B5a – Grove Tributary Valley retains a coherent landscape structure, with its key characteristics remaining evident. The tributary valley landform, watercourses, ponds, riparian vegetation, protected lanes and dispersed farmsteads contribute to an intact rural landscape with limited urbanising influences.
Value	Medium-high

Distinctiveness	
Definition	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Network of watercourses, ponds and riparian vegetation. • Enclosed landscape structure. • Dispersed historic farmsteads and the protected lane Crabtree Lane. • Recognisable landscape pattern associated with the tributary valley. • Previously identified by Colchester Borough Council as a Countryside Conservation Area (CCA) and subsequently identified as an Area of Landscape Conservation Importance (ALCI).
Examples of evidence	• Colchester Landscape Character Assessment, 2024 • Colchester Borough Protected Lanes Assessment, 2015 • Review of Countryside Conservation Areas, 2005
Assessment	The B5a – Grove Tributary Valley exhibits a recognisable landscape pattern derived from the interaction of the tributary valley landform, watercourses, ponds, vegetation and historic settlement pattern. While much of the area is not readily experienced from publicly accessible viewpoints, these features combine to create a coherent and identifiable landscape unit with a distinct local character. This distinctiveness is reflected in the area's previous identification as a Countryside Conservation Area and subsequent identification as an Area of Landscape Conservation Importance.
Value	Medium-high

Recreational	
Definition	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Public Rights of Way in the north-western part of the area • Rural character and relative tranquillity.
Examples of evidence	• OS mapping • Magic Map
Assessment	Recreational opportunities are relatively limited by the extent of public access within the area. Nevertheless, publicly accessible routes, including Crabtree Lane, provide opportunities to experience the area's rural character and tributary valley setting. The area's location within the wider rural setting of the Dedham Vale National Landscape further contributes to its recreational context.
Value	Low-medium

Perceptual (Scenic)	
Definition	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Long-distance views across and along the valley landscape. • Appreciation of the tributary valley landform and its relationship with the wider landscape.

	• Watercourses, ponds and associated vegetation. • Enclosed and intimate landscape character in parts of the valley. • Largely rural character with limited urbanising influences.
Examples of evidence	• Google Earth • National Grids LVIA photography
Assessment	The B5a – Grove Tributary Valley exhibits scenic qualities associated with its tributary valley landform, watercourses, ponds and vegetation structure. Opportunities for views across and along the valley, together with the varied landform, enclosed character and largely rural setting, contribute to a visually coherent landscape with a recognisable sense of place.
Value	Medium

Perceptual (tranquillity)	
Definition	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Shallow tributary valley character • Predominantly rural character • Limited urbanising influences and modern development. • Relatively dark rural skies and limited artificial lighting. • Presence of watercourses, ponds and associated vegetation.
Examples of evidence	• Google Earth • CPRE, the Countryside Charity
Assessment	The B5a – Grove Tributary Valley exhibits a degree of tranquillity arising from its predominantly rural character, shallow valley landform, watercourses, ponds and associated vegetation. Limited urbanising influences and relatively dark rural skies contribute to a calm and largely undisturbed landscape experience.
Value	Medium

Functional	
Definition	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Tributary valley landform and associated drainage corridor. • Network of watercourses and ponds. • Riparian vegetation and associated habitats. • Contribution to habitat connectivity and ecological networks. • Role as a locally distinct landscape corridor within the wider plateau landscape. • Contribution to landscape structure and landscape diversity.
Examples of evidence	• OS mapping • Magic Map

Assessment	The B5a – Grove Tributary Valley performs an important functional role through its tributary valley landform, watercourses, ponds and associated habitats. Together, these features contribute to local drainage, ecological connectivity and landscape structure, supporting the healthy functioning of the wider landscape.
Value	Medium-high

3.7.5 On balance, the B5a – Grove Tributary Valley is considered to be of **Medium-high landscape value** overall.

Table 3.2; B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor

Natural heritage	
Definition	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Roman River and associated riparian vegetation. • Church House Wood Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Site. • Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI, Local Wildlife Site and Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site. • Ecological connectivity provided by the river corridor and associated habitats. • Combination of ecological, geological and physiographic interest.
Examples of evidence	• OS map 1:25,000 Explorer • Magic Map • Colchester City Council Interactive Mapping Portal
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor contains a range of ecological, geological and physiographic features that contribute positively to landscape value. The Roman River, Church House Wood Ancient Woodland, Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI, Local Wildlife Site and Geological Conservation Review site combine to create a landscape of notable natural heritage interest.
Value	Medium-high

Cultural heritage	
Definition	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Numerous Historic Environment Record (HER) assets including Archaeological associations linked to Iron Age and Roman activity. • Historic field pattern continuity. • Former medieval church site at Rectory Road (Aldham Church was 'moved' about 1.2km from what is now Church House Farm to its present site in Aldham in 1854/55). • Historic place names including Church House Farm and Old Rectory. • Church House Wood Ancient Woodland.

	• Historic Gainsborough Line railway corridor. • Strong sense of time-depth and historic continuity.
Examples of evidence	• Historic England • Colchester Borough Protected Lanes Assessment, 2015 • HER and historic OS maps
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor contains a range of archaeological, historic and cultural features which contribute positively to landscape value. Historic field pattern continuity, long-established woodland cover, archaeological interest and ecclesiastical associations combine to create a strong sense of time-depth and historic continuity.
Value	High

Landscape condition	
Definition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Intact Roman River corridor and associated riparian vegetation. • Church House Wood Ancient Woodland. • High degree of historic field pattern continuity. • Limited evidence of substantial field boundary loss or reorganisation. • Persistence of long-established landscape structure. • Survival of historic landscape features and place associations. • Strong relationship between the river corridor, woodland and surrounding field pattern.
Examples of evidence	• Google Earth • Colchester Landscape Character Assessment, 2024
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor retains a coherent and well-preserved landscape structure, with the Roman River, Church House Wood, historic field pattern and associated landscape features remaining intact and readily discernible. Field observations and historic mapping indicate a high degree of continuity and limited evidence of substantial landscape restructuring or fragmentation.
Value	High

Distinctiveness	
Definition	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Roman River corridor and associated riparian landscape. • Church House Wood Ancient Woodland. • Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI, Local Wildlife site and Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site. • Historic field pattern continuity. • Strong sense of time-depth and historic continuity. • Archaeological associations linked to Iron Age and Roman activity. • Former medieval church site and associated historic place names.

	• Distinct combination of ecological, geological, archaeological and historic features.
Examples of evidence	• Historic England • Colchester Landscape Character Assessment, 2024
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor exhibits a strong sense of identity derived from the combination of the Roman River, Church House Wood Ancient Woodland, Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI and GCR site, historic field pattern continuity and archaeological interest. Together, these features create a distinctive landscape with a strong sense of time-depth and historic continuity.
Value	Medium-high

Recreational	
Definition	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Public Rights of Way providing access through and across the corridor. • Opportunities to experience the Roman River landscape and associated natural features. • Varied landscape interest arising from the combination of river, woodland and historic landscape features. • Gainsborough Line railway, promoted as a scenic and leisure route. • Connection to recreational destinations including Chappel, Sudbury and the Stour Valley countryside. • Rural character and relative tranquillity.
Examples of evidence	• OS mapping • Magic Map
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor provides opportunities for informal recreation and appreciation of the countryside through its network of Public Rights of Way, varied landscape character and rural setting. The Gainsborough Line, promoted as a scenic and leisure route, further enhances recreational opportunities and accessibility to the wider countryside, including the Stour Valley landscape.
Value	Medium-high

Perceptual (Scenic)	
Definition	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Roman River and associated riparian vegetation. • Church House Wood Ancient Woodland. • Pastoral land use associated with the river corridor. • Historic field pattern and mature landscape structure. • Varied landscape interest arising from the combination of river, woodland and farmland. • Strong sense of time-depth and historic continuity. • Rural character with limited urbanising influences.

	• Views from Public Rights of Way and the Gainsborough Line scenic railway. • Seasonal variation associated with woodland, vegetation and water features.
Examples of evidence	• Google Earth
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor exhibits scenic qualities derived from the combination of the Roman River, Church House Wood, pastoral land use, mature landscape structure and historic field pattern. The interaction of woodland, water, farmland and historic landscape features creates a visually varied and distinctive landscape with a strong sense of place. Views from Public Rights of Way and the Gainsborough Line further contribute to appreciation of the landscape.
Value	Medium-high

Perceptual (tranquillity)	
Definition	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Roman River and associated riparian vegetation. • Church House Wood Ancient Woodland. • Predominantly rural character. • Relatively dark rural skies and limited artificial lighting. • Strong sense of separation from surrounding development. • Limited urbanising influences. • Naturalistic character associated with woodland, water and pasture. • Narrow rural lane (Rectory Road) which reinforce the area's rural character and sense of separation
Examples of evidence	• Google earth • Magic Map • CPRE, the Countryside Charity
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor exhibits a strong sense of tranquillity associated with its rural character, pastoral land use, Church House Wood, the Roman River and associated riparian habitats. Together, these features create a calm and naturalistic landscape with limited urbanising influences and a strong sense of separation from surrounding development.
Value	High

Functional	
Definition	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape
Examples of indicators of landscape value	• Roman River corridor and associated drainage function. • Network of riparian habitats associated with the river corridor. • Contribution to habitat connectivity and ecological networks. • Role as a green corridor linking woodland, river and farmland habitats.

	• Contribution to landscape structure and landscape diversity. • Long-established landscape framework associated with the river corridor. • Recognition as a strategic green infrastructure and nature recovery corridor.
Examples of evidence	• OS mapping • Magic Map
Assessment	The Roman River Corridor performs a number of important landscape functions associated with the Roman River and its network of riparian habitats. The corridor contributes to ecological connectivity, hydrological processes and landscape structure, linking woodland, river and farmland habitats and supporting the healthy functioning of the wider landscape. Its role as a strategic green infrastructure corridor is further recognised through neighbourhood planning, masterplanning and emerging local plan policy, which identify the area as part of a wider green infrastructure and nature recovery network.
Value	Medium-high

3.7.6 On balance, the B2/B4 – Roman River corridor is considered to be of **Medium-high landscape value** overall.

3.8 Susceptibility to change

3.8.1 The N2T LVIA includes an assessment of each of the published LCAs within the Area of Interest susceptibility to change. Landscape susceptibility reflects the ability of a landscape to accommodate the specific type of development proposed without undue consequences for its key characteristics.

3.8.2 The Landscape Partnership broadly agrees with the susceptibility judgements presented for the LCAs; however, this review has identified two localised landscape character areas which are considered to exhibit characteristics that differ materially from the wider plateau landscapes within which they occur. As a result, a separate high-level appraisal of landscape susceptibility has been undertaken to reflect their specific sensitivities to the proposed development.

3.8.3 The two areas are B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor, both described in Section 3.1.

3.8.4 In carrying out these assessments, consideration was also given to the findings of the previously prepared High Level Landscape Susceptibility Appraisal 2024.

B5a - Grove Tributary Valley

3.8.5 Key Susceptibility Factors:

- Tributary valley landform and associated watercourses.
- Network of ponds, watercourses and riparian vegetation.
- Coherent landscape structure associated with the tributary valley.
- Dispersed historic farmsteads and historic settlement pattern.

- Protected lanes, including Crabtree Lane.
- Predominantly rural character and limited urbanising influences.
- Relatively dark rural skies and a degree of tranquillity.
- Limited ability to accommodate large-scale vertical infrastructure without affecting key landscape characteristics.

3.8.6 The B5a: Grove Tributary Valley exhibits a number of characteristics that are susceptible to the introduction of large-scale overhead line infrastructure, including its tributary valley landform, coherent landscape structure, historic settlement pattern and rural character. Other susceptibilities include opportunities for views of the new elements. The presence of watercourses, ponds, riparian vegetation and protected lanes further contributes to the area's susceptibility to change. Together, these characteristics provide a relatively limited capacity to accommodate large-scale vertical infrastructure without affecting the landscape's key characteristics and rural qualities. Consequently, the landscape is considered to have a **High susceptibility** to development of the type proposed.

B2/B4 - Roman River Corridor

3.8.7 Key susceptibility factors:

- Roman River corridor and associated riparian landscape.
- Church House Wood Ancient Woodland and Local Wildlife Site.
- Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI and Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site.
- Strong sense of time-depth and historic continuity.
- High degree of historic field pattern continuity.
- Distinctive combination of ecological, geological, archaeological and historic features.
- Tranquil rural character and relatively dark rural skies.
- Limited ability to accommodate large-scale vertical infrastructure without affecting key landscape characteristics.

3.8.8 The B2/B4: Roman River Corridor exhibits a number of characteristics that are susceptible to the introduction of large-scale overhead line infrastructure, including its intact landscape structure, strong historic character, tranquil rural setting and concentration of ecological and geological interests. Other susceptibilities include visual exposure associated with the valley landscape. The presence of Church House Wood Ancient Woodland, Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI and the Geological Conservation Review site further contributes to the susceptibility of the corridor to changes that could affect its distinctive character and landscape setting. Consequently, the landscape is considered to have a **High susceptibility** to the development of the type proposed.

3.9 Sensitivity

3.9.1 Landscape sensitivity reflects the relationship between landscape value and landscape susceptibility. Landscapes of higher value and/or higher susceptibility are generally considered to be more sensitive to the type of development proposed.

3.9.2 The Landscape Partnership broadly agrees with the landscape sensitivity judgements presented within the N2T LVIA for the published LCAs.

3.9.3 The findings of the N2T LVIA regarding the sensitivity of each of the LCAs within the Area of Interest, supplemented with the two additional LLCAs, are summarised in the following table,

Table 3.1: Sensitivity judgements

Landscape Character Area	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
A4 – Colne River Valley Floor	Medium-High	High	High
A5 – Colne River Valley Slopes	Medium-High	High	High
B2 – Easthorpe Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium
B4 – Great Tey Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium
B5 – Rochford's Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium
B6 – Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium
B5a – Grove Tributary Valley	Medium-high	High	High
B2/B4 - Roman River Corridor	Medium-High	High	High

3.9.4 Both B5a -Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor are considered to have High landscape sensitivity. The combination of Medium-High landscape value and High susceptibility reflects the presence of important ecological, geological, historic and perceptual characteristics together with a limited ability to accommodate large-scale overhead line infrastructure without affecting the qualities that define the landscape corridor.

3.9.5 Figure 12 illustrates the distribution of landscape sensitivity across the Area of Interest, including the refined LLCAs identified through this review.

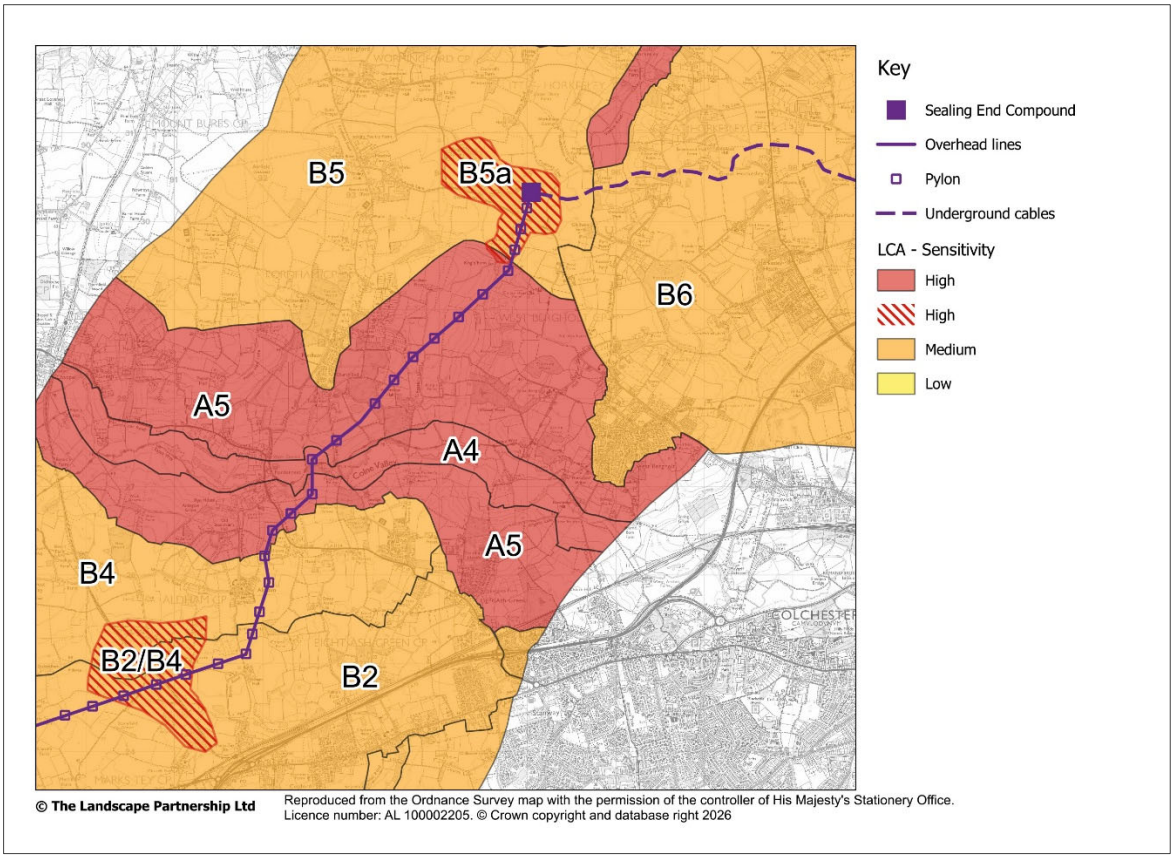

Figure 13: Landscape sensitivity

4 Landscape effects

4.1 High-level review of landscape effects – N2T LVIA

4.1.1 The reviewed N2T LVIA identifies the greatest landscape effects within the more visually sensitive valley landscapes associated with the Colne River corridor, namely LCA A4: Colne River Valley Floor and A5: Colne River Valley Slopes. Within these LCAs, the introduction of large-scale overhead line infrastructure and pylons is assessed as resulting in **Major Significant effects** within 0.5km of the infrastructure, reducing to **Moderate Significant effects** between 0.5km and 1.5km.

4.1.2 Within the plateau landscapes, including LCA B5: Rochford's Farmland Plateau, B6: Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau, B4: Great Tey Farmland Plateau and B2: Easthorpe Farmland Plateau, the N2T LVIA identifies **Moderate-Major Significant effects** within 0.5km of pylons and overhead line infrastructure, reducing to **Moderate Significant effects** between 0.5km and 1.5km. An exception to this is B6 – Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau, where effects are identified as reducing below the threshold of Significant at distance beyond 0.5km of the proposed infrastructure.

4.1.3 The Landscape Partnership broadly agrees with these conclusions.

4.1.4 As set out at Chapter 3, this review identified two LLCAs that exhibit characteristics that differ materially from the wider plateau landscapes within which they occur. The following table provides a high-level indicative professional judgement of the potential effects for these two LLCAs.

Table 4.1: Levels of effect – LLCA

Landscape Character Area	Level of effect / Year 15 within 0.5km	Level of effect / Year 15 between 0.5km and 1.5km
B5a – Grove Tributary Valley	Major Significant	Moderate Significant
B2/B4 - Roman River Corridor	Major Significant	Moderate Significant

4.1.5 The findings indicate that both B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor exhibit a level of sensitivity and subsequent likely Level of effect that is greater than identified for the wider plateau landscapes within which they occur. This reflects the combination of landscape, time-depth and cultural characteristics present within these LLCAs.

4.2 Schedule of findings

The following schedule summarises the findings of the N2T LVIA in relation to the Area of Interest, supplemented with those for the refined LLCAs. The schedule presents the assessed Value, Susceptibility, Sensitivity and anticipated Level of effect within 0.5km and between 0.5km and 1.5km of the proposed overhead line infrastructure.

Table 4.2: Summary of landscape effects – LCAs within N2T LVIA

Landscape Character Area	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity	Level of effect / Year 15 within 0.5km	Level of effect / Year 15 between 0.5km and 1.5km
B5 - Rochford's Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate-Major Significant*	Moderate Significant
B6 - Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate-Major Significant	Not Significant
A5 - Colne River Valley Slopes	Medium-High	High	High	Major Significant	Moderate Significant
A4 - Colne River Valley Floor	Medium-High	High	High	Major Significant	Moderate Significant
B4 - Great Tey Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate-Major Significant	Moderate Significant
B2 - Easthorpe Farmland Plateau	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate-Major Significant	Moderate Significant

* Within the area identified as B5a – Grove Tributary Valley, a separate high-level appraisal has been undertaken reflecting the elevated landscape value, susceptibility and sensitivity identified in Chapter 4.

Table 4.3: Summary of landscape effects – LLCA

Landscape Character Area	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity	Indicative Level of effect / Year 15 within 0.5km	Indicative Level of effect / Year 15 between 0.5km and 1.5km
B5a – Grove Tributary Valley	Medium-High	High	High	Major Significant	Moderate Significant
B2/B4 - Roman River Corridor	Medium-High	High	High	Major Significant	Moderate Significant

4.2.1 Tables 4.2 and 4.3 demonstrate that the LCAs within the Area of Interest along the proposed pylon corridor all are assessed as experiencing **Moderate-Major effects** or **Major effects** within 0.5km of the proposed infrastructure and that all these effects would be Significant. Effects between 0.5km and 1.5km are all judged to reduce to **Moderate effects and to be Significant**, with the exception

of B6: Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau, where effects are identified as reducing below the threshold of Significant due to the proposed undergrounding in this area.

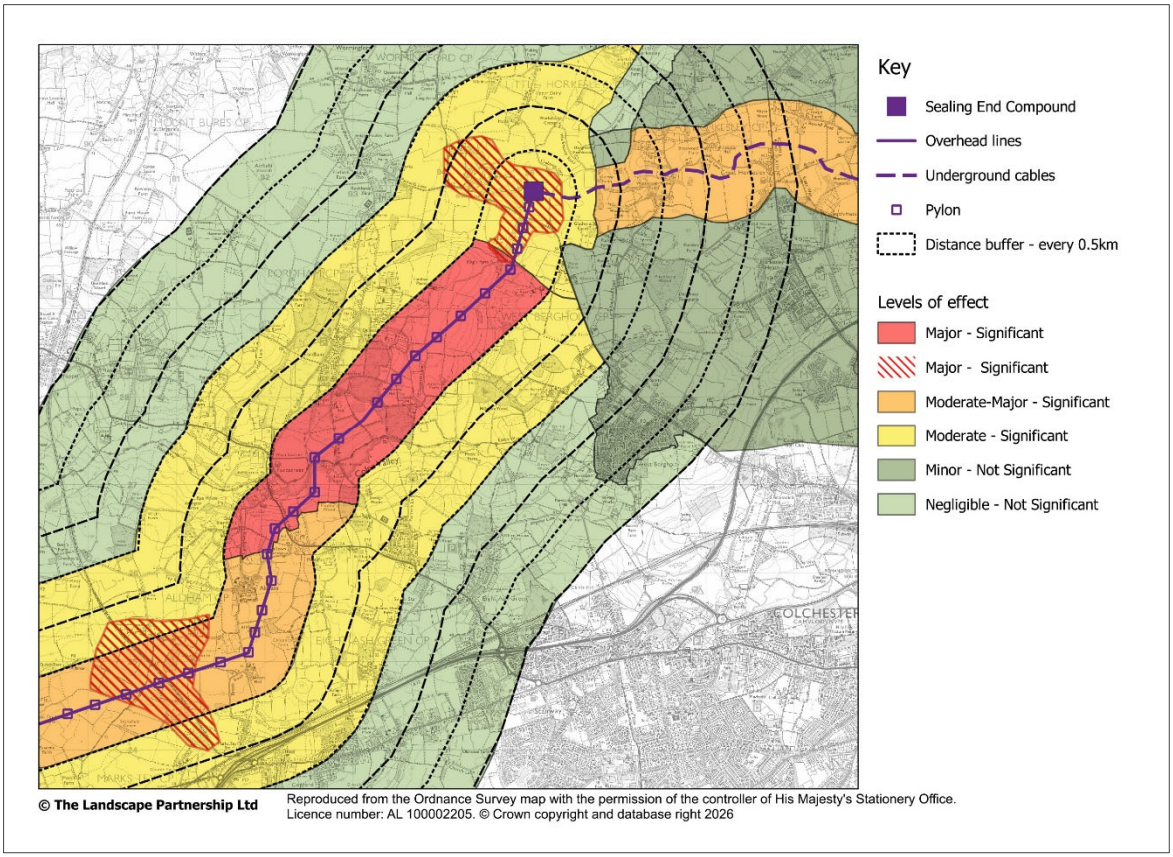

Figure 14: Level of effects

4.3 Additional landscape effects associated with vegetation loss

4.3.1 The landscape effects associated with the Development Proposal do not only arise from the introduction of pylons and overhead conductors, but also from the removal and management of vegetation required to facilitate construction and operation of the transmission corridor.

4.3.2 Trees, woodland, hedgerows and riparian vegetation form an important component of the landscape structure of the Area of Interest. These features contribute to enclosure, local distinctiveness, ecological connectivity and the perception of rural character. They are particularly evident within the Colne Valley, the Grove Tributary Valley and the Roman River Corridor, where vegetation is closely integrated with landform and settlement pattern.

4.3.3 The loss or alteration of vegetation therefore has the potential to contribute to landscape effects beyond the immediate footprint of the infrastructure itself. Whilst replacement planting may mitigate some effects over time, the removal of mature landscape features can result in a reduction in landscape structure and local distinctiveness for an extended period.

4.4 Summary

4.4.1 The review undertaken as part of this assessment demonstrates that the extent of sensitive landscape receptors affected by the proposed overhead line infrastructure may be greater than is

reflected within the broad Landscape Character Areas used within the N2T LVIA. The identification of the B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor localised landscape character areas identify additional areas of elevated landscape sensitivity.

4.4.2 When considered alongside the Major Significant effects identified within the adjoining A4 – Colne River Valley Floor and A5 – Colne River Valley Slopes landscape character areas, the findings indicate a concentration of Significant landscape effects across a series of connected and sensitive landscapes.

5 Visual context

5.1 Visual Receptors and Sensitivity

5.1.1 The N2T LVIA includes 22 viewpoints within the Area of Interest, representing a range of visual receptors including road users and recreational users. The Area of Interest contains an extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and Protected Lanes which provide views across the Colne Valley, adjoining plateau landscapes and the Roman River Corridor. As many of these routes are valued for their rural character, tranquillity and recreational function, users are likely to exhibit a high degree of awareness of changes to the surrounding landscape.

5.1.2 In addition to the viewpoints assessed within the N2T LVIA, The Landscape Partnership has identified a number of further viewpoints located along the Public Rights of Way network within the Area of Interest. Whilst not being exhaustive of all potential viewpoints, together, these viewpoints are considered to be representative of receptors likely to experience notable changes in visual amenity arising from the proposed development and are shown on Figure 14 below supported by panorama photos in Appendix 01.

5.1.3 The additional viewpoints include the following:

- Viewpoint A: Fossetts Lane / PRoW Fordham-16
- Viewpoint B: Bridleway 20 / PRoW Aldham-18
- Viewpoint C: PRoW Aldham-7
- Viewpoint D: PRoW Aldham-3

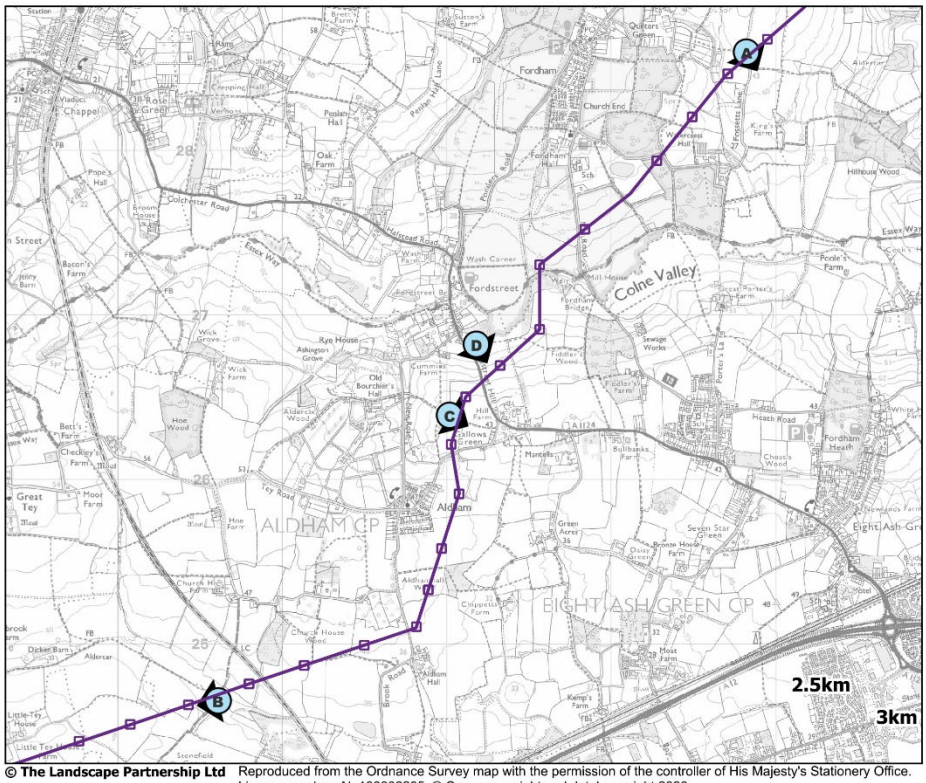

Figure 15: Additional viewpoints

5.2 Sensitivity

5.2.1 Visual sensitivity reflects the relationship between the value place on a view by a visual receptor (person) and the susceptibility of the view change of the type proposed. Receptors of higher value and/or higher susceptibility are generally considered to be more sensitive to the effects of development.

5.2.2 A review of the N2T LVIA indicates that all the visual receptors within the Area of Interest are assessed as being of **Medium** or **High sensitivity**. The Landscape Partnership broadly agrees with these sensitivity judgements.

5.2.3 For the purposes of this review, a separate high-level assessment of visual sensitivity has been undertaken for the additional viewpoints. As noted above, these additional viewpoints are located on Public Rights of Way and Protected Lanes not specifically represented by the N2T LVIA viewpoints and are considered representative of recreational receptors likely to experience close-range views of the proposed infrastructure. The findings are provided in the table below.

Table 5.1: Visual receptor sensitivities - LLCA

Viewpoint	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Viewpoint A	High	High	High
Viewpoint B	Medium	High	High
Viewpoint C	Medium	High	High
Viewpoint D	Medium	High	High

6 Visual effects

6.1 High-level review of visual effects – N2T LVIA

6.1.1 Of the 22 viewpoints located within the Area of Interest, the N2T LVIA identifies Significant residual visual effects at 16 of the viewpoints at year 15. The Significant effects range from Moderate to Major Adverse and are generally associated with viewpoints located within 1.5km of the proposed overhead line.

6.1.2 The six viewpoints assessed as not being Significant are either located at greater distances from the proposed development (VPs 4.07, 4.10, 4.13, 4.28, 4.35 and 4.38) or benefit from substantial screening by intervening vegetation, built form and/or landform (VPs 4.33, 4.28 and 4.35). that the findings indicate that Significant visual effects may occur across a substantial proportion of the Area of Interest and are not confined to a small number of isolated viewpoints.

6.1.3 The Landscape Partnership broadly agrees with the visual assessment conclusions presented within the N2T LVIA. However, in a limited number of cases, The Landscape Partnership considers that the magnitude of visual effects may be greater than those identified within the N2T LVIA. These differences are generally limited in extent and may reflect differences in professional judgement rather than fundamental disagreement regarding the nature of the effects.

6.2 Additional viewpoints – potential visual effects

6.2.1 The additional viewpoints identified through this appraisal are listed below with a high-level indicative professional judgement of potential visual effects, with accompanying panoramic photographs to illustrate the composition of the view attached at Appendix 02.

Table 6.1: Summary of visual effects - LLCA

Viewpoint A: Fossetts Lane / PRoW Fordham-16 High-level assessment of effects: Viewpoint A is located on Fossett Lane, a Protected Lane, at the point where the proposed overhead line would cross the route. Users travelling from Fordham via PRoW Fordham-16, along Fossett Lane and onwards via PRoW Fordham-19 towards West Bergholt (or reverse) would pass directly beneath the proposed conductors. The overhead line has the potential, therefore, to form a prominent and defining feature of the route, introducing large-scale transmission infrastructure into an otherwise rural valley landscape. The presence of the conductors would likely result in a substantial change to the visual experience of the route and noticeably diminish the sense of tranquillity and rural character associated with the Protected Lane and surrounding valley landscape. Effect: Major adverse Significant
Viewpoint B: Bridleway 20 / PRoW Aldham-18 High-level assessment of effects: Viewpoint B is located at the intersection of Bridleway 20 and PRoW Aldham-18 within the Roman River Valley. A proposed pylon tower would be located within the adjoining arable field, with the overhead line extending across the landscape beyond. The tower has the potential to form a prominent focal point

within views from the public rights of way, introducing a substantial vertical structure into an otherwise predominantly rural landscape. Together with the associated conductors, the infrastructure would likely become a defining element of the view, substantially altering the visual experience of the route and adversely affecting the rural character of the Roman River Valley. Effect: Major adverse Significant
Viewpoint C: PRoW Aldham-7 High-level assessment of effects: Viewpoint C is located on PRoW Aldham-7 looking east towards Gallows Green. The proposed overhead line would span the view from north to south, crossing the public right of way. Users of the route would pass directly beneath the conductors, experiencing the infrastructure at close range. The overhead line has the potential to be a defining feature within views across the surrounding countryside, diminishing the sense of openness and rural character currently associated with the route towards Gallows Green (or reverse). Effect: Major adverse Significant
Viewpoint D: PRoW Aldham-3 High-level assessment of effects: Viewpoint D is located on PRoW Aldham-3 between Fordstreet and Fiddlers Wood. The proposed overhead line would cross the public right of way and be visible across a substantial section of the route. Users would approach and pass directly beneath the conductors, experiencing the infrastructure at close range within an otherwise open rural landscape. The overhead line has the potential to be a prominent feature within views and would likely interrupt long-distance views across the surrounding countryside, noticeably altering the visual experience of the route. Effect: Major adverse Significant

6.2.2 On the basis of this high-level review, the additional viewpoints are considered to have the potential to experience Significant adverse visual effects arising from the proposed development. This is consistent with the findings of the N2T LVIA, which identifies Significant visual effects across a substantial proportion of the Area of Interest.

6.2.3 Figure 15 illustrates the distribution of visual effects identified within the N2T LVIA across the Area of Interest, together with the high-level indications of visual effect for the additional viewpoints identified through this appraisal.

6.2.4 The findings indicate that opportunities for close-range views of the proposed infrastructure are not limited to the representative viewpoints assessed within the N2T LVIA. Additional Public Rights of Way and Protected Lanes within the Area of Interest are also likely to experience notable changes in visual amenity, reinforcing the extent of visual effects identified across the Colne Valley landscape.

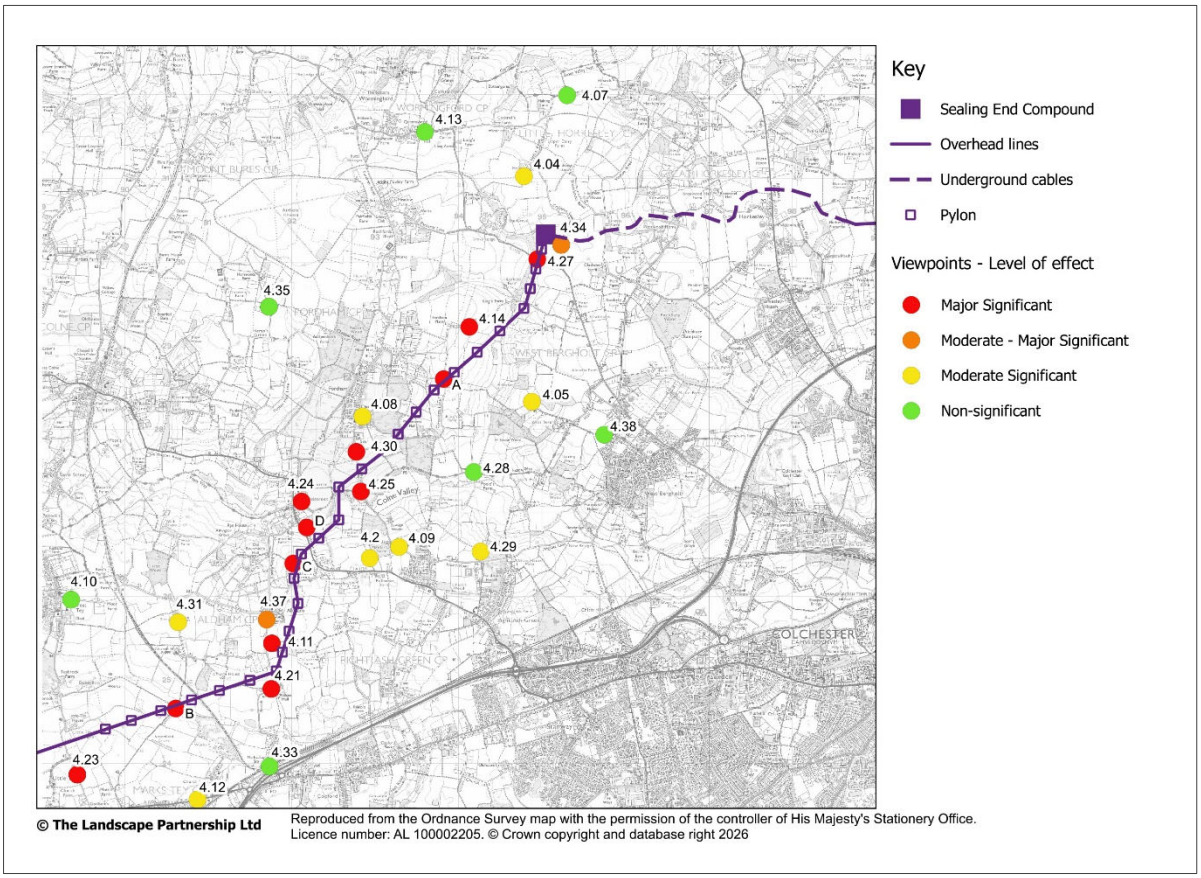

Figure 16: Distribution of visual effects

7 Review of undergrounding proposals along the Norwich to Tilbury route

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This section reviews locations elsewhere along the Norwich to Tilbury route where undergrounding has either been proposed or considered by National Grid during the development of the scheme.

7.1.2 The purpose of the review is not to suggest that these locations are directly comparable to the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor in terms of their landscape qualities. Rather, it is intended to examine the circumstances in which National Grid has considered or adopted undergrounding and the factors that informed those decisions.

7.1.3 Particular regard is given to the Waveney Valley Alternative and the Stour Valley underground cable section, as both examples provide insight into the application of NPS EN-5 and National Grid's approach to balancing landscape, heritage, recreational and environmental considerations against the use of overhead line infrastructure.

7.2 Waveney Valley Alternative

7.2.1 The Norwich to Tilbury Design Development Report, 2024 identified the Waveney Valley as a location where, notwithstanding the absence of a nationally designated landscape, the combination of potential landscape, heritage and recreational effects warranted further consideration of undergrounding in accordance with NPS EN-5.

7.2.2 The report noted: "*Whilst the Waveney Valley is not a nationally designated landscape as set out in NPS EN-5 paragraph 2.9.20, the area was formerly identified (in the local plan) as a Special Landscape Area. Effects would arise from new infrastructure in the landscape. In addition, the setting of a Grade I listed building (St Remegius Church) extends from the edge of Roydon across the valley to the agricultural hinterland and would be affected by a new overhead line. There would also be effects on an undesignated moat. The valley, including the adjacent SSSI are used extensively for recreation with a long-distance path the Angles Way (established by the Ramblers Association), crossed by the 2023 preferred draft alignment adjacent to RG087.*"

7.2.3 Subsequently, National Grid developed the Waveney Valley Alternative (WVA), comprising an approximately 2km section of underground cable through the Waveney Valley near Diss, together with associated cable sealing end compounds at either end of the underground section. The alternative was subject to statutory consultation and environmental assessment.

7.2.4 Although the WVA was not subsequently incorporated into the final Development Consent Order application, it demonstrates that National Grid considered the potential use of undergrounding within a landscape that was not nationally designated. but which still displayed sensitive attributes. In doing so, National Grid identified a combination of landscape, heritage, recreational and ecological considerations as relevant to the application of NPS EN-5 §2.9.26.

7.2.5 Whilst the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor differ in character from the Waveney Valley, similar categories of consideration are present in these areas, including former Special Landscape Area recognition (later proposed for redefinition as Proposed Areas of Landscape Conservation

Importance), significant landscape effects, heritage interests, promoted recreational routes and strategic ecological and green infrastructure functions.

7.3 Stour Valley

7.3.1 The Stour Valley underground cable section provides a useful example of a location where National Grid has adopted undergrounding as part of the proposed Norwich to Tilbury route. A review of the landscape character areas affected by this section provides an opportunity to consider whether similar characteristics and indicators of landscape sensitivity are present elsewhere along the route, including within the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor.

7.3.2 The findings of the N2T LVIA for the Stour Valley underground cable section and the Colne Valley and Roman River Valley overhead line section are summarised in Table 7.1 below.

7.3.3 The landscape value ratings presented in the table have been taken directly from the value assessment tables contained within *Document 6.13.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 13.2 – Landscape Baseline and Assessment*, with the exception of B5a: Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4: Roman River Corridor, for which the value ratings are derived from the appraisal presented in Section of this report.

7.3.4 Landscape susceptibility has not been included within this comparison, as it is intrinsically linked to the nature of the proposed development and consequently is not directly comparable between landscape character areas subject to overhead line infrastructure and those subject to underground cabling.

7.3.5 As landscape sensitivity is derived from a combination of landscape value and susceptibility, sensitivity ratings have likewise been excluded from the comparison. The analysis therefore focuses on landscape value and other indicators of landscape importance, including designations, planning policy recognition and strategic green infrastructure functions, which provide a more consistent basis for comparing the landscape character areas affected by the different forms of infrastructure.

Table 7.1: Summary of landscape value comparisons

Landscape Character Area	Value	Notes	Proposal
B7 Langham Farmland Plateau	Medium	Small part within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Part overhead / part underground
A7 Stour River Valley Slopes	Medium-high	Mostly within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Underground only
A8 Stour River Valley Floor	Medium-high	Entirely within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Underground only
18 Rolling Valley Farmland	High	Entirely within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Underground only
26 Valley Meadowlands	Medium-high	Mostly within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Underground only

Landscape Character Area	Value	Notes	Proposal
12 Plateau Farmlands	Medium	Small part within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Underground only
B6 Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau	Medium	Small part within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Part overhead / part underground
B5 Rochford's Farmland Plateau	Medium	Small part within Dedham Vale National Landscape	Part overhead / part underground
A5 Colne River Valley Slopes	Medium-high	Mostly within Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance Included in various Green Infrastructure Strategies (2008 onwards)	Overhead
A4 Colne River Valley Floor	Medium-high	Mostly within Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance Included in various Green Infrastructure Strategies (2008 onwards)	Overhead
B4 Great Tey Farmland Plateau	Medium	Partly within Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance	Overhead
B2 Easthorpe Farmland Plateau	Medium	Some parts included in various Green Infrastructure Strategies (2017 onwards)	Overhead
B5a Grove Tributary Valley	Medium-high	Mostly within Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance	Overhead
B2/B4 Roman River Corridor	Medium-high	Included in various Green Infrastructure Strategies (2017 onwards)	Overhead

7.3.6 Table 7.1 indicates that National Grid has adopted underground cabling within landscape character areas assessed in the N2T LVIA as being of Medium and Medium-High landscape value. The use of undergrounding within the Stour Valley is therefore not confined solely to landscapes assessed as having the highest landscape value ratings.

7.3.7 Table 7.1 demonstrates that the landscape character areas associated with the Stour Valley underground cable section comprise a range of landscape value ratings, including both **Medium and Medium-High value** landscapes. The areas subject to underground cabling are therefore not exclusively those assessed as having the highest landscape value within the N2T LVIA.

7.3.8 The table also shows that the Colne Valley and Roman River Valley landscape character areas affected by the proposed overhead line are similarly identified as Medium or Medium-High value landscapes. In addition, these areas are associated with a range of landscape policy recognitions, including proposed Areas of Landscape Conservation Importance and strategic Green Infrastructure corridors identified within local and sub-regional planning frameworks.

7.3.9 The comparison indicates that landscape value alone does not appear to explain the differing approaches adopted within the Stour Valley and the Colne Valley/Roman River Valley sections.

Landscapes assessed as being of Medium or Medium-High value occur within both the underground cable and overhead line sections of the route.

7.3.10 While the Stour Valley benefits from the additional protection afforded by the Dedham Vale National Landscape designation, both Table 7.1 and the analysis presented in Section 3 demonstrate that the Colne Valley and Roman River Valley are not undesignated or unrecognised landscapes. Rather, they have been consistently identified through landscape studies, planning policy and green infrastructure strategies as landscapes of particular importance that contribute to wider environmental, recreational and ecological objectives and have been consistently identified as strategic landscape corridors.

7.3.11 Earlier chapters of this appraisal have identified High landscape sensitivity within the A4 – Colne River Valley Floor, A5 – Colne River Valley Slopes, B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor landscape character areas. A4 and A5 have been judged within the N2T LVIA as experiencing Major Significant or Moderate-Major Significant landscape effects arising from the proposed development, as have B5a and B2/B4 within this appraisal. Collectively, these findings indicate the presence of a series of a connected network of sensitive landscapes experiencing potential Major and Moderate-Major Significant effects extending through the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor.

7.3.12 These findings are reinforced by the visual assessment, which identifies Significant visual effects across a substantial proportion of the Area of Interest, including along a network of Public Rights of Way, Protected Lanes and recreational routes. The distribution of these effects indicates that visual effects would not be confined to a small number of isolated receptors but would be experienced across a wider area of the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor.

7.3.13 The findings are relevant to the provisions of EN-5, which recognise that undergrounding may warrant consideration where there is potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual effects, including in locations outside nationally designated landscapes. In this context, the findings indicate that the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor exhibits characteristics that may warrant further consideration of feasible alternatives, including localised undergrounding as a means of reducing landscape and visual effects.

8 Analysis against EN-5: potential for widespread and significant landscape and visual effects

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This section draws together the findings of the appraisal and considers their implications in relation to the policy tests set out in National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5). In particular, it considers whether the proposed overhead transmission infrastructure within the Area of Interest has the potential to give rise to widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual effects such that further consideration of feasible alternatives, including route refinement and localised undergrounding, may be warranted.

8.1.2 EN-5 establishes a strong starting presumption in favour of overhead lines for electricity transmission infrastructure. However, it also recognises that, away from nationally designated landscapes, locations may arise where there is a high potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual impacts. In such circumstances, EN-5 indicates that the Secretary of State should be satisfied that evidence has been provided to support a decision on whether undergrounding is or is not appropriate, assessed on a case-by-case basis.

8.1.3 This appraisal does not seek to determine whether undergrounding should occur. Rather, it provides an evidence base to inform consideration of whether the circumstances described in EN-5 may arise within the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor.

8.2 Landscape character and sensitivity

8.2.1 The appraisal identifies the Area of Interest as comprising a connected series of valley, tributary valley and adjoining plateau landscapes west of Colchester. These landscapes contain a distinctive combination of river valleys, tributary valleys, rolling farmland, woodland, historic field patterns, historic settlements, rural lanes, Public Rights of Way and ecological assets.

8.2.2 The N2T LVIA identifies Medium-High landscape value and High sensitivity for the principal Colne Valley landscapes, namely A4 – Colne River Valley Floor and A5 – Colne River Valley Slopes. This appraisal broadly agrees with those judgements.

8.2.3 The review has also identified two localised landscape character areas, B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor, which are considered to exhibit characteristics that differ materially from the wider plateau landscapes within which they occur. These areas contain concentrations of ecological, historic, cultural and perceptual characteristics which contribute to elevated landscape sensitivity.

8.2.4 As a result, High landscape sensitivity is identified across A4 – Colne River Valley Floor, A5 – Colne River Valley Slopes, B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor. These areas are not isolated landscape pockets, but form part of a connected landscape framework extending through the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor.

8.3 Landscape effects

8.3.1 The review of the N2T LVIA indicates that the greatest landscape effects within the Area of Interest are associated with the visually sensitive valley landscapes of the Colne River corridor. Major Significant effects are identified within 0.5 km of the infrastructure within A4 – Colne River Valley Floor and A5 – Colne River Valley Slopes, reducing to Moderate Significant effects between 0.5 km and 1.5 km.

8.3.2 Significant landscape effects are also identified within the adjoining plateau landscapes. In addition, this appraisal indicates that the locally distinctive B5a – Grove Tributary Valley and B2/B4 – Roman River Corridor have the potential to experience significant landscape effects arising from the introduction of large-scale overhead transmission infrastructure.

8.3.3 Taken together, the findings indicate the potential for significant landscape effects across a series of connected and sensitive landscapes within the Area of Interest. These effects would extend across both the principal Colne Valley landscapes and locally distinctive tributary and river corridor landscapes, rather than being confined to a single isolated landscape receptor.

8.4 Visual amenity

8.4.1 The N2T LVIA includes 22 viewpoints within the Area of Interest, representing a range of receptors including road users and recreational users. Of these, Significant visual effects are identified at a substantial proportion of viewpoints within the Area of Interest.

8.4.2 The Area of Interest also contains an extensive network of Public Rights of Way, bridleways, Protected Lanes and recreational routes, including routes which provide views across the Colne Valley, adjoining plateau landscapes and Roman River Corridor. Users of these routes are likely to have a high degree of awareness of changes to the surrounding landscape, particularly where routes are valued for their rural character, tranquillity and recreational function.

8.4.3 The additional viewpoints reviewed as part of this appraisal indicate that opportunities for close-range views of the proposed infrastructure are not limited to the representative viewpoints assessed within the N2T LVIA. Additional Public Rights of Way and Protected Lanes within the Area of Interest also have the potential to experience notable and significant changes in visual amenity.

8.4.4 The findings therefore indicate the potential for widespread and significant adverse visual effects across the Area of Interest, affecting walkers, recreational users, road users and local communities. Significant visual effects would not be confined to a small number of isolated viewpoints but would be experienced across a wider network of routes and receptors within the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor.

8.5 Recognition of landscape value

8.5.1 The Colne Valley west of Colchester has been recognised through successive landscape studies, planning policy documents, green infrastructure strategies and local planning evidence as a landscape of particular value. Historic recognition through Special Landscape Areas and Countryside Conservation Areas is no longer part of the current planning framework, but the

studies that informed those designations provide evidence of the area's long-recognised landscape qualities.

8.5.2 More recent evidence, including landscape character assessments, green infrastructure strategies, neighbourhood planning and emerging local plan policy, continues to identify the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor as important landscape and green infrastructure resources. These studies recognise their contribution to ecological connectivity, recreation, nature recovery, landscape character and access to the countryside.

8.5.3 This evidence supports the conclusion that the Area of Interest should not be regarded as an ordinary undesignated landscape without recognised value. Rather, it comprises a connected landscape corridor whose qualities have been repeatedly identified through local and sub-regional evidence.

8.6 Comparison with other sections of the Norwich to Tilbury route

8.6.1 Review of other sections of the Norwich to Tilbury route indicates that National Grid has considered or adopted undergrounding in circumstances where a range of landscape, heritage, recreational and environmental factors are present. The Waveney Valley Alternative is relevant because undergrounding was considered in a landscape that was not nationally designated but which displayed a combination of sensitive attributes.

8.6.2 The Stour Valley underground cable section also demonstrates that undergrounding has been adopted within landscape character areas assessed in the N2T LVIA as being of Medium and Medium-High landscape value. The use of undergrounding within the Stour Valley is therefore not confined solely to landscapes assessed as having the highest landscape value ratings.

8.6.3 The comparison is not intended to suggest direct equivalence with the Stour Valley or Dedham Vale National Landscape, but rather to illustrate the range of factors that have informed routeing and undergrounding decisions elsewhere on the scheme. The Dedham Vale National Landscape designation remains an important distinction in relation to the Stour Valley. However, the comparison indicates that landscape value alone does not appear to explain the differing approaches adopted along the route, and that National Grid has had regard to a wider combination of landscape, heritage, recreational and environmental considerations.

8.6.4 Similar categories of consideration are present within the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor, including recognised landscape value, significant landscape effects, heritage interests, promoted recreational routes, ecological assets and strategic green infrastructure functions.

8.7 Overall analysis against EN-5

8.7.1 EN-5 recognises that, away from nationally designated landscapes, there may be locations where a high potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual impacts may justify consideration of undergrounding or other feasible alternatives. The policy requires such matters to be considered on a case-by-case basis, weighing the relevant landscape, visual, environmental, technical and cost considerations.

8.7.2 The findings of this appraisal indicate that the Area of Interest contains a concentration of sensitive landscape and visual receptors. High landscape sensitivity is identified across the principal Colne Valley landscapes and within locally distinctive tributary and river corridor landscapes. Significant landscape effects are identified across a series of connected landscape character areas, and significant visual effects are identified across a substantial network of viewpoints, Public Rights of Way, Protected Lanes and recreational routes.

8.7.3 The evidence also demonstrates that the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor have been consistently recognised through landscape studies, planning policy documents, green infrastructure strategies and emerging local policy as valued and multifunctional landscape corridors. These characteristics contribute to the sensitivity of the Area of Interest and to the potential extent of adverse effects arising from the introduction of large-scale overhead transmission infrastructure.

8.7.4 Taken together, the findings indicate that the proposed overhead line has the potential to give rise to widespread and significant adverse landscape and visual effects within the Area of Interest. On this basis, there is a reasonable evidential basis for further consideration of feasible alternatives, including route refinement and localised undergrounding, in accordance with the provisions of EN-5.

8.7.5 This conclusion does not determine that undergrounding should be selected. Other matters, including engineering feasibility, cost, construction impacts, environmental effects and the effects of undergrounding itself, would need to be assessed by the applicant and considered by the Secretary of State. However, from a landscape and visual perspective, the appraisal indicates that the Colne Valley and Roman River corridor exhibits the type of circumstances in which EN-5 anticipates that further consideration of alternatives may be appropriate.

8.7.6 Taken together, the findings indicate the potential for widespread and significant adverse visual effects across the Area of Interest, affecting a range of visual receptors including walkers, recreational users, road users and local communities. The findings are therefore relevant to the considerations set out within paragraphs 2.9.24 and 2.11.6 of EN-5, which recognise that locations with a high potential for widespread and significant adverse landscape and/or visual impacts may warrant consideration of alternatives, including undergrounding.